



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL HUMANITARIAN AID AND CIVIL PROTECTION - ECHO

ECHO A - Strategy, Policy and International Co-operation
The Director

Brussels,

Dear colleagues,

At the end of a busy year, it is pertinent to reflect on what we have achieved together and what challenges lie ahead. Now, after a full year of heading Directorate A "Strategy, Policy and International Co-operation" of DG ECHO, it is my pleasure to share with you a number of important policy developments and to use this opportunity to thank you for an excellent cooperation and for your constructive contributions to ever improving humanitarian aid (HA) and civil protection (CP) policies to better guide and inform operations and delivery in the field, and ultimately – to better serve those most in need.

It has been a privilege to work with you during 2013. It has been a difficult year marked by both dramatic natural disasters and protracted or newly ignited armed conflicts forcing millions of people to rely on our collective effort to help them survive and to alleviate their suffering.

While it is not always possible to meet regularly in person, I intend to keep you informed of all major policy initiatives and developments we shape and carry out together by a biannual policy letter with links to the most important documents and events for your ease of reference. I am delighted to present you with this first edition of the letter, and hope that you will find it interesting and useful.



Fostering better, more effective and accountable humanitarian assistance

DG ECHO is determined to keep abreast of the need to adapt to a rapidly changing global reality and to maintain the quality and adequacy of both our policy-making and funding. To that end, this year we carried out a big stakeholder consultation under the title "*EU Humanitarian Aid - Fit for purpose?*". I would like to thank all of you who provided contributions to this stakeholder consultation (background and documents at http://ec.europa.eu/echo/policies/consultation_en.htm) and to reassure you that these valuable contributions will inform and inspire us when shaping future policy initiatives.

Since July 2013 DG ECHO, representing the EU, is chairing the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG) – a big challenge and responsibility

(http://ec.europa.eu/echo/partners/humanitarian_aid/odsg_en.htm). Under DG ECHO's Chairmanship the ODSG focuses on two key priorities: (1) OCHA's field performance and (2) partnership and outreach to non-ODSG members. Highlights so far include a fruitful discussion on OCHA's partnership and advocacy strategies, the preparations for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) 2016, OCHA's Strategic Framework 2014-17, which will enhance accountability and facilitate performance monitoring. In addition, a mapping exercise on strategic partnership initiatives and dialogues will be concluded soon. In the coming months the focus will be on OCHA's performance in some key priority country operations in which the IASC Transformative Agenda (ITA) has been rolled out. An ODSG field trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo is planned for the last week of March/first week of April 2014.

DG ECHO remains a strong supporter of ITA, a key initiative launched in the end of 2010 to strengthen the effectiveness of the humanitarian system, improve the collective humanitarian response and enhance accountability to affected populations. Together with other donors we follow closely the implementation of ITA and meet every six months with the IASC Emergency Directors group, including UN and NGO representatives, to discuss progress on implementation of the reforms. ECHO participates in HC retreats, L3 simulation exercises and monitoring field trips, while our experts closely follow implementation in the field. We advocate and encourage partners to contribute to the process and have provided dedicated support to strengthen NGOs' capacities to contribute to ITA both at global and field level. ECHO's Humanitarian Implementations Plans (HIPs) for 2014 now foresee a specific paragraph to encourage partners' engagement in ITA (http://ec.europa.eu/echo/funding/decisions_2014_en.htm).

We have continued to seek improvements to strengthen the evidence behind prioritisation, operational strategies and funding decisions for humanitarian aid. In particular the Global Vulnerability and Crisis Assessment (GVCA) and the Forgotten Crisis Assessment (FCA) tools that we have been developing since 2004 are now available on a web-based platform (<http://echo-global-vulnerability-and-crisis.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>). The platform allows for a more regular updating of the overall ranking and composite data sets - for experts it is now easy to view each of the sets of indicators that make up the assessment and export the results in excel data sheets, maps and graphs. The GVCA is now updated 3 times per year. Additional improvements are planned in 2014 based on an open collaborative approach with some Member States and UN bodies.

The GVCA/FCA are thus key support tools for our needs-based decision making process that also brings sub-national data (where available) and in-depth desk/field analysis into an integrated analysis. The Integrated Analysis Framework is outlined in more detail in the Annual Strategy for Humanitarian Aid in 2014: General Guidelines on Operational Priorities

(http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/strategy/strategy_2014_en.pdf).



EU Children of Peace
EUROPEAN UNION:
RECIPIENT OF THE 2012
NOBEL PEACE PRIZE®

Further developing and consolidating thematic policies

In the area of sectoral and thematic policies we have managed to consolidate and finalise a number of policies, notably in the area of *Nutrition* (http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/news/201303_SWDUndernutritioninemergencies.pdf), *Gender* (http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/Gender_SWD_2013.pdf) and *Disaster Risk Reduction* (http://ec.europa.eu/echo/policies/prevention_preparedness/dipecho_en.htm). These documents, building on internationally agreed humanitarian standards, provide both internal guidance to HQ desks/field colleagues and outreach-oriented policy lines on important issues for the humanitarian community. In order to get a more comprehensive view of funding trends and results of the operations we finance we have placed a special emphasis on implementing tools such as the gender/age marker and key result indicators (KRI).

In a joint effort with colleagues from DG DEVCO and the EEAS the "Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis-Prone Countries" was finalised (http://ec.europa.eu/echo/policies/resilience/resilience_en.htm) which will be the EU's coordinated platform for work on resilience in the years to come.

Turning to the most vulnerable groups, in 2012 the EU had decided to dedicate the Nobel Peace Prize money to children affected by conflict. This year ECHO has doubled our contribution and together with partners we have launched the second edition of the EU Children of Peace initiative, aimed at assisting 28 000 conflict-affected children with educational support. The programme on education in emergencies went into its second round, selecting nine new projects for a total value of EUR 4 million.



EU Aid Volunteers

2013 has been an intense year of work in preparation of the establishment and roll-out of the EU Aid Volunteer programme (http://ec.europa.eu/echo/euaidvolunteers/index_en.htm), involving discussion with many stakeholders and EU

negotiations on the proposed legal framework necessary to establish the programme. Following political agreement by the co-legislators, a Regulation is now in the final stages of adoption, which we expect in March 2014. This paves the way for implementation – notably adopting a work programme and standards and establishing the training programme. By the second half of 2014 we plan to launch the capacity-building element of the EU Aid Volunteers.

Meantime the preparatory actions continue at full speed as the second year of pilot projects draws to a close: some 80 Volunteers 'back to base' were invited to Brussels in September 2013 to share their experiences with over 240 participants at a 3-day event, providing essential feedback on practical experience that will feed into the EU Volunteer programme. You can find a summary report of the outcomes and recommendations is available on ECHO's website and watch a video on the conference

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICZtn4yrQxA>). Finally, the third and final group of pilot projects led by VSO, Save the Children, Solidaridad Internacional and the Italian Civil Protection Department have been launched. 70 expert volunteers will be deployed all through 2014 for capacity building projects.



A renewed and strengthened EU Civil Protection Mechanism and global civil protection outreach

On the civil protection side, we have worked closely with the European Parliament and the Council to secure the timely adoption of the new civil protection legislation

(http://ec.europa.eu/echo/about/legislation_en.htm).

We are pleased with the outcome of these negotiations, which pave the way for a more robust EU Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM) in the future. The new legislation places more emphasis on disaster prevention and on planning. It will result in more and better civil protection assistance through the creation of a voluntary pool of pre-committed response capacities with appropriate financial incentives. It also creates closer synergies between civil protection and humanitarian aid, e.g. by making it possible for the UN and specific international organisations to request assistance through the CPM, and allows us to tap into the expertise available in the civil protection community by creating the possibility of advisory prevention and preparedness missions to developing countries.

We have equally stepped up cooperation in the field of civil protection with the candidate and potential candidate countries and the EU Neighbourhood through a number of regional cooperation projects (http://ec.europa.eu/echo/about/international_cooperation_en.htm). And civil protection has proven to be a useful platform to develop bilateral relations with global partners, in particular the US, Russia, Japan, China and ASEAN.



Reaching out, information sharing and awareness-raising

ECHO's actions and policy priorities are supported by a proactive information and communication strategy. Up-to-date information on ECHO's initiatives and actions is available on our website (http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm).

The website also provides a repository of regularly updated fact sheets outlining both operational actions on ongoing crises and thematic approaches that ECHO prioritises (http://ec.europa.eu/echo/aid/factsheets_en.htm). Other regular updates may be followed via our RSS feed.

In the domain of awareness-raising, ECHO regularly cooperates with humanitarian partners to alert of pressings needs and of actions taken to meet them. Among many others, in 2013 we have teamed up with the ICRC to promote the imperative need to protect and provide access to health workers

(http://ec.europa.eu/echo/news/2013/icrc_healthcare_in_danger_en.htm), together with Action Against Hunger we campaigned against child malnutrition(<http://www.nohungerorchestra.org/>) and together with the IRC we focused on sharing information on how humanitarian partners help refugees (http://ec.europa.eu/echo/news/2013/on_solid_ground_en.htm). The information champagne for the EU Children of Peace initiative served to promote further education in emergencies: (http://ec.europa.eu/echo/EU4children/index_en.htm).

While many of these information and awareness-raising actions physically take place in a number of EU Member States, they spread beyond borders and go global thanks to our social media outreach strategy: <https://www.facebook.com/ec.humanitarian.aid>, https://twitter.com/eu_echo, [ECHO on Flickr](#).



Policy priorities in the near future

Next year, we will continue to reach out and engage with both DAC and non-DAC donors as well as with regional organisations with a view to contribute to developing a **more inclusive and efficient international humanitarian system**. We will likewise embark on shared work with all of our partner organisations towards the preparation of the **WHS 2016**.

In addition, ECHO will devote more attention to **innovative means** of providing humanitarian assistance and newly emerging modern tools and techniques.

As you will know, a joint High Representative/Commission Communication on the **EU's comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises** was recently adopted. ECHO, together with the Member States, will continue to ensure that, although humanitarian aid is included in the Union's wide array of policies, tools and instruments to respond to foreign conflicts and crises, it will not be used for foreign policy and/or military objectives. This is in line with the "**in but out**" formulae describing the specific nature and *modus operandi* of EU humanitarian aid in the toolbox of a comprehensive approach. EU humanitarian aid will continue to be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, solely on the basis of the needs of affected populations, in line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

Regarding **civil protection**, following the adoption of the civil protection legislation, in 2014 the focus will shift to the implementation of the new tools and instruments it creates. Priorities include the roll-out of the voluntary pool, the development of the new transport regime and work on prevention. Taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the new legislation, we will also roll out a number of specific prevention and preparedness activities to the EU Neighbourhood. Regional cooperation with the Balkans and with the EU Neighbourhood will be further developed with the launch of a new IPA programme for the Balkans, the Programme on the Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Disasters (PPRD) in the Southern Neighbourhood (PPRD South) and the continuation of the PPRD East.

Protracted displacement

In the field, for partners and ECHO alike, there is an increased pressure on resources resulting from massive new displacements, with 2012 marking the highest number of newly displaced people ever and 2013 looking equally heavy. A big number of refugees and IDPs remain locked in protracted displacement and remain dependent on humanitarian aid. Institutionally, development actors have started to pay more focused attention to this issue and to develop strategies on possible lasting solutions to unlock situations of protracted displacement. Against this background, ECHO will seek to contribute to policy approaches to refugees and protracted displacement and to this end - engage with the development community.

Thematic and cross-cutting policies

In 2014 we plan to finalise guidelines on health and will start having a closer look at best practice in the area of shelter in emergencies. The respect of IHL and provision of access in the context of complex crisis stays high on the agenda of the international community, and we will attempt to have a more systemic look at these issues. Future policy priorities also include the implementation of the food/nutrition agenda through active involvement in international fora and ECHO's vice-chairmanship of the Food Assistance Convention.

Disaster Risk Management

The European Commission plans to work with Member States and other stakeholders in order to develop an ambitious EU position to help shape a revision of the Hyogo Framework for Action (the UN international framework for disaster risk reduction), also building on the achievements on the EU in this area. A Commission Communication is planned for first quarter of 2014, to be followed by Council Conclusions to feed into the process leading to the adoption of the new framework at the World conference for disaster risk reduction in Sendai (Japan) in March 2015.

(Signed)

Florika FINK-HOOIJER