



# THE UNION'S HUMANITARIAN AID: FIT FOR PURPOSE? SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

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## INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of the 'Fit for Purpose' consultation was to seek stakeholders' views on the challenges, objectives and options to further enhance the effectiveness and impact of the European Union's humanitarian aid (through policy, operational, organizational or other measures), taking into account the changing global context at the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Stakeholders were encouraged to comment, express support, voice their concerns or make suggestions based on the stakeholder consultation document, as well as any other issues related to increasing the impact of the EU's humanitarian aid, by filling in the online questionnaire.

The questionnaire was organized into several overarching themes, with more detailed information provided under each theme, and a range of more specific open and closed questions. The consultation was launched on 14 December 2012 and it closed for contributions on 15 March 2013. Key stakeholders including EU Member States (MS), implementing partners, a number of MEPs and the European Parliament's Secretariat were informed about the launch of the consultation by a letter of Claus H. Sørensen, Director-General of DG Humanitarian Aid and Civil protection (ECHO).

55 stakeholder responses were submitted, broken down as follows:

- 9 Member States<sup>1</sup>
- 31 partners (including consolidated responses on behalf of NGO groups, and international organisation)
- 2 academics and think tanks
- 9 individuals
- 4 others (including campaign/lobby groups, consultancies)

The European Commission would like to thank all stakeholders for providing valuable contributions that will feed into future initiatives on further increasing the impact of the EU's humanitarian action.

It should be noted that while a significant number of replies to the stakeholder consultation were received, allowing for substantive and meaningful conclusions to be drawn, the summary overview of replies should not be taken as a quantitative statistical analysis (which would not be appropriate given the size of the sample).

This document is based on the replies received in the online consultation and summarises its findings from the above-mentioned stakeholders. It does not attribute comments to individual stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> An additional Member State has submitted its comments. As they arrived after this report had been finalised, they are not reflected in this document, however, they will be taken into full consideration in future policy initiative as well.

# 1. GLOBAL TRENDS AND THE UNION'S HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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## 1.1. GLOBAL TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNION'S HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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This section was interesting to gauge the multitude of issues being grappled with, and to garner understanding of the spread of priorities for all of the stakeholders. A number of issues raised by the responders in this section are dealt with in subsequent sections of the document, including on: building local capacity and professionalization, influencing and coordinating the international system, value for money and prioritization, LRRD, gender programming, education in emergencies, Council Working Party on Humanitarian and Food Aid (COHAFA), EU humanitarian funding systems. These comments have been incorporated into their respective thematic areas, therefore you will see in this section only the themes which are considered to be truly global trends.

### **Humanitarian Principles, violence and politicization**

The most significantly recurring theme was that around growing violence against humanitarian aid workers, with the majority of MS and partners putting this high on their list of important global trends. It was often referenced in the context of increasing militarization and politicization of aid, with many stakeholders requesting ECHO to take measures to both de-link EU humanitarian aid from wider EU foreign policy and to step up its advocacy of humanitarian principles, particularly in the case of emerging powers and non-traditional donors.

### **Supporting innovation**

Most stakeholders said they looked to ECHO to be a strong supporter of innovation and should be promoting the use of new technologies by demonstrating their use. However, they did not identify any specific examples apart from some mention of new mapping technologies.

### **Climate Change**

Many stakeholders thought that climate change needed to be addressed in humanitarian assistance, especially by integrating climate change into humanitarian programming.

### **Context analysis and urbanization**

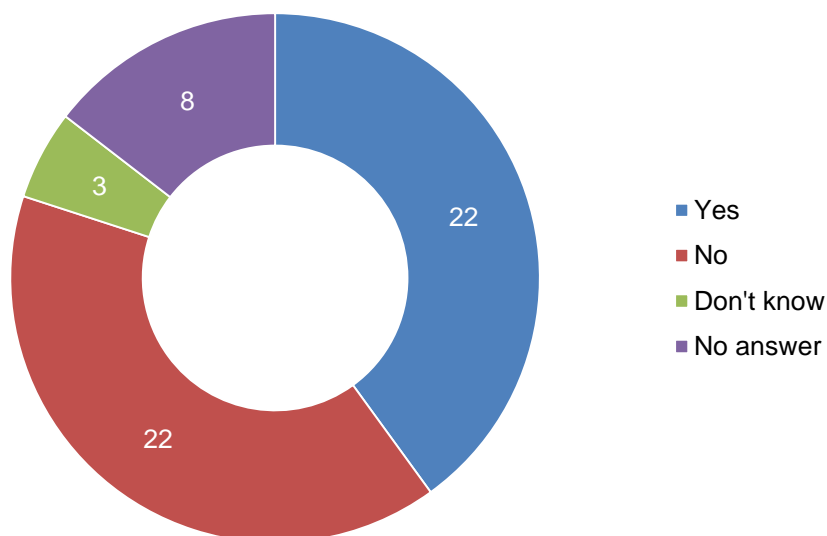
Many of the key NGOs, the UN and academics highlighted the need for more detailed context analysis, in particular the need to better understand responding to urban crises, and the effects of urbanization on already complex compound crises.

## 2. CONTEMPORARY HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES: IS THE UNION ADEQUATELY EQUIPPED TO RESPOND?

### 2.1. UPHOLDING HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES, IHL AND ADVOCACY

#### 2.1.1. HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

a) *Has the EU sufficiently insisted on the respect for humanitarian principles in general and in specific crisis contexts?*



Although there is an even split between 'yes' and 'no' answers all but one MS answered 'yes', with around two-thirds of NGOs responded 'no'. International organisations (IOs) were fairly evenly split.

Several MS suggested working closely with the UN in upholding humanitarian principles. One MS answered yes but wished to retain a level of flexibility and asked for further reflection within the EU on the understanding of humanitarian principles and their practical application. One IO answered yes but felt that perhaps if ECHO displayed distinct branding to EU it would help their impartiality in the field.

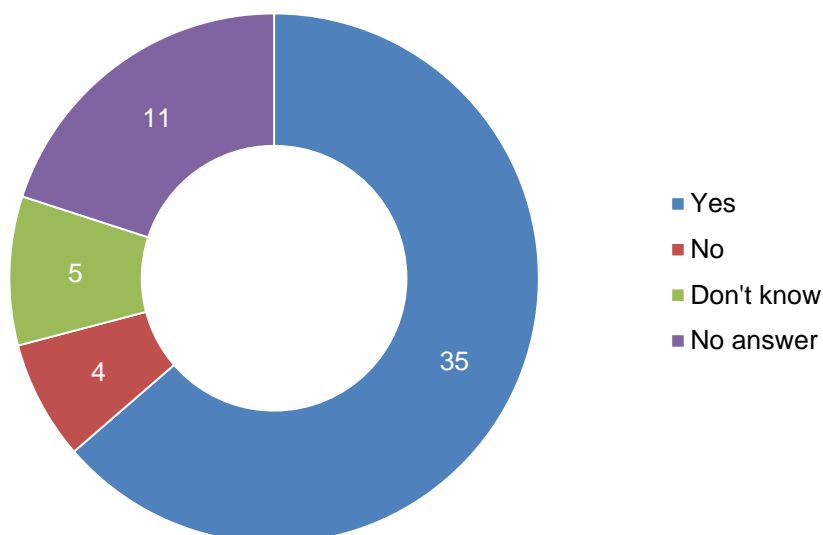
The majority of partners answered 'no' and most felt that the EU needed to work more on keeping humanitarian aid away from politics. This should involve EU (especially EEAS) respecting the distance with ECHO, looking carefully at the widening humanitarian envelope into resilience activities, assessing partners' adherence more rigorously, pushing MS to apply the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid in national policies, and working towards a co-operative approach - not a fully integrated comprehensive one. One academic group thought that ECHO should consider carefully who it decides to fund based on their adherence to humanitarian principles. A lobby group suggested a common standard of information provision as a way to coordinate between humanitarian aid and development activities whilst maintaining a level of independence.

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### 2.1.2. ADVOCACY FOR INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW (IHL)

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a) *Should the EU act more forcefully to increase the respect of and compliance with the IHL? If yes, how?*



All implementing partners answered 'yes' as well as the majority of MS. Two MS answered 'no', along with two individuals.

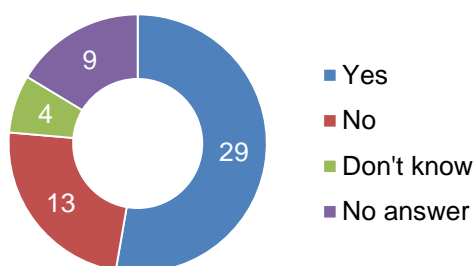
Most partners said that as a large humanitarian donor the EU should be using its influence more to promote respect for IHL. A few gave specific suggestions on how this could be done: e.g. situation analysis at the field level from an IHL perspective, secondment of IHL experts to humanitarian coordinators offices, training on IHL for EU institutions, integration of IHL into ECHO programming where relevant, reporting of ECHO partners on IHL violations in the field, promotion of IHL via political dialogue.

One of the two MS that answered 'no' suggested that rather the EU should contribute to practical knowledge of partners, with another stating that MS should primarily work with and through the ICRC and UN on humanitarian law. They thought it would be useful for the EU to review the set of the European Union Guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law to make them more operational.

## 2.2. EFFECTIVENESS OF AID AND THEMATIC ISSUES

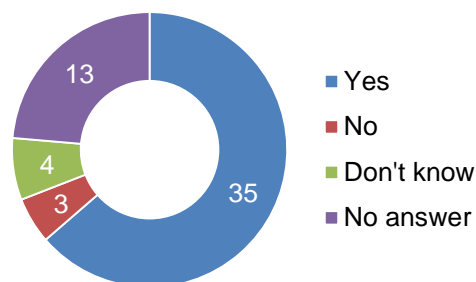
### 2.2.1. RESILIENCE, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR), AND LINKING RELIEF, REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT (LRRD)

a) *Should the Commission reconsider financing principles and priorities (i.e. by adjusting focus from geographical criteria to (more) horizontal ones and scaling up activities that increase the resilience of vulnerable communities)?*



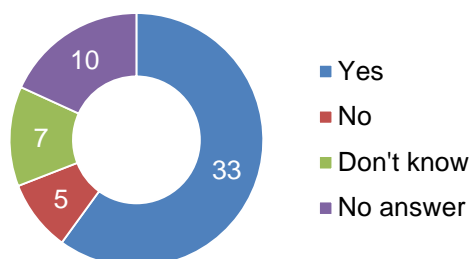
Half of the MS answered 'yes' with the other half either 'no' or 'don't know'. Nine of the thirteen 'no' answers came from NGOs. All of the groups were strongly represented in the 'yes' category.

b) *Should the Union's humanitarian capacity-building measures be expanded to regional/national levels in disaster-prone parts of the world?*



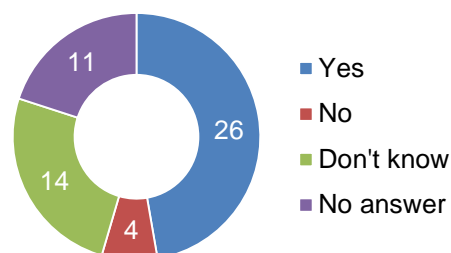
All MS answered 'yes' apart from one 'don't know'. Of the three that answered 'no', two were NGO groups. Most partners answered 'yes'.

c) *Should the scope of preparedness work be extended beyond the current focus on natural disasters in recognition of links between the natural, man-made/technological and complex emergencies?*



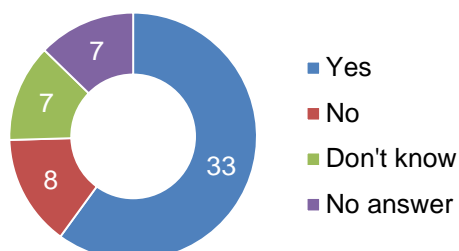
Five MS answered 'yes' and the rest 'don't know'. Most partners answered 'yes'. Of the five 'no' three were NGOs and two individuals.

d) *Should the DIPECHO's 'community-based approach' be also used to build the capacity of emergency response structures of disaster-prone countries, possibly building on the experience of civil protection authorities inside the Union?*



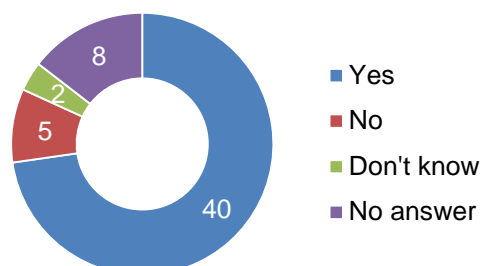
Five MS responded 'don't know', with the rest answering 'yes'. Most partners answered 'yes'. Six NGOs and NGO groups responded 'don't know' along with five individuals. Of the four 'no' three were NGOs and one academic/think tank.

e) Should ECHO remain involved in protracted crises through humanitarian aid or should there be clearer humanitarian exit strategies?



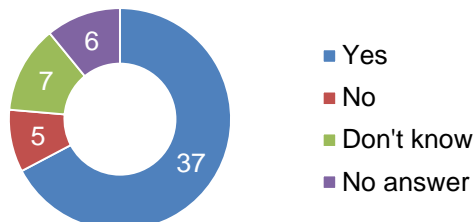
Five MS said 'yes', two 'no' stating the need to focus on exit strategies, and two 'don't know'. Most partners answered 'yes'. Of the eight that said 'no' there was a fairly even mix of NGOs, MS, IOs and individuals/others.

f) Should DG ECHO jointly with its development colleagues develop risk analysis, define strategic priorities for resilience and align its programming priorities?



All MS and most partners answered 'yes'. The five that answered 'no' were three NGOs and two individuals

g) Should the Commission undertake (i) mandatory fragility analysis, (ii) joint humanitarian/development funding strategies for specific post-crisis contexts, and/or (iii) joint assessment missions to ensure that an early post-disaster recovery facilitates effective LRRD?



All MS answered 'yes' apart from one 'no' and one 'don't know'. The remaining four 'no' were NGOs while most partners said 'yes'. Those who answered 'don't know' or declined to answer were almost exclusively NGOs and Individuals

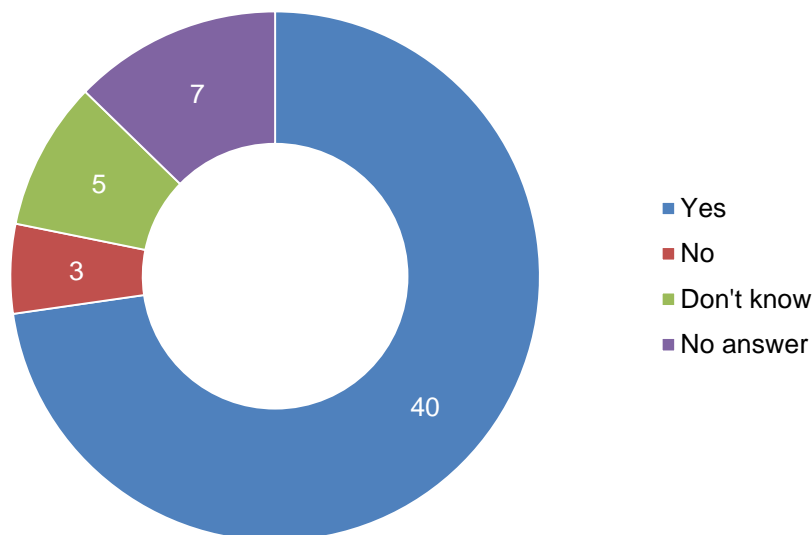
Almost all of the partners made substantial comments about LRRD or resilience as a shared ECHO-DEVCO responsibility, while underlining that ECHO's mandate should continue to give priority to humanitarian action to respond to immediate needs. Most partners advocated for clarity on what the EU policy is and most made several suggestions for what should be included, for example: supporting to DEVCO projects to reduce the risk of disasters, including preparedness and disaster management in political dialogue with partner countries when e.g. climate change is discussed; conducting stronger analysis to prepare response to a crisis; including early recovery approaches in response to a crisis, continuing humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable in the post-crisis recovery while enhancing coordination between humanitarian and development departments of the EC and in MS based on needs assessment, including by stronger coordination at the country level and increasing financial allocations to preparedness, DRR and LRRD projects within MS' development budgets.

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### 2.2.2. QUALITY OF AID AND SECTOR POLICIES

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*a) Should the Union more forcefully pursue the quality of humanitarian aid and donorship (at European and/or global level)? If so, how? What should be priority actions in that respect (standard-setting, peer-reviews, cooperation with emerging donors)?*



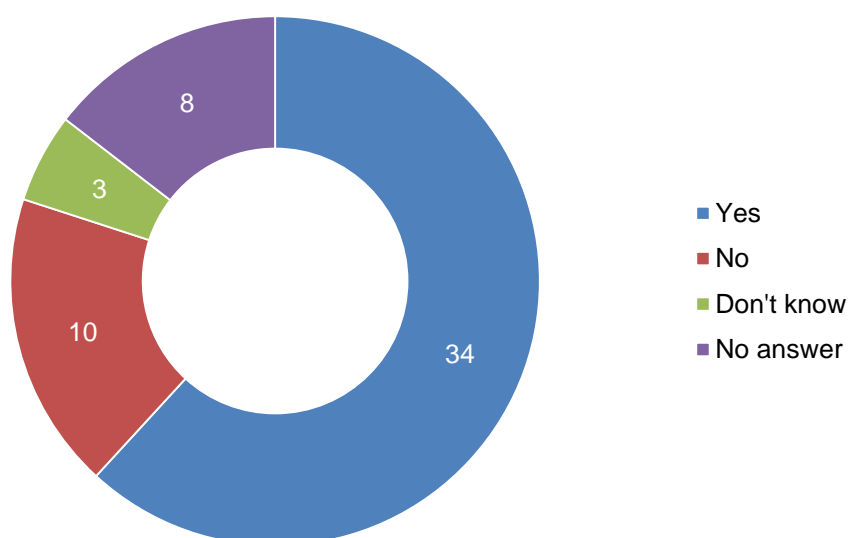
All MS answered 'yes' apart from two 'don't know'. Most partners also said 'yes'. The three 'no' answers came from two NGOs and one Individual. Those that answered 'don't know' or had no answer were mainly NGOs and a few lobby groups and individuals.

The majority of respondents noted that the quality of humanitarian aid should be improved within the existing frameworks, such as the promotion by the EU of humanitarian principles and IHL, the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD), Sphere and Red Cross Code of Conduct, both among implementing partners and governments. Some wanted to see more work with emerging donors, e.g. on humanitarian principles, especially in the cases where such donors may have better access to some communities than traditional donors.

Some respondents suggested that the EU should continue to participate in and promote engagement in international activities, such as UN-led humanitarian evaluations and OECD peer reviews. Regarding the latter, one IO suggested that standardizing reports from partners to donors would be a win-win situation as it would reduce administrative burden on partners and allow them to focus on providing one quality report to all donors. It would also allow donors to insist on a better quality of reporting and enhance the feedback provided to partners. They also said that continuing to share the findings of OECD/DAC peer reviews of EU Member States through COHAFA will help learning across the member states about donorship, particularly with newer MS donors. Newer non-DAC donors should be encouraged to undertake special reviews of their humanitarian assistance (as a number have already done). Humanitarian donor staff should also be encouraged to participate as examiners on OECD/DAC peer reviews; this will give them exposure to how other donors work. Finally, all EU Member States should be encouraged by the EU to participate fully in the GHD indicators process that is currently being undertaken for the first time.



*b) Should the Commission and Member States aim to develop joint/common reference policy guidance in the thematic/sector humanitarian aid areas, based on international best practices? Should there be common sets of key indicators and measurement of results?*



For the MS there were two 'no', one 'don't know' and the rest 'yes'. Most partners replied 'yes'. The other 'no' answers came from NGOs and several from IOs and some individuals.

MS would like to see sectoral policy discussed in COHAFA and the EU to promote collective evaluations. NGOs want the EU to support Joint Standards Initiative (JSI) and Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) certification initiatives and better inclusion of local capacities in needs assessments. One academic group suggested establishing an external regulating body for EU funded projects focusing on appropriateness of program as well as efficiency. The trial of such a system would allow exploration of concepts such as an ombudsman and support the formal regulatory link which is lacking in the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), Sphere, Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), and the GHD initiatives.

There were several divergent views on how to tackle the increased focus on Value for Money (VFM) and the widespread reduction of humanitarian aid budgets. Some member states were keen to see an increase in the use of pooled funds as a way to increase VFM and maintain levels of activity with lower budgets. However most NGOs were concerned about this trend, highlighting the problem of centralization of funding and the prospect of less transparency and flexibility over prioritization. One suggestion was for ECHO to work with partners to consolidate supply chains, thereby cutting duplication and increasing VFM.

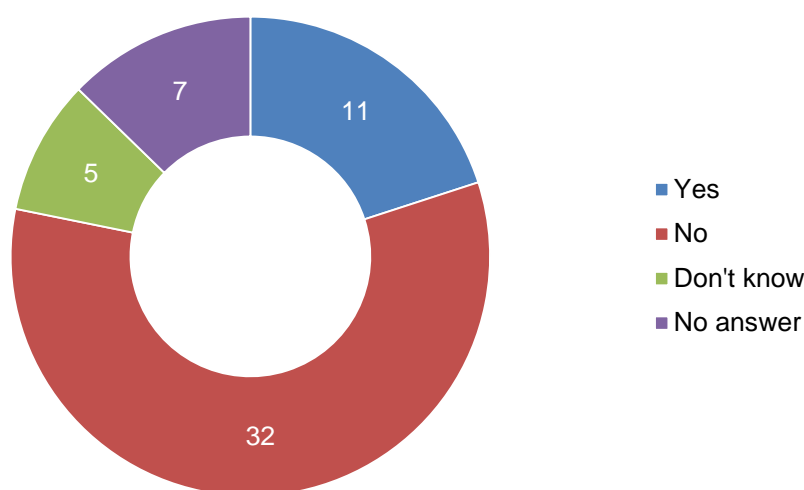
Most stakeholders mentioned that they would like to see more gender sensitive and gender specific humanitarian programming. Several NGOs and one IO said they would like to see ECHO put more funding towards education in emergencies. This was generally linked to a broader proposal for ECHO to enhance its work on thematic programming.

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### 2.2.3. DIRECT AND INDIRECT AID DELIVERY

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a) *Should the Commission conduct more direct operations? If yes, in which areas?*



Five MS answered 'no', three 'don't know' and only one 'yes'. Of the eleven 'yes' responses six were from individuals, two from NGO groups, one from Academic/Think tank, and one from an IO.

Almost all of the partners answered no and gave a number of reasons including: ECHO is not set up for direct delivery and ECHO's partners are much more effective, there is a need to keep EU foreign policy separate from humanitarian aid to protect implementers and to avoid duplication. Some caveated this response by saying that ECHO should provide direct delivery in certain circumstances e.g. when it would support implementing partners (e.g. ECHO Flight), where no other actor is willing or able to respond, and if the cost efficiency would dictate so. This view was also shared by some representatives of the academia. One NGO said 'yes' as it would decrease theft of items and problems with in-kind assistance storage. MS generally felt the current system worked well but one thought it should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, however, limited direct engagement could be considered, e.g. in complex operations where humanitarian, civil protection, security and development experts are involved. An IO suggested that ECHO could provide direct operations via use of civil protection mechanism for preparedness training at risk countries.

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### 2.2.4. COHERENCE WITH CIVIL PROTECTION ASSISTANCE

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a) *In which additional areas synergies between humanitarian aid and the European civil protection assistance would be most beneficial? Why?*

Several MS felt that we could create better synergies e.g. joint needs assessments through the ISAA and joint analysis to increase preparedness in disaster prone countries, as well as the use of ECHO field offices by civil protection actors; all of these activities should be preceded by staff training on how to best increase this cooperation with respect for the different mandates. One implementing partner was also supportive of close coordination, especially in transition phases after the immediate response period. The majority of partners did not want to see direct cooperation between humanitarian and civil protection actors, often citing Paragraph 60 of the Consensus and the MCDA/Oslo Guidelines as the guide to which we should adhere. However they did agree that general

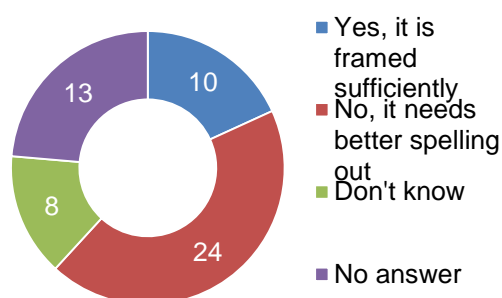
information sharing and lesson learning should take place, while recognising and differentiating the technical capacities of the two areas. One implementing partner went further and stated that EU civil protection interventions outside the EU must comply with the Consensus and add value to any humanitarian actions. An academic group were broadly supportive of joint working and pointed to positive results in Pakistan and Haiti.

*b) Are there other issues that need to be covered under this section?*

One MS and most NGOs reiterated the need to keep principles of humanitarian aid and civil protection separate especially in complex conflict situations. There was space for synergies on a technical level in the aftermath of natural disasters. One implementing partner welcomed the EU's effort to bolster Civil Protection legislation and improve effectiveness; however they wanted EU to ensure they were not duplicating systems already put in place by the UN.

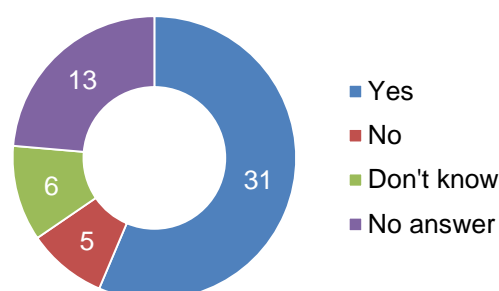
## 2.2.5. THE USE OF MILITARY ASSETS AND COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY (CSDP) CRISIS MANAGEMENT TOOLS

*a) Do you think that the interaction between humanitarian and military actors is sufficiently well-framed and articulated or does it need to be better spelled out?*



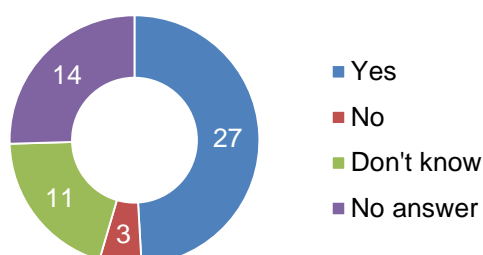
Five MS thought that it was sufficiently framed and two thought it needed better spelling out. The other five who answered 'yes' were three NGO's and two Individuals. Those who answered 'don't know' or didn't answer were mostly NGOs, as well as some MS, lobby groups and individuals.

*b) Should the Commission further step up its dialogue with crisis management structures and military actors with a view to further clarifying the scope for coordination and eventual cooperation?*



Six MS answered 'yes' and three 'don't know'. Those who answered 'don't know' or didn't answer were mostly NGOs, as well as some MS, lobby groups and individuals. The 'no' answers came from three NGOs and two Individuals.

*c) Should the EU step up its efforts to support the promotion of the Oslo/MCDA Guidelines globally?*



Six MS answered 'yes' and three 'don't know'. Those who answered 'don't know' or didn't answer was almost as many as 'yes' and were mostly comprised of NGOs, as well as some MS, lobby groups, academia and individuals. The 'no' answers came from one NGO, one IO and one Individual.

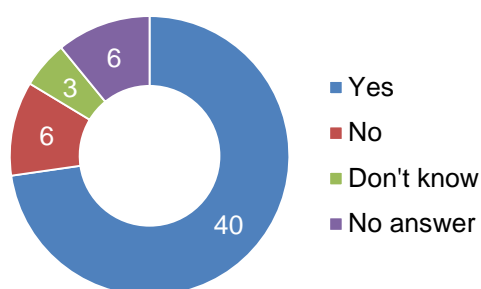
NGOs were generally of the opinion that further dialogue is needed on the use of military assets and CSDP crisis management tools. They accepted the need for dialogue with military actors and private security companies, but were seeking greater clarification and perhaps revalidation of the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Most of respondents agreed that civil-military engagement and coordination should be based on international standards, namely the MCDA and Oslo Guidelines. One suggestion was for ECHO to establish a security focal point for partners to liaise with. A representative of academia wanted to see much more proactive promotion of the guidelines with military, NGO, MS and other humanitarian actors.

## 2.3. COORDINATION WITH MEMBER STATES

### 2.3.1. COORDINATION DURING CRISES

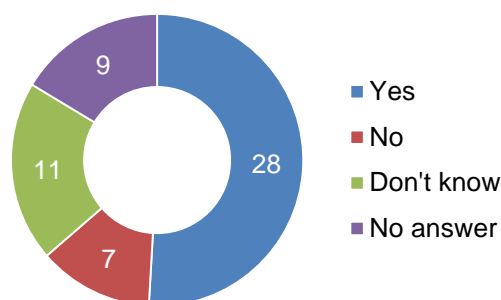
#### 2.3.2. STEPPING UP COOPERATION IN THE AREA OF SECTORAL POLICIES AT EU AND THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

a) *Should the EU step up its efforts in the coordination of response to crises?*



The six 'no' answers comprised two MS, two NGOs and two Individuals. Those who answered 'don't know' or didn't answer were mainly NGOs with one Lobby Group.

b) *Should the EU step up its efforts in fostering cooperation among Member States in the field of sectoral policies?*



Seven MS answered 'yes', one 'no' and one 'don't know'. Of the seven that answered 'no' there were two NGOs, one MS, two IOs and two Individuals

c) *How can the expertise and know-how of the Member States be better brought into play to ensure the best outcome of EU's action in these fields?*

Most MS noted that the EU should step up coordination efforts. Some areas where improvement could be achieved building on MS' experience include: advocacy towards government officials on humanitarian access and principled assistance, strengthening gender perspective, sharing of reports, civil protection. Several MS felt that better sharing of lesson learning would help, as would greater coordination at country level and inward and outward secondments. A few also mentioned that they would like to have more thematic discussions in COHAFA. At the same time, some MS felt that coordination within COHAFA is already sufficient.

There was broad agreement that COHAFA could be better utilized. Some partners suggested taking on one specific theme/policy burden-shared among MS and working on it by trialling the processes of consultation with MS and partners for a year. Several partners would like the EU to hold info on the expertise and capabilities held by each MS in order to enhance coordination, and an evaluation and assessment of MS strengths. A number of NGO partners suggested that ECHO should look to introduce a peer review

process akin to the DAC to compel MS to comply with the Consensus. A lobby group wanted to see MS all signing up to and utilising the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), EU should encourage them to use it properly.

Two of the IOs suggested that ECHO should establish harmonized outreach strategies towards the regional organizations (e.g. OIC, ASEAN, and GCC), emerging partners (BRIC, Gulf and Turkey), private sector and civil society to support international coordination.

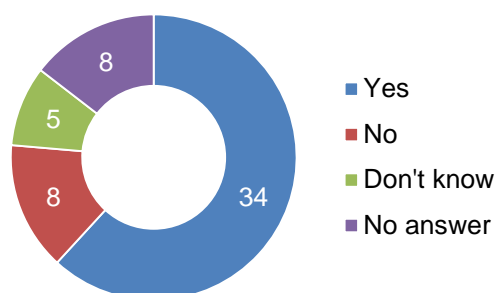
Some partners were interested in EU taking a stronger role in influencing and coordinating with the UN. One thought it would be beneficial for ECHO to use its weight to push the 'multi-mandated' UN to be better organized and consolidated into fewer missions at country level, and perhaps take on some of its coordination role where clusters were not working.

An academia representative offered a number of concrete steps that the EU could take: establish a mechanism to identify 'champions' of key sectoral policy areas; develop a real-time information sharing system; develop a systematic lesson learning mechanism; improve recruitment and selection procedures for key coordination roles; focus the role of cluster coordinator; promote more fair burden-share arrangement with MS; raise awareness of European Consensus, Action Plan and humanitarian principles including supporting MS to incorporate them into national strategies.

## 2.4. WORK WITH PARTNERS

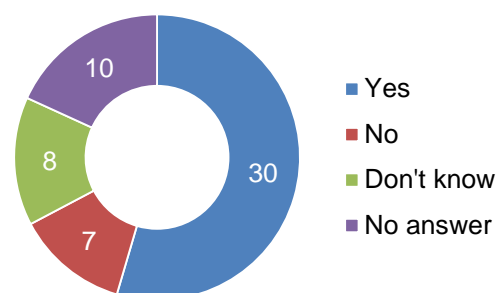
### 2.4.1. SCOPE AND REACH OF PARTNERSHIPS

*a) Should the Commission engage more with humanitarian NGOs in third countries?*



Two MS answered 'no' and the rest 'yes'. All of the others that answered no were NGOs or NGO Groups.

*b) Should the Commission interact more with specialised agencies of non-EU countries?*



All MS answered 'yes' apart from one who didn't know. All of the 'no' answers were on behalf of NGOs and NGO Groups.

Most MS agreed that the Commission should engage in more direct work with partners. One of them made a suggestion to conduct mapping and evaluation on possible non-EU partners.

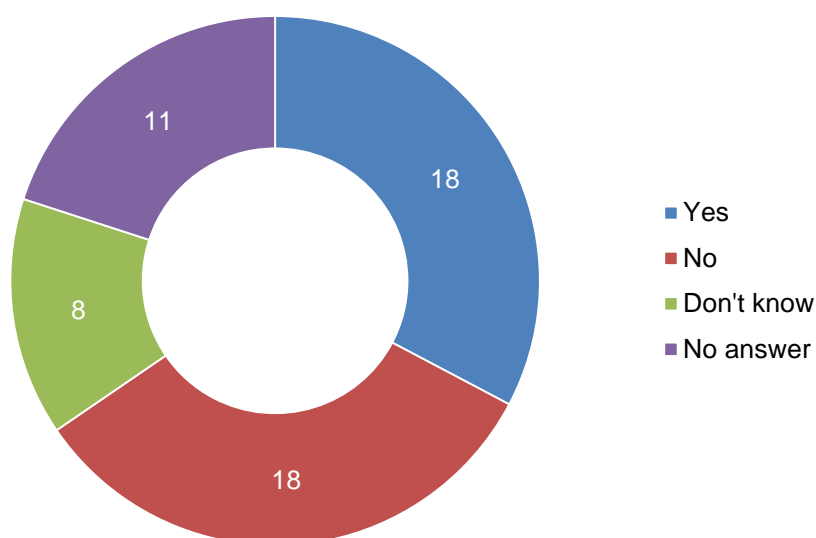
The majority of stakeholders referenced this as a concrete action that ECHO should look to expand on, including consultations on policy initiatives, investing in capacity building of partners, producing local guidance notes and taking part in country level exchange workshops.

Most partners were against EU direct work with third country NGOs and non-EU specialised agencies. One IO noted that the support of local partners was very welcome

but that EU should recognise the difficulties that they may have with the administrative burden and either look to build capacity or ask European partners to act as intermediaries. Another IO noted that they, and other global organisations, already work with many non-EU agencies and humanitarian actors and that direct links might not always be the most efficient way for the EU to establish relationships with said actors and could create duplication. It was suggested that the EU consider providing a select group of partners with special agreements for rapid response.

#### 2.4.2. EU CONTRIBUTIONS TO POOLED THIRD-PARTY FUNDS

*a) Should the Commission contribute to pooled third-party funds?*



Of the eighteen that answered 'yes' five were NGOs, five were MS, three were IOs, four were individuals and one academic/think tank. Of the eighteen that answered 'no' twelve were NGOs, two were MS, one IO and three individuals. Of the remaining nineteen that didn't know or didn't answer ten were NGO's, two MS, one IO, one academic/think tank, one Lobby Group and four individuals.

*b) How could the Commission ensure that contributions to the third-party funds are used fully in line with humanitarian principles and based on needs?*

There were several different approaches proposed by MS – one suggested working through ODSG and the Pooled Funds Working Group and by becoming a member of Advisory Board in the field. Two MS thought that CERF and OCHA's activities are fully in line with principles and based on need so were a suitable channel. Another MS suggested that the EU should rather explore and use shared ECHO-MS funding in some humanitarian operations. Several MS advised that the EU should consider funding only through mechanisms that allocate resources on the basis of need.

The majority of partners advised that the current system of supporting specific projects was more desirable than contributing to the third-party funds. The role of ECHO as a quick and politically independent funding source for humanitarian NGOs is considered very important by some partners – contributing to third party funds would diminish and lessen this role. Some others were pragmatic about the prospect and said that if they were to be used they wanted to see open, transparent, coherent and principled third party funds and that ECHO should look to develop a monitoring system with the right level of expertise, along with gaining membership of management committees for said funds.



They also expressed that the use of third party funds should only be considered where they add value due to flexibility, efficiency, impact etc. Some felt that ECHO's inclusion in the management structure of third party funds would allow for useful influencing opportunities on good practice.

An IO suggested that ECHO should explore ways to enhance the complementarity between ECHO and CERF allocations, particularly in underfunded emergencies and to strengthen cooperation with OCHA pooled funds advisory boards.

## 2.5. INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM, NEW DONORS, PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND VISIBILITY

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### 2.5.1. INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE SYSTEM

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*a) What additional measures should be taken to further operationalize the objectives of the Transformative Agenda?*

Stakeholders had many suggestions on the Transformative Agenda (TA) – separated into the following categories:

#### **Coordination**

ECHO should continue to critically review UN performance in the sector of coordination and include of national partners. ECHO should encourage and support coordinated donor messaging to agencies boards at HQ level in support of the TA.

In order to foster DRR and LRRD, there should be a link between clusters and local coordination systems to enhance sustainability and ownership. At present the link between disaster preparedness and disaster response is not clear.

ECHO should also support the inclusion of all relevant operational actors, including NGOs, in appropriate coordination structures, encouraging their active participation in the planning and implementation of the response, as well as a demonstrable commitment to coordinated action. ECHO should reinforce evidence-based strategic planning and prioritization through ensuring that its funding is in line with the priorities collectively identified. ECHO should also work from indicators mutually agreed with the humanitarian community to monitor the response, how this is achieved and the impact of humanitarian action. Ideally this would be through the development of real-time mapping and monitoring of DG ECHO and MS activities.

#### **Humanitarian Coordinator/Cluster system**

The role of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) should be strengthened and have their independence in UN integrated missions enhanced, along with the separation of funding decision structures from cluster lead agencies to lessen the effect of conflict of interests. HCs and cluster leads should be held more accountable for results. Cluster system should be adjusted to the needs and capacities of international and local NGOs to promote their participation and benefit from their added value. Some partners wanted to see the continued support to the training of cluster coordinators.

#### **Influencing other actors**

The EU should use its influence to ensure that procedures for appointing the ERC and the HCs are transparent and their selection based upon the competencies of the candidate, which should necessarily include humanitarian expertise. ECHO should also ensure its own staff has sufficient knowledge of the TA to support its operationalization at field level and to promote the TA with implementing partners and civil society actors.

One MS said that donors could assist by pushing development partners (incl. UNDP) and providing more support to states who want to build resilience capacity. Another one, however, thought that it was up to OCHA to do this.

One NGO group thought that ECHO should continue to seek engagement and consistency among the MS to influence host governments to adhere to international law and to allow unfettered humanitarian access.

### **Accountability**

Two implementing partners felt that there had been little progress on accountability. ECHO should continue to support the accountability pillar, including through demanding external certification of UN agencies, and demanding that UN humanitarian agencies are held up to the same scrutiny as NGOs and IOs. ECHO should focus on developing joint standards and benchmarks and a clear feedback mechanism “target group - Humanitarian Coordination” is needed. Respect for diversity (age, gender and any other form) is the basis for impartial humanitarian action and therefore essential for accountability.

### **Resourcing**

The Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism must be resourced adequately, including sufficient funding and by making suitably experienced personnel available for deployment. Posting of ECHO staff into UN system (e.g. in Cluster coordination) should be considered, similar support could be offered to ICRC. Longer term, flexible and more predictable funding could be allocated by the EU to support the implementation of the TA by operational organisations, particularly through support to the cluster approach and the HCT system.

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

ECHO should undertake a realistic assessment of the humanitarian reform process to see which impact it has had and what it has improved. Follow-up should be undertaken on the proposal to conduct an in-depth critical evaluation on the TA first results.

### **Planning and systems**

The TA is neither clear on the role of local actors or the link between disaster preparedness activities and disaster response. Hence further operationalization of the TA should include the definition of the role of local actors in emergency response and inclusion of preparedness systems into response planning.

The systems, mechanisms and procedures established by the Transformative Agenda for "Level 3" emergencies must be adapted and applied to smaller-scale events, which form the bulk of the crises that humanitarians respond to and which cumulatively are more destructive.

*b) How can the Union and its Member States best work together to ensure a genuinely more responsive and cost-effective international response system?*

Stakeholders had many suggestions – separated into the following categories:

### **Funding**

There were some divergent views on pooled funds and their impact, some felt that due to the problems related to the functioning of pooled funds and the importance of being able to respond effectively and quickly to emergencies, it is essential that EU MS maintain bilateral funding to NGOs. Others felt that a contribution by the Union and its MS to a pooled fund would strengthen the capacity of the civil society sector and support a trend where capacity is further strengthened at the regional and national levels by actors who are best placed to respond and prepare for disasters.

Currently, timing of contributions reflects donor governments' budget cycles more than operational realities. The EU could contribute more to regular resources of implementing partners, operating on a programme rather than project basis. This would reduce transaction costs and enable greater flexibility and adaptability in international response.



## **Coordination and streamlining systems**

Common needs assessments and programme cycle management was a recurring theme for MS. Many partners felt likewise and would like support for good mapping systems and standards, and for certification, as well as increased investment in joint assessment and open data sources. Consistent support for common standards and policies – and sufficient funding to allow agencies to deliver interventions based on these – was seen as particularly crucial by several NGO groups. Many partners wanted to see ECHO simplify and thus reduce the administrative burden, both on the donor side and on the partners' side

Donors need to take their responsibilities seriously by supporting the established coordination mechanisms and to create further incentives for their partners to participate as well. Besides the general support for the TA and coordination mechanisms, the ECHO Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) and operational guidelines development process should be more inclusive with real active participation of the humanitarian stakeholders and should be better aligned to the CAP/CHAP development process.

On the operational side ECHO would need to improve the consistency of the technical appraisal at the field level and to better align the ECHO HIP and operational guidelines with the CHAP/CAP process.

One additional idea was in relation to the International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles (IDRL) guidelines, by helping addressing legal preparedness, the EU would contribute to the establishment of a more effective system, in which international assistance is better regulated and thus facilitated. This would potentially result in a great efficiency gain for the whole response system.

## **Assessments, accountability and decision-making**

The EU should support efforts towards more evidence-based humanitarian action. There needs to be a demonstrable link between funding allocations and needs assessments and analysis. The EU should also continue to support improvements in needs assessments and ensure focus on information which is critical for design/implementation.

One NGO stated that the EU should hold aid actors that it funds (particularly UN system) accountable in terms of quality (of assessments, of partners, of direct operations, of management and M&E cultures) to avoid perpetuating the functioning of a broken system as shown in some recent emergencies, for example Somalia, South Sudan, Syria.

One partner noted that a responsive and cost-effective system is relative to context. By oversimplifying the difficulties faced by humanitarian actors in certain contexts, the system sets itself up to under-perform.

## **IHL/Good practice**

The EU should lead by example by applying IHL and relevant guidelines including respecting the funding criteria donors have agreed upon through the GHD, particularly with respect to cross-country and cross-sector imbalances in funding, and to the timing of contributions. One stakeholder thought that the EU should strengthen procedures to follow up when countries do not abide by IHL and international agreements.

## **Local Capacity**

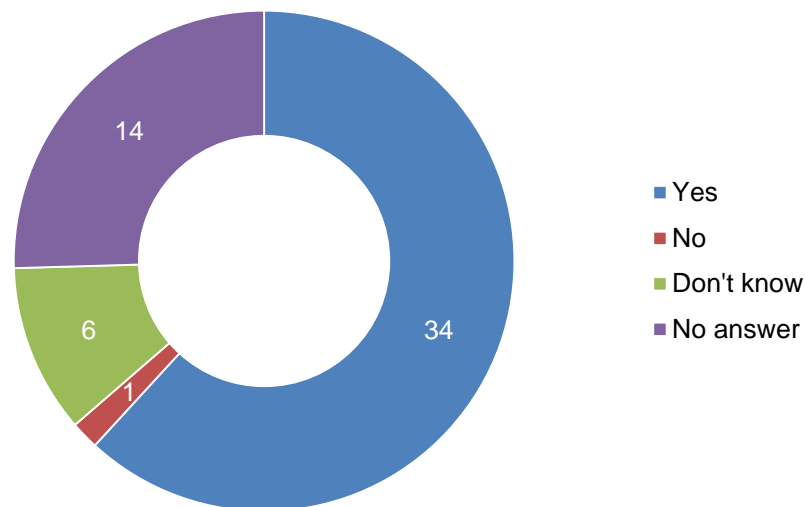
The EU could invest more systematically in building national capacities for disaster risk mitigation and response with the ultimate aim of promoting resilience locally and nationally and decreasing the need to fall back on international response systems. This would be a longer term programme that will yield longer term benefits.

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### 2.5.2. OUTREACH TO THE EMERGING DONORS

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a) *Should the Union step up its outreach to emerging donors?*



There was only one 'no' and this came from an implementing partner NGO. Six MS answered 'yes' and two 'don't know'. Only one IO answered 'Don't know', the other IOs answered 'yes'. The other 'don't know' answers came from NGOs, Academic/Think Tanks and Individuals.

b) *What should be the guiding principles of cooperation with new donors?*

All MS felt supporting emerging donors to sign up to the principles of GHD was paramount. The UN role in the dialog with emerging donors is indispensable. The strategic role of OECD should be reflected and respected (as the strategic lead of the global development partnership). Also understanding each other's comparative advantage was a sensible position to be in for coordination.

Many partners agreed that there was obvious utility in seeking consistent engagement with emerging donors, especially in relation to gaining agreement on the importance of international law, the universality of the core humanitarian standards, and in relation to issues such as access, transparency and accountability. In so far as possible, donors should be seeking to support the delivery of interventions in a consistent manner and at an agreed level. One NGO group suggested sharing models of identifying 'quality' humanitarian partners would be a useful activity.

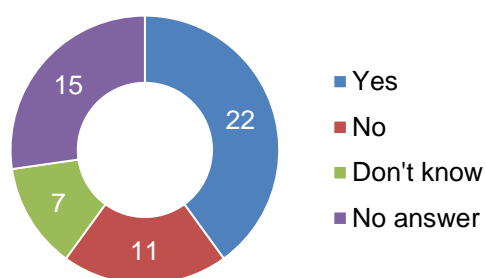
One IO gave a slightly different take on the issue, offering two distinct guiding principles. They stated that such an engagement strategy should be developed in close coordination with the UN, to avoid duplication, to build on each other's efforts and to ensure coherent engagement by the EU with such entities. The Commission should however explore ways to establish harmonized outreach strategies towards regional organizations or alliances (OIC, ASEAN, GCC), UN member states (BRIC, Turkey), and new resource partners. However, they also noted that most of the "emerging" countries do not feel they are donors but rather cooperation agents with specific skills, experiences and human resources and have more to offer than only funding. The guiding principle should be to develop a good understanding of those new partners and start with a process of mutual learning and the pursuit of mutual interests. While there is a clear interest to ensure a coordinated approach based on the respect of existing humanitarian principles and standards, the EU should avoid imposing its model and favour the development of a common agreement responsive to their concerns. Other countries have often had long relationships with third parties, even if they haven't always been conceptualised as

humanitarian donors. The EU should find tailored messages for engaging with new partners, noting the significant differences in their world views, and particularly their views on humanitarian and development work.

One other IO had a different view stating that cooperation with new donors should remain only within the frame of humanitarian principles and GHD.

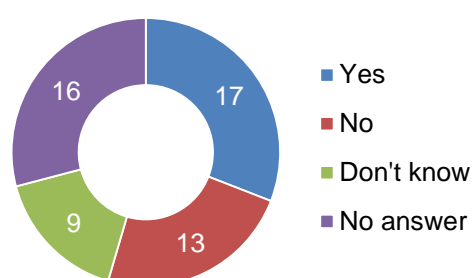
### 2.5.3. PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

a) *Should the Commission step up its work with the private sector?*



Of the eleven that answered 'no' there were three MS, five NGOs and three Individuals. The 'yes' answers came from nine NGOs, two IOs, four MS, an Academic/Think Tank and a small number of Individuals.

b) *Should the Commission take advantage of private businesses' social responsibility schemes for humanitarian purposes in a more systematic way?*

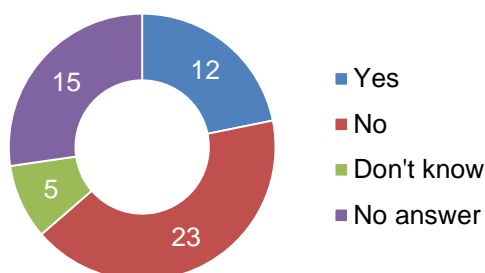


There was roughly an equal split between MS, NGOs and IOs on both side of the 'yes' and 'no' answers.

Most Member States believed that the EU should not step up engagement with the private sector. Several NGOs were of the opinion that ECHO should not prioritise its work with the private sector, except in cases where it was intended to improve humanitarian response and providing that business partners adhered to humanitarian principles and standards. If efficiency gains were possible through the use of new technologies and specialist systems then they should be utilised, but perhaps ECHO should look to do this through contracts with existing partners rather than directly with the private sector. Any engagement with the private sector should be under scrutiny of key humanitarian actors. They also felt the OCHA guidelines on working with the private sector could be better disseminated and used.

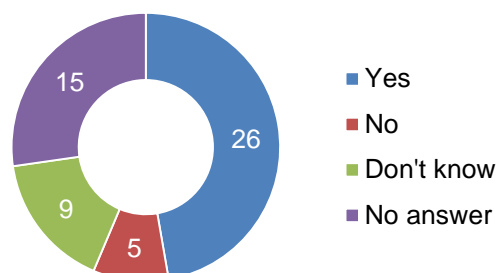
#### 2.5.4. INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

a) *Is media coverage of EU-funded humanitarian aid sufficient? If not, what in your opinion is the main reason?*



Three MS answered 'yes', five 'no' and one didn't answer. All of the IOs answered 'yes' as did a small number of NGOs. The rest of the twenty three 'no' answers almost entirely came from NGOs.

b) *Do you see potential to improve it and if so, in which concrete ways?*



Three of the five 'no' answers came from MS. Mainly IOs and NGOs answered 'yes' and provided suggestions, detailed below.

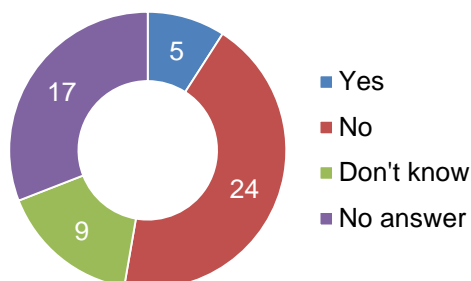
A MS felt that the Commissions' Representations in MS capitals should have bigger responsibility and better engagement of national media channels to inform public (tax payers) about the EU concrete actions in the field of humanitarian aid, its response to disasters and crises, and about the coordination and the needs of aid.

Several NGOs thought that ECHO should hold the primary responsibility of visibility while the partners could support it. This could be done by strengthening the communication department of ECHO. The focus should firstly be on raising awareness on EU humanitarian work within the EU and only then the visibility of the EU as a donor in the field. One IO noted that excessive reliance on visibility materials not only can give rise to potential security issues, but can also distort perceptions of the political neutrality of humanitarian actors – an issue of particular concern.

Some implementing partners also felt that communicating on “positive” impacts is important to maintain the willingness of the EU taxpayer to remain engaged and to continue the humanitarian support. The current visibility strategy emphasizes short term, direct intervention and provision of physical assets, the EU could however benefit from a more issue and advocacy based communication strategy highlighting not only the projects funded but also the success stories and the positive impact of the humanitarian response. Media coverage should also target countries where the EU intervenes, explaining what the key EU principles are; values including the European model of social and economic community, shared growth and safety nets.

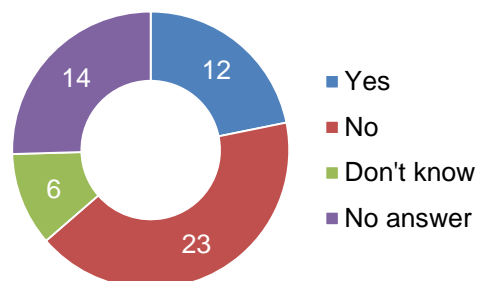
One other key point was the need to successfully harness the ever growing power of social media.

c) *Should the volume of communication activities on EU-funded aid by implementing partners correspond to the financial size of their partnership with the EU?*



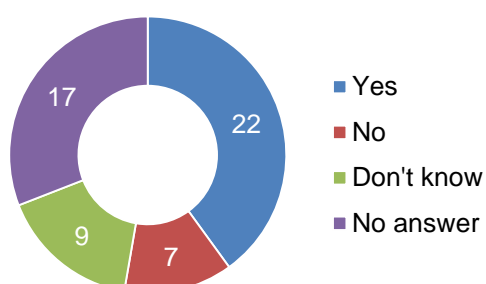
Only five answered 'yes', three NGOs, an IO and a MS.

d) *Should requirements in terms of ensuring EU's visibility as a donor on the part of the implementing partner organisations be revised or increased in order to achieve better visibility of EU-funded aid in the field?*



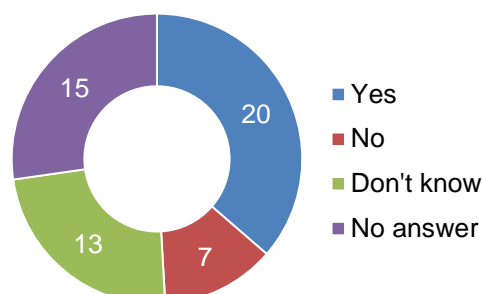
Of the twelve 'yes' answers eight were from NGOs, three MS and one Individual.

e) *Should the EU-funded partner organisations play a role in the efforts for better media outreach?*



Three NGOs, three individuals and one MS answered 'no'. Those that answered 'yes' included six MS, three IOs and a number of NGOs.

f) *Should DG ECHO take a lead in a joint communication strategy with partners in order to increase effectiveness in its communication with the EU citizen?*



One IO, one MS and a few NGOs answered 'no'. Two IOs, two MS and a larger number of NGOs answered 'yes'.

Two MS felt that visibility should not be a priority and should never be at the forefront of decision making and the focus should remain on the provision of humanitarian aid.

One NGO group noted that although ECHO's visibility was good in the field that more could be done at EU level. Another asked whether visibility in any cases was justified and aligned with a principled approach.

An IO said it would be preferable for the larger share of ECHO's visibility efforts (and that of other humanitarian donors) to target its own constituents or institutional partners, rather than asking its partners to do so.

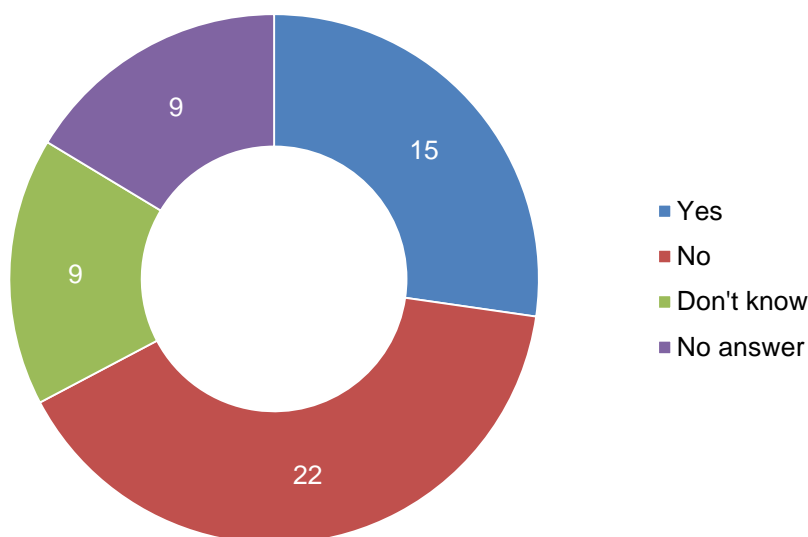
Regarding current ECHO communication and visibility guidelines, another IO encourage DG ECHO to develop joint approaches with its partners (i.e. multi-partner communication campaigns such as the ECHO-RC campaign on Silent Disasters). Encouragement was also expressed for exploring innovative communication approaches (social media, YouTube, etc.).

One lobby group explained that governments recognize the need to demonstrate transparency of funds they are managing and their impact. DG ECHO may wish to begin discussions on publishing data on funds allocation and its execution as well as participation in IATI with its partners who have Framework Partnership Agreements.

## 2.6. HUMANITARIAN DECISION-MAKING

### 2.6.1. DECISION-MAKING FOR THE UNION'S EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN AID

*a) In your experience, does the decision-making process of the EU allow a timely and appropriate response to the various types of humanitarian crises? b) If not, what exactly should be improved, and how?*



Seven MS answered 'yes' and two 'don't know'. The other 'yes' answers came from one IO and a number of NGOs. The 'no' answers came from NGOs, other IOs, two Academic/Think Tanks.

One MS thought that ECHO procedures should be closer aligned with the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), in order to contribute to a coordinated and strategic UN response.

While some partners praised ECHO for its speed and predictability in funding, others wanted to see funds flow quicker – often they had started spending before receiving confirmation of funds. An IO felt that diverging reporting requirements imposed by multiple donors funding the same operations tended to translate into excessive, duplicative reporting demands that negatively impact operational efficiency. The EU should therefore explore ways to harmonize donor reporting requirements and to better define a results-based approach that would allow partners to focus on operations rather than input.

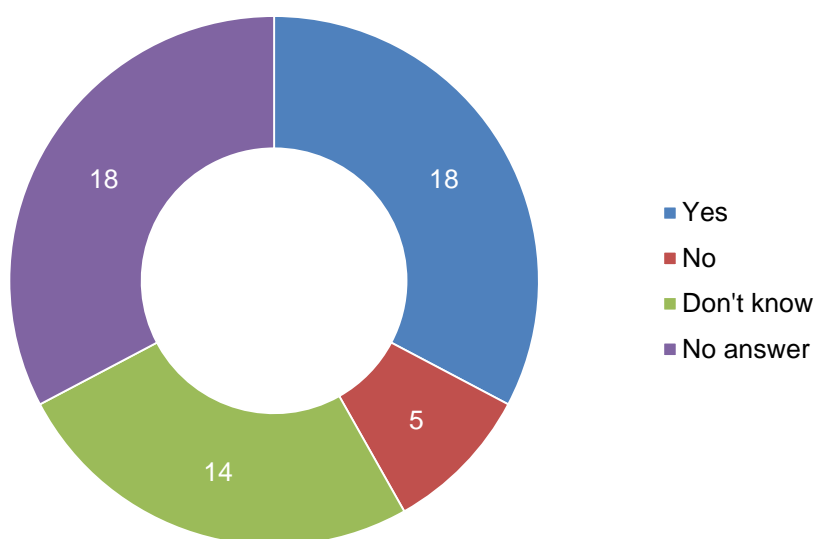
A large number of partners were concerned about EU systems for humanitarian aid. Implementing partners were vocal about the increasing administrative obligations and the added burden this made on their operations. Some suggestions were to make the FPA process less onerous, to reassess whether instruments were fit for purpose (long term crises – short term instruments), and to systematically think about legal preparedness in advance of launching humanitarian operations.

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### 2.6.2. EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING

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*a) In your experience, does the EU's approach to evidence-based humanitarian decision-making through GNA/FCA/FINAT deliver adequate results?*



The only 'no' answers came from three individuals and two NGOs. Five MS answered 'yes' with the remaining four answering 'don't know' or not responding.

*b) How the Union can best contribute to the global evidence-based decision-making?*

One MS was very supportive of the current processes especially the NATF, GHD and HIP. Another one would like to see more sharing of ECHO's needs assessment tools, methods and results.

The establishment of common assessment tools was also high on partners' priorities for this area with many partners asking that the EU support the roll out of the IASC Transformative Agenda, NATF work plan and the continue funding ACAPS. One IO wanted to see the EU move away from making decision on needs towards funding based on an analysis of risk.

Other areas that partners picked out were the need for more conflict sensitivity in needs assessments and more collection of sex and age disaggregated data. One NGO group wanted to see more transparency in ECHO's decision making when selecting NGO partners.

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