European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Emergency Toolbox
EU funding for sudden-onset humanitarian crises

What is it?

One of the instruments that the European Commission has to provide humanitarian assistance to unforeseen, sudden-onset crises is the Emergency Toolbox. The various funding tools within this toolbox are administered by the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) within the European Commission’s Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO).

Why is it relevant?

The Emergency Toolbox is specifically dedicated to providing emergency response for vulnerable people outside the EU on 3 fronts:

- it aims to respond as rapidly as possible to emergencies through short deadlines to decide on allocations, close cooperation between the ERCC and humanitarian experts, and simplified procedures for humanitarian organisations to submit project proposals.

- it is designed to provide first-line funding in the immediate aftermath of a crisis. The maximum duration of an action is limited to either 6 or 12 months. After the swift allocation of the initial funding through the Emergency Toolbox, after an analysis of needs, the EU can supplement this support through other funding instruments.

- it aims to respond to emergencies that come unexpectedly and could not be anticipated. This is why the Emergency Toolbox is separate from – and complementary to – other humanitarian funds that are allocated on an annual basis, through Humanitarian Implementation Plans, to specific geographical areas and managed by humanitarian experts. The Emergency Toolbox reduces the need for country Humanitarian Implementation Plans to respond in an ad-hoc way to unexpected needs and allows them to respond to strategically planned goals.
What are the 4 tools within the Toolbox?

- The **Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT)** is used to respond to large-scale natural hazards and technological disasters where over 100,000 people or over 50% of the population are affected. Depending on the type of disaster, the aim is to allocate funds within 24-48 hours of an emergency’s onset and the emphasis is on the swiftness of the decision-making process.
- The **Small-Scale Tool** is used to assist a limited number of people (below 100,000) affected by a natural hazard or man-made disaster. The maximum allocation per action is €500,000.
- The **Epidemics Tool** is used to respond to and prevent epidemic outbreaks.
- The **Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)** is a fund belonging to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). It provides support to national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The EU contributes to this fund up to a maximum of €200,000 per action.

How are we helping?

In 2020, the EU allocated €73.75 million through the Emergency Toolbox.

- The ALERT instrument was activated in reaction to 16 disasters in 2020: the Taal volcano eruption in the Philippines; the floods that hit Iran and Pakistan; the desert locusts infestation in the Horn of Africa; the floods in East, West and Central Africa; the floods and landslides in South and Southeast Asia; tropical cyclone AMPHAN in Bangladesh and India; typhoon GONI and typhoon VAMCO in the Philippines; hurricanes ETA and IOTA in Central America, tropical cyclone YASA in Fiji; the explosion in Beirut, Lebanon; and to support the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge initiative. Between €750,000 and €4.1 million were allocated to each of these of the emergency responses.

- The Small-Scale Tool was used on 14 occasions in 2020, as follows: the floods in Madagascar, Chad, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic and Laos; tropical cyclone HAROLD in Vanuatu; tropical storm AMANDA in El Salvador and Guatemala; tropical cyclone GATI in Somalia; hurricane IOTA in Colombia; the food and health emergency that arose in northern Argentina; the forced displacement triggered in Uganda; violence that broke out in South Sudan, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and to assist vulnerable communities affected by COVID-19 in Colombia and South Africa.

- The Epidemics Tool was mobilised 3 times in 2020: for yellow fever in Venezuela and for the global response to COVID-19.

- The European Commission channeled funding to the DREF instrument 47 times in 44 countries in 2020. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were, thus, supported in their rapid response to emergencies related mainly to floods, tropical cyclones, conflict and civil unrest.