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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

Annual report on the European Union's humanitarian aid operations financed in 2018

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the Union's main activities and policy outcomes in 2018 in the field of humanitarian aid, as carried out through the European Commission. The report is prepared pursuant to Article 19 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996.

HUMANITARIAN AID OPERATIONS supported in 2018

Humanitarian crises have increased in complexity and severity over the last decades. Conflict remained the main driver of humanitarian needs, while natural disasters continued to result in many people needing emergency aid. In 2018, over 134 million people needed assistance.

The EU remained one of the largest humanitarian donors, providing relief and support to the most vulnerable people through the mobilisation of both humanitarian aid and civil protection assistance. However, responding rapidly to emerging crises remained a challenge due to access and security constraints.

The European Commission was at the forefront of the EU's response to crises, funding humanitarian aid operations for more than EUR 1.8 billion (UN humanitarian appeal was USD 25.4 billion) in over 90 countries with particular focus on supporting conflict-affected populations inside Syria and refugees in neighbouring countries.

Promoting principled humanitarian aid and respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) was at the heart of the Commission's objectives. The EU continued playing a leading international role by chairing two donor groups: the Donor Support Group of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Good Humanitarian Donorship group (the latter chaired together with Switzerland). Moreover, the Commission chaired the global initiative Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (GBV) until January 2019. GBV and Education in Emergencies (EiE) remained major priorities for the EU's humanitarian actions.

The Commission pursued work on resilience in response to crises and fragility spreading worldwide. In this context, the Commission progressed on the implementation of the humanitarian-development nexus. The peace element of the Nexus was endorsed during the informal Foreign Affairs Council for Development meeting in September 2018, concluding that the 'triple' (humanitarian-development-peace) Nexus should address protracted crises through principled humanitarian action.

The Commission continued to work towards greater cost-efficiency, in line with Grand Bargain commitments between donors and operational agencies at the World Humanitarian Summit. In this respect, the Commission issued the Guidance Note on the Delivery of Large-Scale Cash Transfers, which ensures that more funding reaches beneficiaries and that less is spent on administrative costs. In this context, the EU continued the roll-out its largest cash programme - the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) for refugees in Turkey.

Overview of the main humanitarian aid operations supported in 2018

The European Commission intervened in a wide range of crises and disasters worldwide. Some of them are highlighted below.

Emergency Response

The Commission used a dedicated Emergency Toolbox to respond rapidly to new emergencies and to seriously deteriorating existing crises that could not be foreseen when the Annual Financing Decision was adopted. The Emergency Toolbox contains four instruments: the Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT), the Epidemics Tool, the Small-scale Tool and supports to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' (IFRC) Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)

ALERT provides rapid first-line funding for immediate response to sudden-onset large-scale natural disasters where more than 100 000 people are affected. In 2018, EUR 8.65 million was provided to respond to severe floods in Kenya, Ethiopia and Nigeria, earthquakes and a tsunami in Indonesia and the effects of a tropical cyclone in the Philippines.

The Epidemics Tool provided urgent funding for five outbreaks: Lassa fever (Nigeria), Ebola (DRC), cholera (Djibouti, Niger and Zimbabwe). The amount disbursed was EUR 2.775 million.

The Small-scale Tool was used to respond to seven disasters of a total of EUR 2.225 million, namely: Tonga (tropical storm), Nigeria (refugee movement), Nicaragua (civil unrest), Guatemala (volcano eruption), Laos (dam collapse), Venezuela (floods) and Haiti (earthquake).

The European Commission was also one of the main donors of the DREF, contributing to 39 operations for a total of EUR 3.9 million, approximately 25% of the 2018 fund.

The Syria Crisis

In 2018, the Syria crisis entered its eighth year. During that time, offensives and shifts in territorial control resulted in massive displacement, casualties and tremendous suffering of more than 13 million people. The Commission delivered life-saving assistance, mainly by providing food, medicine, water and shelter. The Commission's actions benefited populations inside Syria as well as Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. The Commission's humanitarian assistance amounted to EUR 260 million.

Furthermore, the EU was involved in numerous international diplomatic initiatives, such as "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region" Conference in Brussels, the Humanitarian Task Force of the International Syria Support Group in Geneva, the Senior Officials meetings organised in Oslo and in Berlin, and other advocacy efforts to promote the respect of humanitarian principles and IHL. The Brussels conference raised awareness of the plight of affected civilians in Syria, with pledges totalling EUR 3.5 billion for 2018, as well as multi-year pledges of EUR 2.7 billion for 2019-2020.

Turkey

In June 2018, the EU agreed on providing an additional EUR 3 billion for the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey to support Syrian refugees. Under this second tranche, EUR 550 million were committed in 2018, out of which EUR 50 million for humanitarian aid, mainly on protection and health. This brought the overall humanitarian funding contracted under the Facility to over EUR 1.45 billion.

The Facility's flagship humanitarian program, the Emergency Social Safety Net, continued to address basic needs and protection needs of 1.7 million beneficiaries. This was the largest single humanitarian project in the history of the EU. Building on the ESSN, the EU funded the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) project since the beginning of 2017, and by December 2018 it supported regular school attendance for 517.000 children.

Western Balkans

In 2018, EU humanitarian activities focused mainly on support to refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Local communities and international organisations provided basic assistance such as food, shelter, and basic healthcare. However, their capacities were overstretched, and in May 2018 the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina officially requested assistance from the EU.

The European Commission allocated EUR 2 million in humanitarian aid in 2018 to provide emergency assistance to address the needs of refugees and migrants. The short-term assistance was complemented by a mid-term response of EUR 7.2 million.

Ukraine

After more than four years of conflict, humanitarian needs persisted in 2018 in eastern Ukraine. The conflict affected over 4.4 million people, out of which at least 3.4 million were in need of humanitarian assistance. Restricted humanitarian access and adverse political and security developments led to deterioration of the humanitarian situation. The humanitarian response was challenged by the high politicisation of the conflict and the decreased funding allocations of donors.

The EU and its Member States remained one of the largest humanitarian donor, with a total of EUR 232 million of support. The EU continued to provide life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable, while promoting a smooth transition to medium and long-term assistance in other areas of eastern Ukraine.

The Yemen Crisis

Yemen was the largest humanitarian crisis worldwide with 22.2 million people in need of assistance in 2018. The ongoing conflict, violations of IHL and weak economic situation of the country triggered the largest food security emergency for 20 million people. The Hodeidah offensive launched in June 2018 displaced over 500 000 people and further intensified the crisis. In addition, the outbreak of cholera continued in Yemen.

During 2018, the Commission scaled up its response to the crisis by providing EUR 127.5 million of life-saving assistance to more than 14 million vulnerable people.

Mali regional crisis

Armed conflict and violence increased, with continued spill-over to the neighbouring countries, namely: Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. Some 390,000 people were forcibly displaced. As a result, humanitarian needs rose, while access challenges remained.

In 2018, the Commission provided EUR 61 million of humanitarian aid, with a main focus on health and nutrition, and covering 80% of the health districts in the North. In total, about 160,000 vulnerable people received emergency food assistance. Over 124,000 children under the age of five suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) received life-saving nutrition assistance, and thousands of children benefitted from EiE activities in North and Central Mali. Moreover, the Commission provided food assistance to over 140,000 Malian refugees in Burkina Faso and Niger, as well as food assistance and EiE to Malian refugees in Mauritania.

Sahel crisis

2018 saw the worst food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel in many years. An increasing spread of conflict and an agro-pastoral crisis worsened the existing complex situation affecting an increasingly vulnerable population.

The Commission provided emergency assistance for a total amount of EUR 272.9 million for the various countries affected. Over 1.1 million vulnerable people received food assistance and life-saving treatment was provided to more than 450,000 children suffering from SAM. The EU has been working actively to implement the humanitarian-development Nexus by strengthening the resilience of the affected population, reducing humanitarian needs and addressing the root causes of food insecurity and acute undernutrition.

The Lake Chad Basin Crisis

In 2018, conflict and violence continued to severely affect 17 million people living in the area. Over 2.7 million people, including 1.5 million children, were forcibly displaced internally or to neighbouring countries. Acute food insecurity and undernutrition remained at a critical level, with 3 million people severely food insecure.

The Commission allocated over EUR 105 million in response to the wide-ranging humanitarian needs in the affected countries. Significant funds were used to provide food assistance, basic health care, water and sanitation, shelter and household items for the IDPs, refugees and vulnerable host communities. The Berlin Conference on the Lake Chad region in September 2018 provided the opportunity to renew international commitment to support the Lake Chad countries. The EU then announced funding of EUR 138 million combining humanitarian and development assistance.

Central African Republic (CAR) regional crisis

The situation continued to deteriorate, with an increased spill-over to the neighbouring

countries. Fighting between armed groups and attacks against humanitarian workers intensified. More than half of CAR's population (some 2.5 million people) were in need of humanitarian assistance. Close to 2 million were suffering from acute food insecurity, and two thirds of the population had no access to basic healthcare. About one in four citizens was forcibly displaced, either internally or to neighbouring countries (Cameroon, Chad and the DRC).

The Commission allocated over EUR 33 million of humanitarian assistance to the crisis. This included emergency support to conflict-affected populations in CAR, as well as to refugees in neighbouring countries.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate, as populations were affected by the continued conflict, forced displacement and the volatile political situation. The 10th and largest Ebola outbreak in DRC was declared in August 2018. It was the first to occur in a conflict-affected area, challenging the response as community resistance was violent and the risk of a regional spread was high. In addition, more than 13 million people were food insecure in DRC, twice the number in 2017. Around 4.5 million persons have been forcedly displaced in the past years and an additional 800,000 Congolese have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

EU funding amounted to over EUR 80 million, focusing on life-saving assistance and logistical support through its humanitarian air service. Regarding the Ebola response, the EU was working closely with the Government of DRC and key partners, providing technical expertise, logistic support and financing operations, also in neighbouring countries.

Somalia

Humanitarian needs remained high due to the severe drought and continued armed conflict. The food security and nutrition situation remained critical with 6.2 million people – half of the population – in need of humanitarian assistance. This included 2.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in overcrowded settlements and exposed to protection risks, of which 300,000 people were forcefully evicted from state-owned property in urban areas.

EU's allocation of EUR 89 million enabled partners to provide life-saving assistance in the form of cash, health and nutrition care, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene assistance. With the humanitarian assistance and favourable rains, the number of severely food-insecure people decreased by 54% between 2017 and 2018. Initiatives were made to transition from emergency response to a shock-responsive and predictable safety net, in collaboration with development donors. The humanitarian situation remains fragile and the needs are above the pre-crisis levels of two years ago.

Ethiopia

Since 2017, the inter-ethnic violence resulted in 3 million IDPs. With an open-door policy, Ethiopia was hosting one of highest number of refugees in Africa: over 900,000 refugees from South Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea. Humanitarian actors were concerned about the lack of

adequate assistance to those new arrivals, which led to very high malnutrition rates.

In 2018, the Commission contributed with EUR 63 million to respond to the needs of crisis-affected people in Ethiopia. Working through partners, the EU assisted refugees from South Sudan and Eritrea with food, shelter, essential household items, malnutrition treatment, water and sanitation. The largest share of funding was dedicated to the IDPs who had to flee violence and destruction of their homes and livelihoods.

Sudan

The socioeconomic crisis that started at the beginning of 2018 resulted in a deterioration of the humanitarian situation. Poor access to mainly food and health care, in combination with negative coping mechanisms, also triggered increased protection needs. A high number of people faced food insecurity already during the harvest season, which grew worse during the lean season with a figure reaching approximately 6 million people, causing high vulnerability and critical levels of severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Increasing restrictions on the physical access to cash created additional constraints.

In order to respond to the increasing humanitarian needs in Sudan, the Commission mobilised EUR 41 million to support the response to the most acute needs.

Venezuela

The living conditions of the population deteriorated due to a socio-economic and political crisis. Lack of medicines, combined with a dramatic reduction of the health system's capacity, resulted in a growing number of people lacking treatment. Several large outbreaks of infectious diseases occurred as a result of discontinuation of preventive programmes, deterioration of sanitary conditions and decreased vaccination coverage. Malnutrition rates exceeded emergency thresholds in many areas. Homicide rates and violence continued being among the highest in the world. By the end of 2018, over 3.2 million people had left the country mainly for Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil.

A total of EUR 32 million was allocated by the EU for provision of notably health and nutritional services, water and sanitation, protection, EiE, as well as support to host communities. This amount includes EUR 7 million of EDF increase to support the pressing humanitarian needs.

Colombia

Humanitarian needs rose, respect for IHL was challenged, and violence against civilians by armed groups caused population displacement. Over 150,000 people were displaced in 2018, and 1 million suffered confinement and mobility restrictions. By the end of the year, neighbouring countries hosted around 300,000 Colombian refugees. At the same time, the escalation of the crisis in Venezuela pushed people to flee to Colombia. The country was also highly prone to natural disasters, and conflict-affected areas provided only limited access to emergency responders.

The Commission allocated EUR 8.56 million to help conflict-affected people and to reinforce disaster preparedness capacity. Aid sectors included: protection, health care, water and sanitation for the most vulnerable groups, EiE as well as disaster preparedness.

Haiti

Haiti faced critical food insecurity during the year, with more than 1.3 million people in acute food crisis. Prevalence of acute malnutrition among children under the age of five remained high and above WHO emergency levels in several locations. More than two years after hurricane Matthew, over 140,000 affected households still lacked access to earthquake-resistant shelters, as well as to water and sanitation.

In 2018, the EU spent EUR 12 million on acute food insecurity and support for coordination across humanitarian operations. Furthermore, EUR 3.4 million was invested in disaster preparedness initiatives, supporting rapid response capacities, disaster-resistant shelter building techniques and drought preparedness. The EU also provided EUR 0.2 million of Non-Food Items in response to the October earthquake.

Afghanistan

Entering its 18th year, the ongoing conflict caused an increasing number of civilian casualties and new displacement. The country was also hit by a severe drought with a massive impact on the agricultural production, which affected more than 13 million people. Among the 600,000 new IDPs and the estimated 820,000 refugees (both documented and undocumented) coming back from Iran and Pakistan in 2018, many were in need of assistance. About 13.5 million people were facing a situation of food insecurity, which was 6 million more than the previous year.

The EU continued to provide life-saving assistance also in areas not supported by other actors, despite the challenging security conditions. EUR 46 million was allocated in 2018 to support relief operations.

Rohingya Crisis

After the massive displacement in 2017, about one million stateless refugees resided in 2018 in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. The majority of them lived in an extremely congested mega-camp and were completely relying on humanitarian aid, with no freedom of movement and livelihood opportunities. Displacement from Myanmar almost tripled the total population of Cox's Bazar, creating tensions with local communities.

The EU provided EUR 46 million in humanitarian assistance for the crisis, both in Bangladesh and Myanmar, in the form of basic health care, water, sanitation, shelter, nutrition, protection, psychological support and disaster risk reduction assistance.

Horizontal priorities

Education in Emergencies (EiE)

In 2018 the European Commission dedicated 8.5% of its humanitarian budget to EiE activities in 34 countries (for an amount of EUR 91.6 million) thus surpassing the 8% target for the year. In 2018 the Commission also provided EUR 1.4 million of EiE funding through the Emergency Support Instrument in Greece. The assistance to EiE benefited 1.25 million beneficiaries, allowing them to secure access to safe and quality education in the most vulnerable situations.

The Commission also adopted a Communication on EiE and protracted crises¹ in May 2018. The new policy framework will enable the EU to leverage resources more predictably, flexibly and effectively based on a holistic and coordinated humanitarian-development nexus approach and clear strategic priorities. The EU Member States endorsed the policy framework by a Council Conclusion² adopted in November 2018.

Cash assistance

Cash transfers are often more efficient and cost-effective than other forms of aid, as recognised by the international community during the World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain and as reaffirmed by the Cash Guidance Note (November 2017). With reduced transaction costs, aid directly reaches beneficiaries, and has maximum impact with good value-for-money. Moreover, cash transfers support local markets and lay the foundations for the recovery and resilience of communities.

The European Commission took all opportunities to scale up the use of cash which has been successfully used in operations in Turkey, Greece, Somalia, Lebanon, Jordan, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Innovation and private sector engagement

In 2018, the Commission became involved in the global debate around humanitarian innovation and private sector engagement, notably at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum, at the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, and at the UN General Assembly.

The Commission continued to support the development of innovative approaches by exploiting opportunities offered by EU research and innovation programmes. For example, three European Innovation Council Horizon 2020 prizes of direct relevance for the humanitarian sector were launched in 2018: Affordable High-Tech for Humanitarian Aid, Early Warning for Epidemics and Blockchains for Social Good.

¹ Communication on education in emergencies and protracted crises (COM (2018)304 final of 18.5.2018).

² Council Conclusions on education in emergencies and protracted crises (12817/18 of 26 November 2018).

EU Leadership of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Emergencies

From June 2017 to December 2018, the Commission led the global humanitarian initiative “Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies”. This global initiative brings together 82 partners (States, donors, international organisations and NGOs), aiming to drive change and foster accountability in the humanitarian system to address GBV from the earliest phases of a crisis. The Commission has been active in this initiative since its creation (2013) and became its global leader in June 2017.

Throughout 2017 and 2018, the European Commission allocated approximately EUR 62 million in humanitarian aid for the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence worldwide.

ECHO Flight (Africa) and support to Humanitarian Air Transport Services

Humanitarian air services are crucial to reach people in need, particularly when infrastructure is unreliable. In addition to transporting humanitarian supplies and workers, humanitarian air services carry out medical and security evacuations.

The Commission operates its own humanitarian air service – ‘ECHO Flight’ – with hubs in Kenya, Uganda, DRC and Mali. The service, with six aircrafts, supported the humanitarian staff of more than 250 projects, transported 26,176 humanitarian aid workers, and around 230 tons of cargo in 2018. The ECHO Flight budget amounted to EUR 14.6 million, and the service was provided free of charge for partners and humanitarian organisations.

The Commission also supported other not-for-profit humanitarian air services. In 2018, it contributed EUR 24.5 million to the WFP/United Nations Humanitarian Air Service, and EUR 750,000 to the Afghanistan operations of Mission Aviation Fellowship.

Summary of evaluations completed in 2018

[Comprehensive evaluation of EU Humanitarian Aid, 2012-2016](#)

The evaluation concluded that the EU is a principled, needs-based donor with unique features, such as its approach to partnerships, its field network and its contributions to shaping the humanitarian system. Budget allocations were found to be appropriate to respond to the needs of targeted populations and to the humanitarian aid objectives as well as to be driven by comprehensive and robust needs assessments. In general, actions were assessed as being cost-effective.

Areas identified as requiring improvement included: developing a more programmatic approach to partnerships between the EU and its partners; increasing the involvement of local implementing partners; scaling up successful innovative approaches and improved reporting; foster synergies with civil protection activities; and better communicating the rationale of EU strategic directions.

[Evaluation of Humanitarian Logistics within EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Action, 2013-2017](#)

The evaluation covered the Commission's investments in humanitarian air services, initiatives to improve systems for humanitarian logistics, and funding to the logistic elements of Commission projects. It concluded that Commission investments in logistics hubs and training, as well as Commission support to the development of the Global Logistics Cluster all had lasting benefits. Moreover, support to air services remains highly relevant.

The evaluation recommended that the Commission develop a humanitarian logistics policy and pay greater attention to logistics within partnership agreements, crisis assessment and planning tools. In addition it proposed ways of further fostering leadership in the realm of logistics, working collaboratively with other humanitarian actors to achieve efficiencies and improve results.

[Evaluation of the EU humanitarian aid intervention in the African Great Lakes region, 2013-2017](#)

This evaluation provided an assessment of EU humanitarian interventions in the African Great Lakes region from 2013-2017. Budget allocations were not proportionate to the increasing needs in the region, which implied that the Commission had to restrict its interventions to the core mandate of saving lives. Despite that, the strategy adopted was adapted to the evolution of the needs, a high level of coherence was achieved amongst actions and the Commission played a key role in humanitarian coordination structures in the region.

The evaluation identified specific aspects contributing to DG ECHO's efficiency, e.g. strong monitoring processes. Scope for improvement was noted in relation to 're-application' processes (i.e. for renewal of grants to an implementing partner for the continuation of a specific action) and/or multi-year projects.

2018 budget

1. List of funding agreements concluded by the Commission in the field of humanitarian aid³:

Agreements for humanitarian aid awarded by the EU can be found on the Financial

Transparency System (FTS) website

2. Humanitarian aid budget implementation 2018

³ Including names of partner organisations concerned.

the EU 2018 BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION

Excluding external assigned revenue from Member States

Region/country	Amount	%
Africa	651	37%
Sudan & South Sudan	86	
Central Africa	95	
Great Lakes	70	
Horn of Africa	200	
Southern Africa, Indian Ocean	11	
West Africa	160	
North Africa	19	
Africa	10	
Middle East and Eastern neighbourhood	552	32%
Middle East	474	
Eastern neighbourhood	79	
Asia, Pacific	116	7%
South West and Central Asia	57	
South East Asia and Pacific	59	
Latin America, Caribbean	73	4%
Latin America	52	
Caribbean	21	
Worldwide disasters	36	2%
Civil protection	41	2%
EU Aid Volunteers	19	1%
Emergency support within the Union	199	11%
Complementary operations and support	67	4%
TOTAL	1.753	100%

(in million €)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SOURCES

- General information on DG ECHO:
<http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en>
- Financial information on the European Commission's humanitarian aid activities in 2018:
https://ec.europa.eu/echo/financing-decisions-hips-2018_en
- Operational information from previous years:
<http://ec.europa.eu/echo/about/annual-reports-en.htm>
- 2018 Annual Activity Report, DG ECHO:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/annual-activity-report-2018-european-civil-protection-and-humanitarian-aid-operations-echo_en
- 2018 Annual Management and Performance Report:
<https://ec.europa.eu/info/node/10237>
- DG ECHO's evaluation reports:
<http://ec.europa.eu/echo/funding-evaluations/evaluations-en>
- European Commission and Member States' humanitarian aid funding data:
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/hac/>

List of partners having signed the 2014 Framework Partnership

<http://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/weblistpartners.pdf>