

EVALUATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION

THEMATIC EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF THE EU'S HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

November 2022

EVIDENCE
MATTERS



Euro
Civil P
them

Civil Protection
& Humanitarian
Aid

on
and
Aid

Prepared by:



Particip GmbH
Merzhauser Str. 183
D-79100 Freiburg

Contact person: Isabell Breunig – isabell.breunig@particip.de

Framework Contract ECHO/A3/SER/2017/05

Contract No ECHO/ADM/BUD/2021/01202

Contract title Evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian interventions in disaster preparedness

Authors

Lezlie Morinière
Marilise Turnbull
Borja Cuervo Alonso
Stefan Lang
Isabell Breunig

Contact information:

European Commission
Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations – DG ECHO
Unit ECHO.E.2 Programming, Control and Reporting
Email: ECHO-EVAL@ec.europa.eu
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations:

[Evaluations](#) | [European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations \(europa.eu\)](#)

LEGAL NOTICE

This document has been prepared for the European Commission as part of the evaluations of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. However, it reflects the views only of the authors, and the European Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this document, and is not liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse of this publication. More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://www.europa.eu>).

The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by the Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). Except otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the European Union, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective rightholders.

© European Union, 2022

Evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian interventions in disaster preparedness

Final Report

The report consists of two volumes:

VOLUME I – MAIN REPORT

1. Introduction
2. Methodological approach
3. Findings
4. Conclusions
5. Recommendations

VOLUME II – ANNEXES

1. Terms of reference
2. List of stakeholders consulted
3. List of documents consulted
4. Systematic literature review
5. Project sample for SPA / case studies
6. Complementary information from quantitative analyses
7. Global eSurvey results
8. Mini telephone survey results

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Abstract | 1 |
| 1 Introduction | 2 |
| 1.1 Objectives and scope | 2 |
| 1.2 Object of the evaluation | 3 |
| 2 Methodological Approach | 5 |
| 2.1 Overall approach | 5 |
| 2.2 Challenges and limitations | 8 |
| 3 Findings | 8 |
| 3.1 EQ1 - Relevance | 8 |
| 3.2 EQ2 - Coherence with DG ECHO policies | 12 |
| 3.3 EQ3 - Coherence between EU entities | 15 |
| 3.4 EQ4 – Added value | 17 |
| 3.5 EQ5 – Effects at community level | 20 |
| 3.6 EQ6 – Effects at government level | 23 |
| 3.7 EQ7 – Cost effectiveness | 27 |
| 3.8 EQ8 - Budget allocations (efficiency) | 31 |
| 3.1 EQ9 - Sustainability | 33 |
| 4 Conclusions | 35 |
| 4.1 Key achievements | 35 |
| 4.2 Main obstacles to greater preparedness achievement | 36 |
| 4.3 Evaluation criteria synthesis | 37 |
| 5 Recommendations | 38 |
| 5.1 Cluster 1: Strategic/central level | 38 |
| 5.2 Cluster 2: Operational, while awaiting the strategic changes | 39 |

List of figures

| | | |
|----------|---|----|
| Figure 1 | Evolution of policy and institutional context for DG ECHO and disaster preparedness | 2 |
| Figure 2 | Targeted preparedness and mainstreaming | 3 |
| Figure 3 | Evaluation Team's conceptualisation of DG ECHO Disaster Preparedness Theory of Change | 4 |
| Figure 4 | Evaluation criteria and questions | 5 |
| Figure 5 | Stakeholders consulted per stakeholder category | 7 |
| Figure 6 | eSurvey results – DG ECHO added value | 18 |
| Figure 7 | Comparison of codes in DG ECHO projects (DPBL to Regular Humanitarian) | 22 |
| Figure 8 | What can be called 'preparedness'? | 41 |

List of tables

| | | |
|---------|--|----|
| Table 1 | Tools and methods used | 5 |
| Table 2 | Overview of national government preparedness actions | 27 |

List of boxes

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| Box 1 | Increased attention to risk in the design of DG ECHO projects | 10 |
| Box 2 | Findings from thematic case studies - Multi-risk | 13 |
| Box 3 | Examples of cross-DG coordination mechanisms on DP | 16 |
| Box 4 | Findings from thematic case studies – Climate change | 20 |
| Box 5 | Findings from thematic case studies – Government | 25 |
| Box 6 | Factors contributing to making DP actions efficient and cost-effective | 28 |
| Box 7 | Findings from thematic case studies – Conflict | 30 |
| Box 8 | Learning in the 2021 DP Guidance | 31 |
| Box 9 | Tagging DP funding in the DG ECHO portfolio | 32 |

| | | |
|--------|--|----|
| Box 10 | DP accounting (or tagging) – a simple estimate | 39 |
| Box 12 | A checklist to define what preparedness is | 41 |

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|--|
| CDEMA | Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| DG CLIMA | Directorate-General for Climate Action (European Commission) |
| DG ECHO | European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (European Commission) |
| DG ENV | Directorate-General for Environment (European Commission) |
| DG INTPA | Directorate-General for International Partnerships (European Commission) |
| DG NEAR | Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (European Commission) |
| DG RTD | Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (European Commission) |
| DIPECHO | Disaster Preparedness ECHO (former DG ECHO programme focusing on preparedness) |
| DP | Disaster preparedness |
| DPBL | Disaster Preparedness Budget Line (DG ECHO) |
| DRM | Disaster Risk Management |
| DRR | Disaster Risk Reduction |
| E/RRM | Emergency/Rapid Response Mechanism |
| EC | European Commission |
| EEAS | European External Action Service |
| eSF | Electronic Single Form |
| EQ | Evaluation Question |
| ESG | Evaluation Steering Group |
| EU | European Union |
| EU MS | EU Member State |
| EUD | European Union Delegation |
| EUR | Euro |
| EWS | Early Warning Systems |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organisation |
| FbF | Forecast-based Financing |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| HIP | Humanitarian Implementation Plan |
| HQ | Headquarter |
| IFRC | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies |
| IOM | International Organisation for Migration |
| IP | Implementing Partner |
| JC | Judgement Criterion |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| LAC | Latin America and the Caribbean |
| MENA | Middle East and North Africa |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PIRAC | Platform for the Americas and the Caribbean |
| PIROI | Indian Ocean Regional Intervention Platform |
| PROSOLI | Programa Progresando con Solidaridad |
| SAIO | Southern Africa and Indian Ocean |
| SLR | Systematic Literature Review |
| SPA | Systematic Portfolio Analysis |
| UCPM | Union Civil Protection Mechanism |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNDRR | United Nations International Office for Disaster Risk Reduction |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| USD | US Dollar |
| WASH | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene |
| WFP | World Food Programme |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |
| WWD | Worldwide decision |

Abstract

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the EU's humanitarian interventions in disaster preparedness. The scope included preparedness-related activities funded globally from 2015 to 2020 and addressed both targeted preparedness activities and mainstreaming of preparedness. The methodology integrated data collection in four countries and a global eSurvey.

The evaluation found that DG ECHO support to preparedness was highly relevant and made tangible contributions, leaving target groups better able to cope with disasters. DG ECHO has targeted communities and increasingly involved national governments, showing that a systems approach – acceptance that community-level preparedness is most effective when supported by national governments – is taking hold. Other key achievements found were the promotion of a stronger corporate culture of risk awareness in DG ECHO humanitarian programming, and a more limited and strategic focus on preparedness in DG ECHO's activities.

Lack of corporate confidence in preparedness, as well as insufficient understanding of the concept and an institutional environment not fully conducive to greater investment in preparedness, remain significant barriers to greater progress.

Recommendations include establishing a clearer DG ECHO position on the importance of disaster preparedness, a stronger commitment to tracking preparedness and accounting, and the development of clearer terminology and guidance documents.

1 Introduction

This evaluation has been commissioned by the Evaluation Sector of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). It aims to evaluate the European Union's (EU) humanitarian interventions in disaster preparedness (DP). The evaluation's purpose and scope, object and methodological considerations – including limitations – are summarised below, prior to detailing the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

1.1 Objectives and scope

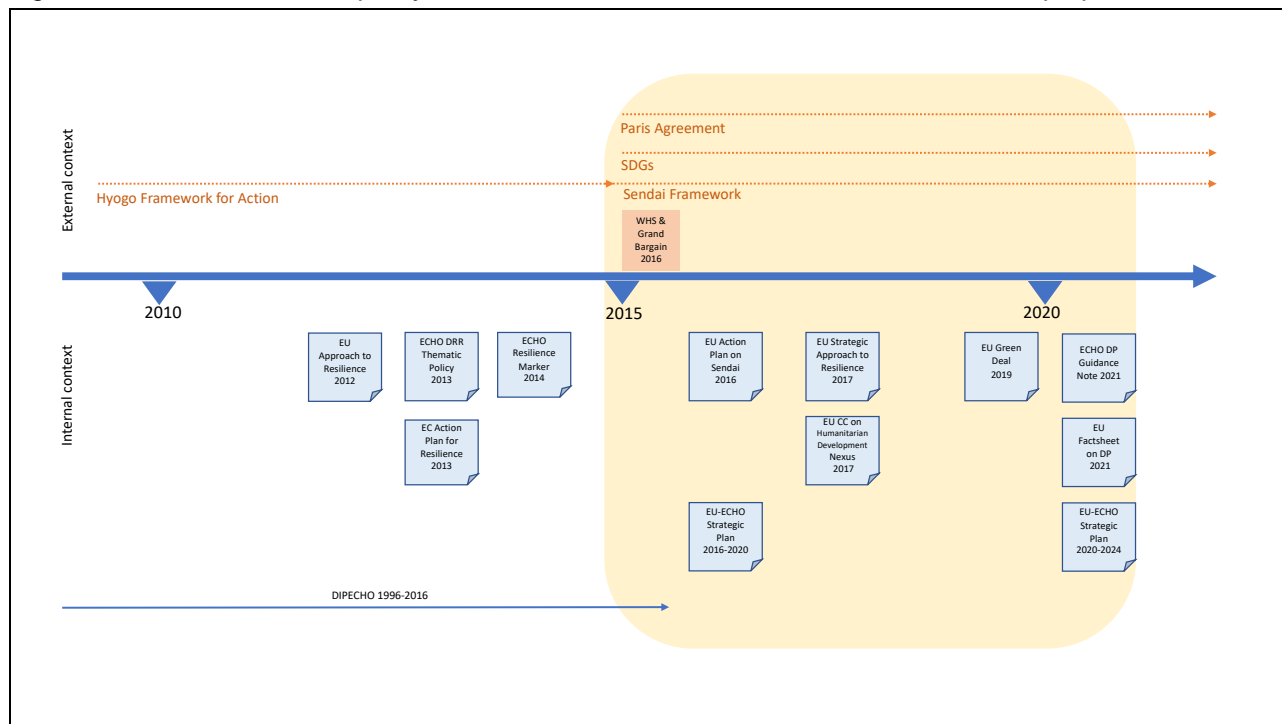
The main objectives of the evaluation are to provide: i) an *independent, retrospective assessment of the performance and results* of the EU's contributions to disaster preparedness within its humanitarian action from 2015-2020; and ii) *strategic recommendations* to support DG ECHO future activities in this field. The evaluation covers relevance, coherence, EU added value, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability/connectedness. Consistent with the European Commission's (EC) Better Regulation Guidelines, the evaluation serves a *dual purpose* of accountability and learning. The main users at European level are the DG ECHO staff at HQ, regional and country level as well as other EU actors such as DG INTPA, DG NEAR and EU Member States (EU MS) and agencies. Other intended users include national and regional stakeholders, implementing partners and other humanitarian and development donors.

Process: The evaluation was conducted following four main phases: inception, desk, field and synthesis. An Evaluation Steering Group (ESG), consisting of EC staff involved in the activity evaluated, has provided general assistance to and feedback on the exercise.

Geographic scope: The evaluation has been undertaken at global level and included country-level data collection covering four countries in four different regions (see section 2).

Temporal scope: The evaluation has focused on the period 2015-2020 but has also taken into account major changes that occurred in DG ECHO support to DP in 2021. The reason for including the year 2021 was the implementation timeline of the evaluation: desk and field phases were conducted in 2022, providing the team a rich opportunity to also consider 2021 efforts, while disregarding 2021 efforts would have required to remove recent progress from discussions and analyses. As such, the evolution of DG ECHO policy, guidance and programming and the changes in the external context over the whole period 2015-2021, as shown in Figure 1, were considered pertinent to the evaluation.

Figure 1 Evolution of policy and institutional context for DG ECHO and disaster preparedness



Source: Evaluation team, based on DG ECHO and other EC policy documents

Thematic & financial scope: For defining the thematic scope of the evaluation, the team has used the 'Guidance Note on Disaster Preparedness' published in 2021¹, as it is the most comprehensive and advanced articulation

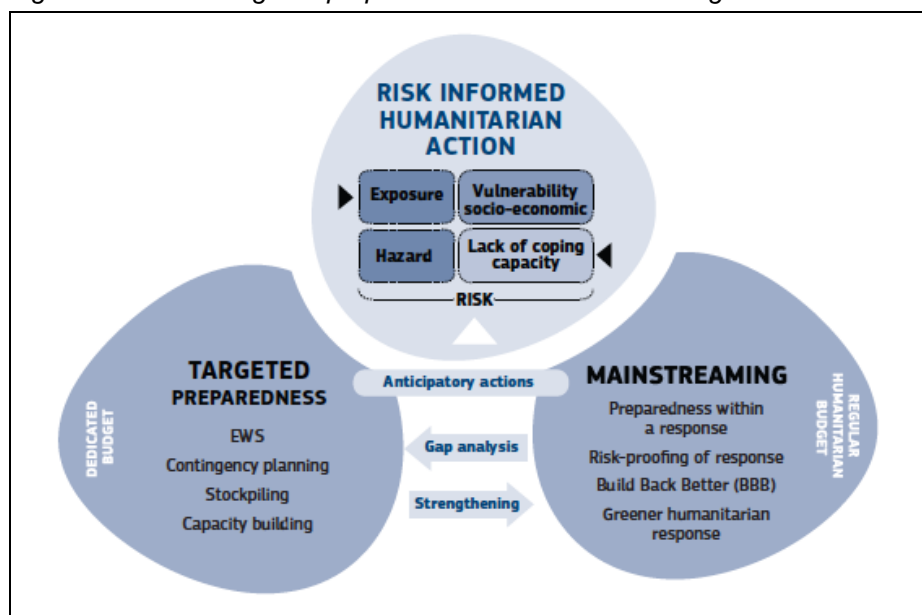
¹ EC (2021). DG ECHO Guidance Note Disaster Preparedness.

of the ‘culture of preparedness’ that exists in DG ECHO and was developed over the two years preceding its publication (i.e. from 2019 to 2021). In line with the 2021 Guidance Note and UNDRR Terminology, the evaluation understands disaster preparedness as: i) an important component of Disaster Risk Management (DRM), ii) a complement to the longer-term risk management strands, namely prevention and recovery, iii) a theme narrower than and within the scope of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR); iv) contributing to but not synonymous with resilience, and v) one that applies to the four DG ECHO-recognised types of events: natural hazards, conflict, health outbreaks and technological accidents. This covers in particular targeted preparedness activities and mainstreaming of preparedness, explained in more detail in section 1.2. Outside the scope of this evaluation are any other EU preparedness activities through e.g. the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)².

1.2 Object of the evaluation

As articulated in the thematic scope above, according to DG ECHO, preparedness relates to all types of future events. DG ECHO also claims that a “*nexus approach with development actors is the primary implementation modality for preparedness.*” DG ECHO contributes to preparedness through two approaches (see also Figure 2):

Figure 2 Targeted preparedness and mainstreaming



Source: DG ECHO Guidance Note Disaster Preparedness (2021).

- **Targeted preparedness activities**, which include Early Warning Systems (EWS), contingency planning, stockpiling (also known as pre-positioning), evacuation systems³ and capacity strengthening⁴ (see Figure 1). DG ECHO mainly funds these and other specific preparedness activities under the Disaster Preparedness Budget Line (DPBL). In 2015, the DPBL evolved from the former Disaster Preparedness Programme known as DIPECHO (launched in the LAC region in 1996) to focus “*more strictly on disaster preparedness and early action [and] to avoid overlaps with long-term development instruments used for disaster risk reduction*”.⁵ While in 2015, DPBL was only used in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and Asia regions, in 2016, it was introduced in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (SAIO) region and in 2017, in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. In 2018, the DPBL was introduced in the West and Central Africa region, and it has remained active in all regions since then. Between 2015 and 2020 (inclusive), the Disaster Preparedness Budget Line totalled EUR 290.9 million.
- **Mainstreamed preparedness activities**: DG ECHO also expects preparedness to be systematically mainstreamed across the portfolio in ‘regular humanitarian budget’ which covers DG ECHO-funded humanitarian response projects. While there is no exact definition of mainstreamed preparedness, the DG ECHO DP guidance suggests that it starts with risk proofing of project design. DG ECHO expects risk-proofing to make humanitarian assistance more effective and to ensure that operations do not create new

² https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/eu-civil-protection-mechanism_en

³ Evacuation systems (routes, shelters, etc.) for rapid-onset events are not featured in Figure 1 but are key preparedness activities mentioned 20 times in the DP Guidance.

⁴ Capacity strengthening is used in preference to capacity building as it assumes some level is already present. It includes awareness raising and training of any type on knowledge and skills.

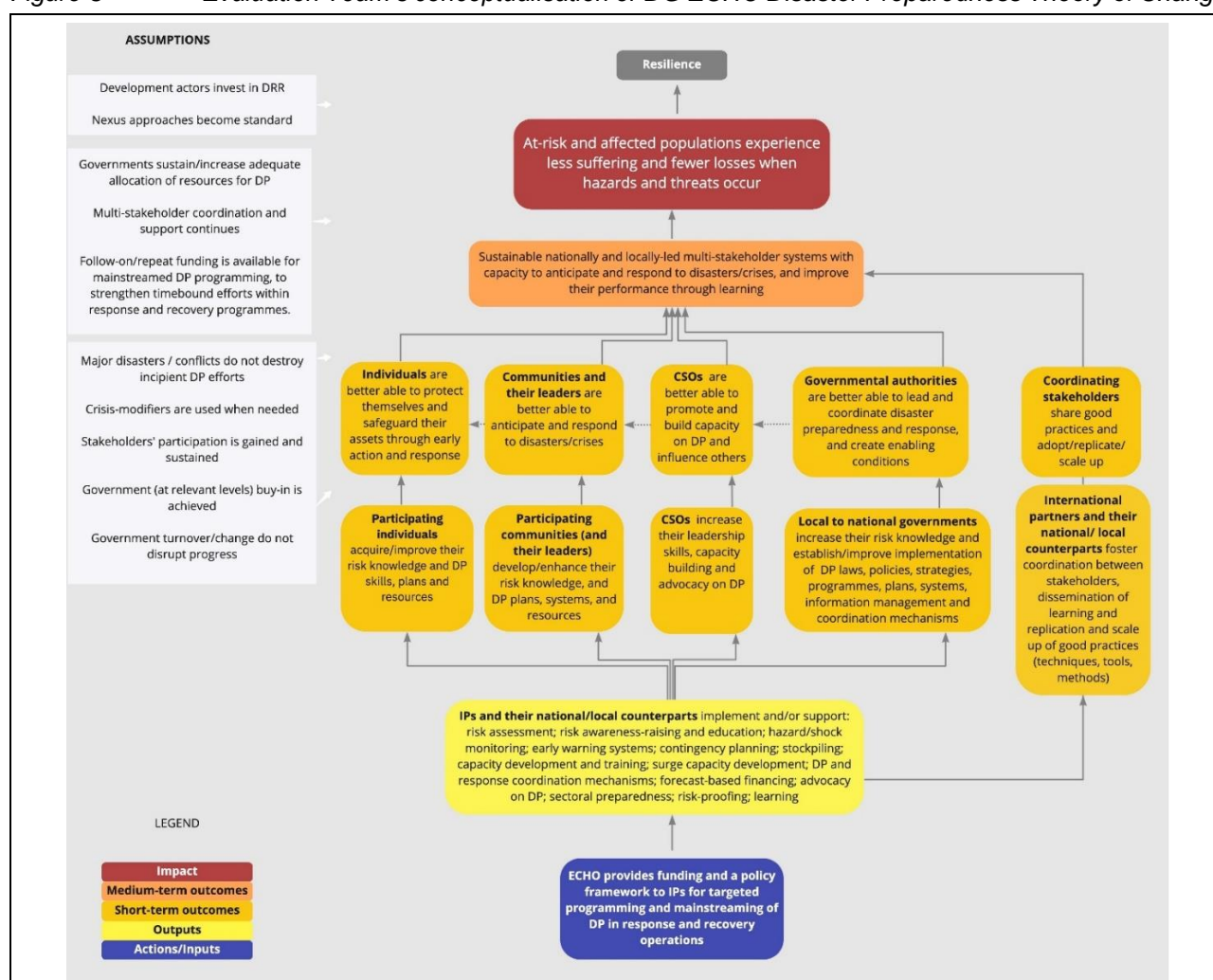
⁵ EC (2021). DG ECHO Guidance Note Disaster Preparedness.

or exacerbate existing risk (i.e., do-no-harm). Risk-proofing in DG ECHO includes two tools: i) the *Resilience Marker* which supports the systematic analysis of risk at the design stage; and ii) the *Crisis Modifier* which assures flexibility by setting aside earmarked funds in projects that can be activated to address unanticipated lifesaving needs (i.e., crisis within or during a crisis). Greening humanitarian response also constitutes risk-proofing because it aims to minimise the carbon footprint of the funded actions⁶. Also, according to the DP Guidance, preparedness includes relevant actions within response operations for every sector (education, food security, health, nutrition, protection, WASH and shelter & settlements). However, to date, there is no established or widely accepted (and documented) way for DG ECHO to precisely account for or measure these types of mainstreaming. While mainstreaming measurement is beyond the scope of this evaluation, according to the evaluation's terms of reference an additional EU 906 million was estimated to represent the mainstreaming portion of DG ECHO's investment in preparedness for the period 2015-2020.

Building on the above observations, the term 'targeted actions' in this evaluation refers to actions which are funded from the DPBL. Given the issues with its definition, use of 'mainstreaming of preparedness in response' is kept to a strict minimum. When used, it refers to actions that are funded outside the DPBL (i.e. budget lines related to 'regular' humanitarian aid), but which reportedly contain explicit elements expected to contribute to building preparedness for future disasters.

For the purpose of this evaluation, during inception phase the evaluation team has developed a Theory of Change summarising its understanding of the logic underpinning DG ECHO support to DP during the period under review (see Figure 3). It consolidates the most relevant elements of EU's humanitarian interventions in disaster preparedness in a single framework that links rationale to strategy, projects and short-, medium- and long-term results.

Figure 3 Evaluation Team's conceptualisation of DG ECHO Disaster Preparedness Theory of Change



Source: Evaluation team, based on SPA and SLR

⁶ Risk proofing is an important and laudable DG ECHO action for all development and humanitarian projects. However, it does not align well to the official (UNDRR) definition of preparedness.

2 Methodological Approach

2.1 Overall approach

This evaluation was designed to answer *nine evaluation questions (EQ)* aligned to six evaluation criteria (see Figure 4). EQ 1 seeks to establish how relevant DG ECHO's approach to preparedness has been to beneficiary countries and groups. EQs 2 and 3 examine the DP coherence both inside DG ECHO and between DG ECHO and other EU entities. EQ 4 explores EU added value of DG ECHO preparedness actions compared to individual EU MS and other donors. EQs 5 and 6 assess how effective the DP approach has been first in communities and second among government structures. EQs 7 and 8 establish cost-effectiveness and adequacy of DP funding level. Lastly, EQ 9 examines the sustainability of the results.

Figure 4 Evaluation criteria and questions

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| RELEVANCE (EQ1) EQ1: To what extent has DG ECHO support to DP considered partner countries' <u>national priorities</u> and needs of most <u>at risk groups</u> ? | COHERENCE (EQ2,3) EQ2: to what extent have DP efforts aligned with DG ECHO <u>evolving DP policy and approach</u> ? EQ3: to what extent are DP efforts internally <u>consistent</u> (ECHO) and <u>compatible</u> with other EU actions (DGs INTPA/NEAR/CLIMA)? | ADDED VALUE (EQ4) EQ4: What is <u>added value</u> of ECHO DP actions compared to parallel actions of others, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU MS acting on their own • other donors and banks or • IPs with own DP agenda? |
| EFFECTIVENESS (EQ5,6) EQ5: To what extent has DG ECHO developed or reinforced DP capacity and practice at <u>community</u> level? EQ6: To what extent have DG ECHO efforts in DP influenced <u>multi-level government</u> institutions, legislation, policies and practice? | EFFICIENCY (EQ7,8) EQ7: to what extent has ECHO achieved <u>cost-effectiveness</u> in its support to DP? EQ8: Was the <u>size of DP investment</u> proportionate to expected achievement? | SUSTAINABILITY (EQ9) EQ9: to what extent has DG ECHO achieved <u>sustainable results</u> through its DP efforts? |

Source: Evaluation team

To answer these questions, the evaluation used a *mixed-methods approach*, combining quantitative and qualitative data and leading to a summative and formative assessment with actionable recommendations for DG ECHO. In particular, a set of 48 projects from 45 countries and a few regions has been selected out of the portfolio of all DG ECHO-funded projects (3,567) and assessed in-depth. (Remote) country-level data collection has been conducted on DP activities in Dominican Republic, Palestine, Philippines and Uganda.

Table 1 provides details on the tools and methods used. Findings from all data points were registered into a triangulation matrix and the strength of evidence was monitored, along with gaps. The evaluation team met to further triangulate and debate findings. Evidence compiled is medium-to-strong for all evaluation questions.

Table 1 Tools and methods used

| Tool / Method | Phase | Approach |
|--|---------------------------|--|
| Documentary review, including Systematic Literature Review (SLR) | Inception and desk phases | The SLR has consisted of reviewing a large number of documents by systematically coding the information through MAXQDA ⁷ . The team applied a coding tree comprising 56 terms, structured along 7 categories: impact, outcomes, outputs, actions, inputs, assumptions, other & case studies. The SLR comprised three sets of documents: i) <i>1,703 academic documents</i> recruited using SCOPUS ⁸ , using the terms 'preparedness' and 'disaster' / 'hazard' / 'threat' in the title, abstract or key words; ii) <i>146 DG ECHO funding decisions</i> (from 2015 to 2021); iii) <i>21 global EC policy documents</i> on DP-related topics (e.g., DRR, nexus, resilience). The team also examined a total of 64 recent evaluations by DG ECHO and other DP actors, including 20 strategic evaluations commissioned by DG ECHO between 2015 and 2021. This resulted in a robust understanding of what these sets of documents portrayed by way of preparedness actions and principles. |

⁷ MAXQDA is a software programme designed for computer-assisted qualitative and mixed methods data, text and multimedia analysis in academic, scientific, and business institutions.

⁸ Scopus is Elsevier's abstract and citation database launched in 2004. Scopus indexes content from more than 25,000 active titles and 7,000 publishers.

| Tool / Method | Phase | Approach |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| Systematic portfolio analysis (SPA) and project scoring | Desk phase | <p>The evaluation team downloaded <i>all project-specific Single Forms⁹ from HOPE¹⁰</i> from January 2015 through December 2021, i.e., for the full set of 3,567 agreements/projects. These were systematically coded through MAXQDA (see SLR above).</p> <p>From the full downloaded archive of DG ECHO projects, the team sampled a balanced selection comprising <i>48 projects</i> (see Annex 5) covering four main themes: i) multi-risk approach, ii) government preparedness, iii) conflict preparedness and iv) climate preparedness. Each theme was covered by a minimum of 10 projects. The team summarised the findings related to each theme in the form of a short thematic case study (four thematic case studies in total).</p> <p>The <i>sampling</i> took account of the following criteria: potential for learning, investment size, modality, evolution, stakeholders (targeted groups and implementing partner), geographical focus and project's hazard category. It was agreed with the ESG that the selection should contain two thirds DP Budget Line (DPBL) and one third non-DPBL actions.</p> <p>After the sample was confirmed by the ESG during desk phase, the team used a rubric/scoring system based on the EQs for an <i>in-depth analysis of each project</i>. In particular, rubrics and criteria were used to decide if each part of the ToC was achieved, partially achieved, or not achieved, and to what extent assumptions held true.</p> |
| Quantitative analyses | Desk phase | <p>The evaluation team performed quantitative analyses on DP funding across donors and DG ECHO DP funding (DPBL and regular humanitarian funding) across regions, using various data sources, including i) OECD DAC data¹¹, ii) HOPE data, iii) data from World Wide Decisions and Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs)¹², and iv) INFORM data¹³. Quantitative analysis was also applied on coding that compared projects across the DPBL and regular humanitarian budget, as well as on preliminary survey results.</p> |
| Global eSurvey | Desk and field phases | <p>A global eSurvey gathered insights from respondents working on disaster preparedness. All contacts collected during the course of the evaluation (both at HQ and country levels) were invited to participate in the eSurvey. In total, <i>276 participants</i> (out of 1,938 invited) completed it (see Figure 5). The eSurvey allowed for documentation of stakeholders' (DG ECHO officials, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, EU MS Embassies, other donors and DG ECHO implementing partners) perceptions on a number of topics such as EU policy and institutional environment, coordination with EU internal and external stakeholders, and DG ECHO's added value. The survey was based on a short questionnaire structured around the main Judgement Criteria (JCs) and indicators which needed to be informed by this data collection tool. Detailed survey results are presented in Annex 7.</p> |
| Country-level data collection, including project site visits and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) | Field phase | <p>The team conducted country-level data collection in four countries: Dominican Republic, Palestine (remotely), Philippines (remotely) and Uganda. The countries were selected by the team in close consultation with the ESG and with the aim to have a sample that illustrates well the DG ECHO DP portfolio, including the diversity of operational contexts. The team's approach initially foresaw data collection in only three countries. In consultation with the ESG in the desk phase, Palestine was added as an additional 4th field phase country to include the conflict angle and strengthen geographical balance. For this case, data collection was agreed on to be conducted remotely, and no project sites were visited, nor communities consulted.</p> <p>For each of the four country-contexts, a balanced sample of 6-10 projects was selected for in-depth analysis. The projects sampled covered the whole evaluation period, were implemented by different implementing partners,</p> |

⁹ Electronic project-specific DG ECHO reporting and monitoring documents

¹⁰ DG ECHO database

¹¹ Development finance data, reported by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

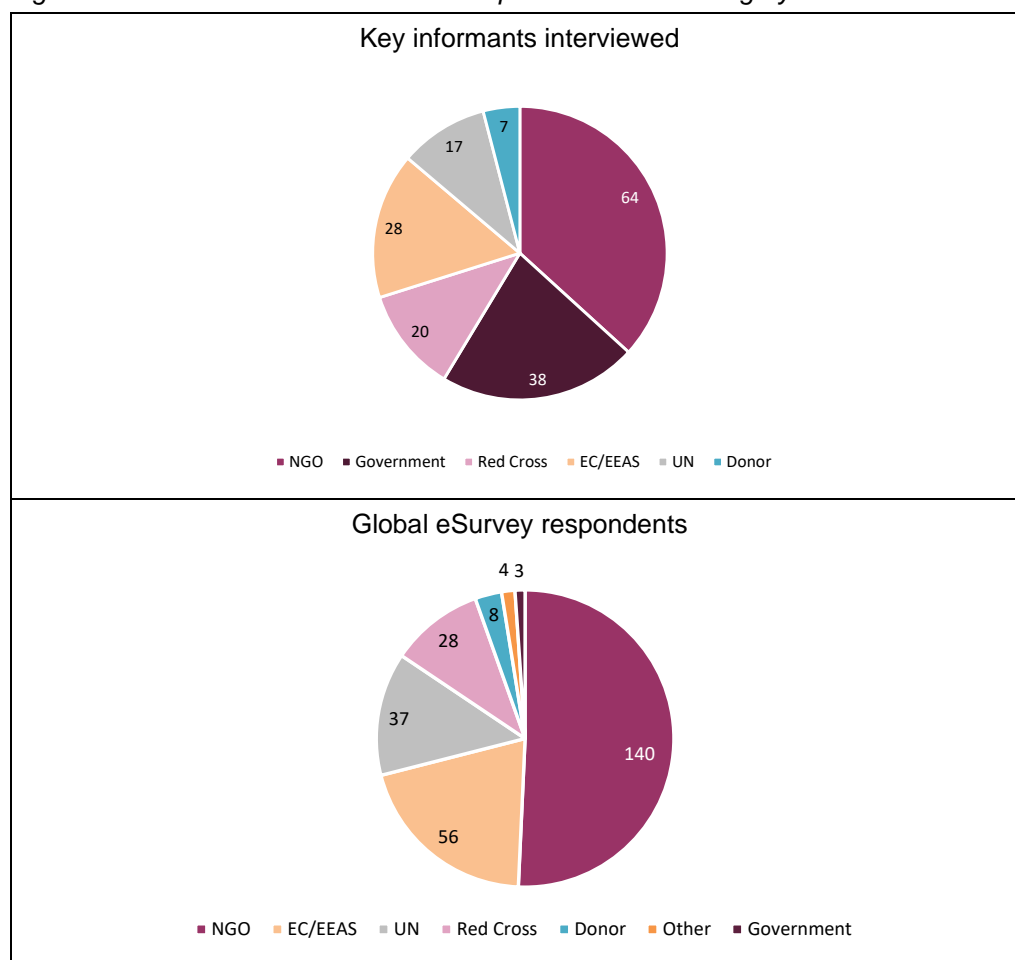
¹² Since 2012, the European Commission adopts yearly a 'Worldwide Decision' that covers all humanitarian aid actions which DG ECHO anticipates to fund as explained in DG ECHO's Annual Strategy. Through this document it allocates the necessary funds for the implementation of humanitarian aid actions, including in the field of disaster preparedness. In the context of this Decision, ECHO prepares and publishes 'Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs)' which provide more detailed information on the operational priorities identified.

¹³ The INFORM Risk Index is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters. INFORM is a collaboration of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning and Preparedness and the European Commission.

| Tool / Method | Phase | Approach |
|---------------------------------|-------------|--|
| | | funded by both the DPBL and other budget lines, and included also regional projects. A total of nine project sites was visited. The team organised a total of three FGDs in Uganda in person <i>with members of communities benefitting from the projects</i> sampled for the country-level analyses. The FGDs entailed a qualitative discussion with participants. Topics included relevance, local participation in the design of the project, results (perceptions of feeling more prepared) and local ownership inter alia. |
| Mini telephone survey | Field phase | This instrument captured a wider set <i>of community voices in the field countries</i> . Community members consulted were proposed by implementing partners' who provided telephone numbers for a sample of individuals who represent community-level beneficiaries of DG ECHO-funded projects. The telephone survey consisted of a limited number of questions asked in a voice call. Answers were transcribed verbatim and entered into a data entry mask for analysis. The evaluation team consulted a total of <i>87 community members</i> through the phone survey. Respondents were final beneficiaries of a total of eight DG ECHO-funded projects in Dominican Republic (42 respondents), Uganda (31 responses) and Philippines (14 responses). 50% of the respondents were female. For the reasons outlined above, no final beneficiaries were consulted for the Palestine mission. Detailed survey results are presented in Annex 8. |
| Key informant interviews (KIIs) | All phases | In total, <i>174 informants</i> were interviewed. Contacts were provided by DG ECHO (HQ and regional / field staff) and included EU staff (officials from the DG ECHO HQ, regional and country offices, other EC officials in Brussels and EU Delegation (EUD) officials), EU MS Embassy officials as well as representatives from local and national governments, UN agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and other donors such as USAID (see Figure 5). |

Source: Evaluation team

Figure 5 Stakeholders consulted per stakeholder category



Source: KIIs and eSurvey

2.2 Challenges and limitations

The main challenges faced by the evaluation team throughout all phases of the evaluation were *challenges in data collection* related to the limited availability / response rate of specific stakeholder groups and the availability and accessibility of data and documents, including

- *National government representatives*: The invitation to complete the eSurvey was widely distributed among the national government contacts obtained for the countries selected for data collection. Although several reminders were sent, only three government representatives completed the eSurvey. In Philippines, due to the change in administration in June 2022 and the strained relations between the outgoing administration of President Duterte and the EU, the team's numerous interview requests went unanswered. No government representatives in Philippines were interviewed. Despite these challenges, the team managed to capture government voices through interviews with a total of 38 national and local government representatives in Uganda, Dominican Republic and Palestine, and the quality of the evidence is deemed adequate with this number.
- *EC officials in Brussels and in the field*: Multiple interview requests were sent to EC headquarters (HQ) staff (including DG ECHO units in Directorates A, B, C and D, DG INTPA, DG NEAR and DG ENV), but several went unanswered. Despite these challenges, the team managed to capture DG ECHO (6 interviews), DG INTPA (1 interview) and DG ENV (2 interviews) voices on EU internal coherence and coordination. In the field, the team faced difficulties to reach some EUD representatives in Philippines and Uganda. Overall, this has not affected the quality of the analysis.
- *Community members / final beneficiaries*: Implementing partners in Philippines and Uganda provided the team with fewer beneficiary contacts than expected. In total, the team interviewed 87 community members, which was less than the target number of 150, but still adequate to capture important perspectives, especially for EQ5. In Philippines, the planned field visits and FGDs in Mindanao could not take place due to travel restrictions because of the security situation. Interviews were conducted remotely instead.
- *EU MS*: Multiple interview requests sent to EU MS at HQ level went unanswered and no EU MS representatives were consulted at the global level. However, at country level (Palestine) the team captured the voices of some EU MS such as Belgium, France and Sweden.
- *DG ECHO databases*: Further limitations regarding data collection were linked to the HOPE database. Despite the fact that partial access was granted to the team, within HOPE it was difficult to quantify the share of funding of a non-DP project or intervention that was dedicated to preparedness. Although there were DRR/DP markers within EVA, the conceptual differences between DP and DRR make it difficult to clearly identify project components that are exclusively focused on preparedness.
- *DP country fiches*: The existence of country-level DP fiches prepared annually since 2019 was reported to the team late in the process. The team could therefore only partially take them into account in the analysis.

Despite the limitations faced, the team remains confident that the most important challenges were identified and documented, ensuring the credibility and validity of the evaluation's findings, conclusions and recommendations.

3 Findings

3.1 EQ1 - Relevance

To what extent has DG ECHO support to DP considered countries' national priorities and needs of the most vulnerable?



Summary answer to the Evaluation Question

DG ECHO's disaster preparedness (DP) actions have been appropriate to needs and risk levels, and approaches have been relevant. At the global level, DG ECHO has invested the targeted preparedness budget line funding in countries experiencing high risk, but the geographic distribution of DG ECHO DP funding has not fully reflected risk levels.

At country level, risk/needs assessments were systematically undertaken, updated and applied to inform the design of DG ECHO preparedness support. Risk/needs assessments have been of good quality generally across the portfolio. There has been growing recognition that such assessments (and the projects built on them) are more relevant when conducted in a participatory manner. Nonetheless, gaps were

identified, and filling them would improve assessment – thus the relevance – of preparedness actions. Prominent areas deserving greater attention are climate change and conflict sensitivity.

DG ECHO preparedness objectives and mechanisms responded well to beneficiary needs. They evolved during the period under review, which demonstrated the ability of the organisation to learn. Crisis Modifiers have been increasingly integrated into the design of DG ECHO projects – to date, more prevalent in targeted preparedness than regular humanitarian actions – and were frequently activated. While well understood in some contexts, in others there is confusion among implementing partners about the difference between Crisis Modifiers and Emergency/Rapid Response Mechanism (E/RRM), despite this being explained in HIP TAs for several years. Often using Crisis Modifiers, DG ECHO projects flexibly reacted to COVID-19, an experience that has influenced project implementation more broadly.

The degree of alignment between DG ECHO preparedness actions and national government policies, priorities and programmes has been variable. Explicit consultation of authorities during design and implementation of DG ECHO preparedness actions was varied, and depended largely on relationships nurtured over time. As a humanitarian organisation, DG ECHO is not funding directly and is not strictly required to align with government policies, priorities and programmes. Nonetheless, DG ECHO efforts have increasingly targeted national government systems, and preparedness capacity gaps. While DG ECHO staff regularly checked this, for example through the Resilience Marker (part of electronic Single Forms (eSF)/Ficheops¹⁴), national policy frameworks seldom form a key feature of the DP programmes. DG ECHO has not been a strong or regular voice for DP advocacy with government partners. DG ECHO efforts have only moderately aligned with National DRR platforms, a decision that can be defended on the grounds of effectiveness.

This question asks if DG ECHO support for preparedness is aligned to global risk hotspots, how relevant funded activities are for at-risk countries (as proven by alignment to national policies/platforms, recognised capacity gaps and national engagement in design and implementation) and how well actions are informed by quality risk/needs assessment. It also asks how flexible DG ECHO is in responding to an evolving risk environment (e.g. COVID-19 and climate change), as well as how learning is integrated into design. Expectations are:

- DG ECHO has allocated preparedness funding in line with country needs partially through active engagement in the analysis of risk/needs at global level and use of the Index for Risk Management, (INFORM), a Crisis Assessment, and the Forgotten Crisis Assessment (FCA).
- DG ECHO has allocated DP funds – aligned to HIPs – inside regions/countries based on comprehensive and ongoing multi-risk/needs assessment (including climate¹⁵ considerations and crisis context analysis), checked by e.g. the Resilience Marker Questions 1 and 2.
- Relevance is further demonstrated when the assessment is an *“inclusive and participatory process that engages all first responders”* and that stakeholders are *“meaningfully involved”* in activity design and implementation.¹⁶ Relevance is further increased when preparedness activities build the capacity of local actors (i.e. the localisation agenda), are reinforced with advocacy and leverage funding across the humanitarian, development and peace boundaries.¹⁷
- DG ECHO has ensured contractual and financial flexibility through, among others, the use of the Crisis Modifier in all projects and the E/RRM.

3.1.1 Needs and risk assessments (JC1.1)

DG ECHO’s allocation of preparedness funding aligned moderately well with macro levels of risk. As presented in Annex 6 and further discussed under EQ8, the country-level correlation between DG ECHO DP funding 2015-2020 and the INFORM risk level index indicates that funding aligned moderately well with macro levels of risk. The correlation is stronger for the preparedness actions financed by the regular humanitarian budget lines than for targeted preparedness financed through the DPBL. While not raised in interviews, documents suggest that the budget allocation methodology especially for the DPBL is continuously under discussion across DG ECHO using INFORM, Country DP Fiches and other inputs.

¹⁴ Project-specific DG ECHO reporting and monitoring documents

¹⁵ *“Considering the unfolding climate and environmental crisis, analysis of current and future risks stemming from both climate change and environmental degradation should be included in all risk assessments to identify interlinkages and priorities for action in specific contexts.”* (DG ECHO (2021). DP Guidance Note). DG ECHO does not strive to make climate change a feature of all preparedness actions but rather insists that climate change impacts on both hazard/crisis characteristics and intervention details are at least considered.

¹⁶ DG ECHO (2021). DP Guidance Note.

¹⁷ Regarding advocacy, the 2021 DP Guidance Note explains: *“Advocacy to promote positive change, and to influence the agendas and behaviour of national or local governments, organisations, or individuals must be systematically carried out. This can be pursued, for example, by demonstrating the benefits of preparedness and thus promoting the improvement of dedicated legal and institutional mechanisms or the scaling up of pilot interventions.”*

At country level, risk/needs assessments have been systematically undertaken, updated and used to inform the design of DG ECHO preparedness actions. As evidenced by the HIPs and eSF/Ficheops, and confirmed by survey results, DG ECHO routinely checks for, promotes the use of and contributes to needs or risk assessment to guide the design of humanitarian response. Proposals are screened for the joint or coordinated nature of needs assessments and the comprehensive “multi” nature of risk assessments – see also Box 1.

Box 1 Increased attention to risk in the design of DG ECHO projects

There has been an increased attention to risk assessment in DG ECHO humanitarian assistance during the period under review. While needs assessments are expected ‘post-crisis’, risk assessments (and linked mapping) are expected to inform preparedness priorities. The 2021 DP Guidance refers to needs assessment only four times compared to close to 50 times for risk analysis or risk assessment.

The eSF submitted by implementing partners routinely include a ‘Resilience Marker’ whose first question asks “Do the proposed project activities adequately reflect an analysis of risks and vulnerabilities (including conflict, environment and climate risks)?”. It instructs that “*both ‘mainstreaming’ and ‘targeted preparedness’* actions are based on a comprehensive risk assessment” (p13) and “risk assessment and risk analysis should be a continuous process [across] the programme cycle.” (p14).

A conflict/context analysis is also promoted (not limited to conflict-zones). Resilience Marker Question 2 asks “Does the project adopt a “do no harm and conflict sensitivity” approach, include specific measures to ensure that the identified risks and any environmental impacts of the project are addressed to the extent possible, and are not aggravated by the action?”.

Source: SPA, SLR

Country-level risk/needs assessments were generally of good quality across the portfolio, with some noteworthy gaps. There has been a technical working group in DG ECHO on needs assessments to harmonise the practice and individual Technical Assistants have also applied criteria independently, checking that vulnerability is integrated in the assessment sections of the eSF. Among projects scored in the SPA carried out by the evaluation team, half had at least moderate consideration of at-risk groups. Climate preparedness projects studied were particularly strong in the inclusivity dimension. The analysis also indicates that emphasis on disadvantaged groups (e.g., persons living with disabilities) is more prevalent in targeted preparedness projects than in regular humanitarian actions and is greater in projects implemented by NGOs, with their long experience with target communities, than UN agencies. Field visits provided a number of good examples of risk assessment practice – e.g., precise identification of targeted risk groups (Dominican Republic), differentiating the acutely-vulnerable sub-populations in a context of overall vulnerability, application of a locally relevant multi-risk assessment tool (Palestine), thorough and constructive feedback regarding risk assessment in both successful and unsuccessful proposals (Philippines).

There has been recognition in DG ECHO that risk/needs assessments (and the projects built on them) are more relevant when conducted in a participatory or consultative manner. This is evidenced by increased national and community consultation between 2015 and 2020; the latter addressing the emerging localisation agenda. DG ECHO actions in the four countries studied all demonstrate sensitivity to the needs of beneficiaries; whether by consultation during project design (Palestine), needs assessments (Philippines), gathering of real-time feedback on activities and inclusion of local civil society actors in all DPBL consortia contracts (Uganda), or working through implementing partners with long-standing community engagement (Dominican Republic). At the same time, it must be recognised that, while some projects reflected strong participation of communities, others were anchored more with national authorities or implementing partner organisations external to communities. There has surely been consultations but, in absence of an objective standard, it would be difficult to say whether the consultations observed constitute what the 2021 Guidance Note terms “*meaningful participation and involvement [...] in designing and carrying out an effective and comprehensive risk assessment.*”

DG ECHO’s historical needs-based approach has increasingly been complemented by DRR inspired by Sendai Framework priorities. Anchored in DRR, risk management language has been applied increasingly in DG ECHO project design, although progress has been uneven. In the LAC region, the gradual move to strengthen government preparedness capacity (via e.g., DIPECHO since 1998) has led to the evolution from a previous emphasis on assessing specific vulnerability and exposure of a population to now a wider more national or regional level exploration of risk. DP actors strive to use a multi-hazard approach but encounter challenges due to siloed government structures; e.g., in Colombia one government department deals with natural hazards/disasters and another with migration/displacement/conflict. In Uganda, despite strong focus on hazards, specific attention in risk assessments to exposure and vulnerability (the two other recognised components of risk) were not visible and no tangible attempt was found to examine the overlap of vulnerability, exposure and hazards together in a systematic manner. While earthquake is a major risk identified by stakeholders in Palestine, there has been very little attention to this hazard within portfolio and

the Government of Palestine has aspired to build its capacity in weather forecasting through its own data analysis, rather than on models and online data

A future-looking perspective on risk is to be found in most funding decisions (HIPs), but risks from climate change (while more common in the projects funded under the DPBL than the rest of the portfolio) are insufficiently visible in assessments. In Philippines, for example, although the main hazards are typhoons, projects studied contained very little on climate change adaptation. In Palestine, there was no mention of climate risks in project documents or interviews, except for one project¹⁸. More broadly, ‘context analysis’, which includes ‘conflict sensitivity’, was weak; risk assessments without this display insufficient understanding of the institutional dynamics affecting DP/DRR.

3.1.2 Flexibility in design (JC1.2)

DG ECHO preparedness objectives and mechanisms responded well to beneficiary needs even as they change and demonstrate the ability of the organisation to learn. This was confirmed by the eSurvey results (see Annex 7). Crisis Modifiers, more prevalent in targeted DP projects than regular humanitarian projects (see Annex 6 for details), have been increasingly integrated into the design of DG ECHO projects and activated for close to two-thirds of them. Crisis Modifiers, to judge from interviews and survey responses, are an impressive innovation enabling DG ECHO to be responsive to changing contexts and ready to react in a flexible, timely manner. Crisis Modifiers are well known to most actors, including many local authorities (e.g., Uganda, where they are seen to allow District Contingency Plans to be acted on directly to deal with localised flooding, an influx of refugees and COVID-19 surge. In Dominican Republic, Crisis Modifiers were activated rapidly, and most actions were timely. First activated there for COVID-19, Crisis Modifiers have now become standard in all projects. In Philippines, the Crisis Modifiers tool is well adopted by implementing partners and activation is promoted by the ECHO field office, with good effect. One issue overall is that the difference between crisis modifiers and E/RRM mechanisms is not always clear to both ECHO country staff and partners.

Often linked to Crisis Modifiers, COVID-19 has broadly influenced project implementation, providing an opportunity for DG ECHO to demonstrate flexibility. Project documents show flexibility in terms of duration, adjusting project contents and granting no-cost extensions to accommodate the impact of COVID-19. Survey respondents confirm the positive ability of DG ECHO to adapt to unanticipated situations, as do examples from the field. In Palestine, projects were able to expand in both scale and scope to cope with greatly increased needs. In Philippines, timely and relevant COVID-19 top-ups and adjustments were readily granted, demonstrating DG ECHO’s flexibility in adjusting to changing circumstances. There was frequent and positive use of Crisis modifiers, promoted by field offices. In Uganda, Crisis Modifiers requested were approved to deploy surge teams to compensate for staff affected by COVID-19. In the Dominican Republic, every studied project used the crisis modifier to respond to COVID-19 and the changing needs of beneficiaries and authorities.

3.1.3 Alignment with national policies and DP strategies (JC1.3)

DG ECHO efforts during the evaluation period – more than in previous years – targeted national government systems, and preparedness capacity gaps. Funded efforts complement and reinforce existing national DP programmes well, albeit unevenly and without systematic consultation of government entities. Those that do consult benefit in their design and implementation from the involvement of national government stakeholders. The reinforcement of national DP programmes is widely considered a priority and one that also benefits communities through a system-wide approach. For example, in Dominican Republic, DG ECHO has cultivated close relationships with government stakeholders and DPBL projects address government capacity gaps with substantial influence on national DP institutions and policy (e.g., including changes made to national policy as a result of DG ECHO). In LAC more generally: DG ECHO posted liaison officers in the national DRM institutions. In Uganda, all DPBL projects are building national and local government capacity, on the logic that community level preparedness efforts will be much more meaningful once the district level authorities are engaged. DG ECHO works with a consultant (under IOM, an IP) inside the Prime Minister’s Office (Central level) to build capacity from within. At district level DG ECHO-funded DP projects placed staff inside the district government offices for two years as their Contingency Plans were being developed. In Palestine, most projects sampled include elements on government capacity building which have evolved despite the lack of national DP instruments.

DG ECHO, however, is not mandated to align with national priorities (i.e., policies and programmes) and alignment is uneven. Some countries, such as Uganda and Dominican Republic, could almost be considered models for DG ECHO’s close cooperation with government systems; whereas in others, there is very little contact with governments. Alignment of DG ECHO efforts with overarching national policy frameworks is checked, for example, with the Resilience Marker (part of eSF/Ficheops), but national policies are seldom a key feature of DP programmes. Nonetheless, examples of alignment have emerged from

¹⁸ “Strengthening Jordan Isreali Palestine Regional Floods Early Warning System” (2019/00969, Expertise France)

interviews both at headquarters and in the field. In Vietnam, after 10 years of DG ECHO funding, Community-based DRM has been adopted by the government as the national approach to DRR. In Burkina Faso, DG ECHO strives to carefully align all efforts with the national multi-risk plan supported by WFP (epidemics, wind, drought, flood, pests, and conflict) based on an analysis of risk, with buy-in from local and state government. In SAIO, DG ECHO's activities are aligned both with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) contingency plan and the National Disaster Preparedness priorities. In LAC, safe hospitals (Ecuador and Colombia), safe schools (Ecuador) and livelihood resilience (with Colombia Ministry of Agriculture) are DG ECHO flagship efforts that have become part of public policy. In Philippines, where implementing partners have been heavily involved in shaping national policies and strategies, ECHO projects and interventions are well aligned with national policy frameworks. The situation is similar in Uganda.

Because of its humanitarian focus, DG ECHO sometimes negotiates approaches that do not align with or are not recognised as national priorities. This includes, for example, cash preparedness and preparedness for conflict in Mozambique and anticipatory action for numerous other countries. Other times, governments are closed to discussion and DG ECHO shifts its focus to community levels. The issue arises of the extent to which DG ECHO should actively engage in advocacy at the national policy level. An example is Palestine, where, although there is some alignment with national DP efforts, there is no pertinent legislation in force and a lack of clear national DP policies and framework. Nonetheless, the opportunity to contribute to development of the national DRM framework is there, and guidance would be welcome. Another opportunity presents itself in Uganda, where a stronger and higher-level push from donors such as DG ECHO might push national DRM legislation over the finish line.

DG ECHO has not made a major effort to align with National DRR platforms. This suggests -- and interviews confirm -- that the platforms may be an important mechanism in DRR, but perhaps not the most effective use of DP funding and efforts of DG ECHO. However, in Dominican Republic and LAC more generally, DG ECHO is a leading contributor to regional discussions and platforms and DG ECHO funded UNDRR to lead an effort on regional learning events, e.g., in Cartagena, Colombia. In Uganda, DG ECHO and partners strongly advocate for and contribute to the DRR platforms at national/central level and are advocating for the same to be invigorated at the district levels (some are already, but most districts are not).

Only rarely was there explicit consultation with authorities during design and implementation. In Dominican Republic, there was strong involvement of a range of national institutions such as the authorities responsible for social protection and water authorities, in addition to regional/provincial/municipal involvement and support; e.g., in southern Colombia, Bolivia, Peru. In Uganda, DG ECHO is strongly engaged with government stakeholders at every level. In Palestine, by contrast, DG ECHO is not closely involved with national authorities and its work is not well known among government representatives consulted. COVID-19 related travel restrictions contributed to this low visibility, as did the fact that national authorities are not eligible for direct funding. In Philippines, ECHO's direct involvement with national authorities is very limited but it reportedly takes place at all levels through implementing partners.

3.2 EQ2 - Coherence with DG ECHO policies

To what extent have DP efforts aligned with DG ECHO's evolving policy and approach?



Summary answer to the Evaluation Question

As confirmed by DG ECHO's 2021 DP guidance, DG ECHO has aligned its DP efforts with key international frameworks (particularly the Sendai Framework and Paris Agreement), with their emphasis on principles such as the Precautionary Principle, Do No Harm, and No One Left Behind. DG ECHO support to DP has also been consistent with major EU policies, in particular in terms of their increased emphasis on localisation (and empowerment of local preparedness actors), resilience, early action, risk knowledge, nexus approach and conflict preparedness. DG ECHO DP portfolio has been largely sensitive to gender and broadly in line with EU policy commitments in this area, but the intersectionality perspective to deal with multiple discriminated-against identities has been limited.

DG ECHO's evolving strategic approach to DP, established within the 2013 Thematic Policy for DRR and most recently laid out in the 2021 Guidance Note for DP, is increasingly underpinned by commitments to address multiple hazards and mainstream DP in all relevant actions. DG ECHO support to DP has increasingly integrated a multi-hazard approach, although some Technical Assistants have not fully embraced the approach and implementation is limited until governments do the same. As discussed in EQ1, DG ECHO has increased its efforts to mainstream DP in responses via risk-proofing (including but not limited to the concept of 'do not harm'), the Resilience Marker, Crisis Modifiers and E/RRM. Conflict-related

preparedness interventions, conflict sensitivity and technological risks are only lightly present in more recent programmes feature in the portfolio, as these were not features of the 2013 Thematic Guidance for DRR.

DP has been integrated in recent DG ECHO sector policy guidance documents (Education, Food Security, Health, Nutrition, Protection, WASH, Shelter & settlements), but the actual integration of DP in implemented sector activities remain variable and DP mainstreaming in food security is less evident than, for instance, in WASH and health.

This question asks about the alignment of DG ECHO support to DP with DG ECHO policy, guidelines and approaches as well as with other relevant EU policy frameworks and DP-related global policy frameworks. Further, it asks about the appropriateness of DG ECHO institutional frameworks, especially in regard to mainstreaming preparedness and linking DP actions to Disaster Risk Finance (DRF) actors.

It is expected that the various dimensions of the evolving policy and institutional framework underpinning DG ECHO DP actions has remained internally coherent over time and has been aligned with DP-related global frameworks.

3.2.1 Alignment with overall DG ECHO approach to DP (JC2.1)

DP projects aligned well with DG ECHO strategic approach and guidelines. eSurvey results reported on in Annex 7 confirmed this strong alignment. Among the important trends has been the **increasing emphasis on multi-hazard approaches**, and portfolio analysis showed that implementing partners have been increasingly finding opportunities to add preparedness for additional hazards to former single hazard projects, with occasional difficulties arising from differing approaches on the part of Technical Assistants. A multi-hazard approach was evident in DG ECHO's portfolio, e.g. in three of the four countries studied – Philippines (man-made and meteorological risks in Mindanao-focused projects), Uganda (multi-hazard approach in all DG ECHO-supported district Contingency Plans), and Dominican Republic (urban resilience projects). However, as much as DG ECHO's implementing partners integrate a multi-hazard approach in their programming, their impact will be limited until the governments mandate coordination between different departments dealing with risks associated with natural hazards and conflict to ensure a multi-hazard approach. Box 2 presents additional information collected through the thematic case study on multi-risk approaches.

Box 2 Findings from thematic case studies - Multi-risk

The DG ECHO portfolio has increasingly demonstrated a multi-hazard approach, rightfully recognising all types of emergencies: natural hazards, biological, conflict and technological. Single hazard approaches were the exception in the portfolio. As promoted in 2021 Guidance Note, multi-risk is an integral part of risk-proofing as it demonstrates thinking about all plausible hazards that affect a context, thereby mitigating any cascading or interrelated effects. Insistence on, or opportunities for multi-hazard programmes, however, were found to be irregular – partially influenced by differing approaches of individual Technical Assistants.

The most visible way the multi-risk approach has been applied was through promotion of Contingency Plans. In these processes, for example, DG ECHO projects led local actors to jointly assess risks, identify the top three most likely to influence a given context, and plan for the most probable influences of those three. Other examples of the multi-risk approaches were EWS and risk mapping (i.e., national risk atlases).

The concept of multi-risk often surfaced naturally from multi-sectoral approaches, i.e., including stakeholders representing many sectors in preparedness actions. Inter-sectoral work on government contingency plans often effectively forced stakeholders to think across sectors: e.g., to stage health notices from/inside schools, to promote reforestation in anticipation of flooding. Often at DG ECHO's insistence, gender-based violence was considered in health programming and COVID-19 brought biological hazards to the forefront of ECHO's preparedness.

While the multi-risk approach has been gaining traction, one challenge was that institutions have not been evolving at the same rhythm. Siloed approaches inside government structures (and often donor funding) made the management of multiple hazards tricky (e.g., divisions between displacement and natural hazards, or climate and disaster management).

Source: SPA, SLR, KIIs.

Alignment of programming with DG ECHO's evolving strategic approach for DP was lowest for technological risks, which was incorporated in DG ECHO's approach most recently, **and conflict**, which DG ECHO staff consider overdue. Unlike other changes in policy highlighted in the 2021 guidance, technological risks barely feature in the portfolio and conflict-related interventions and conflict sensitivity are not yet clearly or uniformly present.

There is consensus among informants that DG ECHO's policies have promoted gender sensitivity, however implementing partners were of the view that a stronger emphasis on intersectionality (between groups such as indigenous people, women and persons with disabilities) is needed. The eSF require categorisation

of beneficiaries, but while programmes may address the intersections, the relationship between the categories and how that affects preparedness is rarely discussed in eSF/Ficheops.

3.2.2 Alignment with EU policy and global DP frameworks (JC2.2)

DG ECHO has aligned with key international frameworks (particularly the Sendai Framework and Paris Agreement), with their emphasis on principles such as the Precautionary Principle, Do No Harm, and No One Left Behind. eSurvey results (see Annex 7) confirm this strong alignment. This alignment was present since the 2013 Thematic Policy and is reinforced in the 2021 Guidance Note. With its emphasis on local actors and national government, the 2021 DP Guidance also strongly reflects the Grand Bargain and the localisation imperative. The Core Humanitarian Standard is reflected in the Resilience Marker but is overall less evident than other international frameworks, possibly because it is more closely associated with response.

DG ECHO DP support has also been consistent with major EU policies in external action, such as the European Consensus on Development, GAP-III and Human Rights Action Plan. The greatest areas of common concern are resilience, early action, risk knowledge, nexus approach and conflict preparedness. DG ECHO strategic approach to DP, as outlined in the 2021 DP Guidance, distinguishes itself from other EU policies by being stronger at community-level, nature-based solutions and ecosystem restoration. With regard to the latter, DG ECHO is recognised by implementing partners as being one of the first humanitarian donors to incorporate environmental concerns.

DP has been integrated in recent DG ECHO key sector policy guidance documents such as on Education, Food security, Health, Nutrition, Protection, WASH and Shelter & settlements. Thanks to these increasing linkages at policy level, DG ECHO has made progress on mainstreaming preparedness into technical sectors. For example, it encourages partners to include WASH response hardware that will continue functioning outside the emergency or be re-used in future hazard events, and it was lauded by implementing partners for supporting mainstreaming of DRR in Health and Education in Emergencies (EiE) guidelines. Less evident is mainstreaming of DRR in Food Security.

Mainstreaming preparedness across technical sectors prior to disaster events is present (and part of targeted preparedness) in the portfolio. The concept of a 'crisis in a crisis' has been indeed recognized by DG ECHO but was not prevalent in the portfolio. The 2021 Guidance Note tries but does not clarify the topic well. Because this type of mainstreaming was considered a complex topic by all stakeholders consulted, there is no simple way to estimate the level of mainstreaming of preparedness per year, per region, per sector in the regular humanitarian portfolio.

3.2.3 Appropriateness of DG ECHO institutional framework and DP guidance (JC2.3)

There are mixed levels of understanding of how DP fits within the DG ECHO and wider EU institutional framework. Through both targeted DP and regular humanitarian projects, DG ECHO has supported all strands of DRM, depending on the country and context. However, given the fuzzy boundaries between DP and other aspects of DRM within different conceptual frameworks, including DG ECHO's previous policy guidance, it is not surprising to find countries where there is uncertainty as to how DP fits within the wider institutional framework. For example, in Palestine implementing partners have been seeking greater clarity on what DG ECHO wants to achieve from targeted and mainstreamed preparedness, having had proposals turned down for the latter. In Uganda, by contrast, DG ECHO's focus on preparedness was well understood across partners and most if not all of them advocated for allocating more support to preparedness than is currently, including progressively increasing the DPBL.

The flexibility of Crisis Modifiers in allowing DG ECHO to rapidly transition from preparedness to response has been widely recognised as a positive institutional innovation. As discussed in EQ1, Crisis Modifiers were used with increasing frequency and were activated very widely for COVID-19. Across countries they have been appreciated by implementing partners and DG ECHO staff alike because they significantly limit the time spent on new decisions, proposals and approvals. Implementing partners in Philippines lauded DG ECHO staff for motivating their use and providing helpful instruction on when and how to use them, and in Uganda implementing partners articulated their value as a preparedness tool that facilitates early action and early response.

In LAC and Asia, the practice of international implementing partners partnering with local organisations was an effective way to mainstream preparedness, as mentoring and experience gained through implementation built partners' readiness to respond in future disasters. In general, implementing partners are supportive of the fact that aspects of DP mainstreaming are included in the Resilience Marker in the eSF because this pushes partners to consider and integrate them. In Philippines, mainstreaming DP in response has been routine for many years, so, while the 2021 DP Guidance was well-received by implementing partners, it had little additional effect on the evolution of preparedness mainstreaming. Changes in DG ECHO guidance and approach had more influence in other regions than in Asia and LAC regions, which are regarded as forerunners of the current approach to mainstreaming preparedness. In Uganda, implementing partners

consider that by risk-proofing interventions (i.e. by checking in the design stage that they can withstand known hazards and do no harm in terms of risk creation), they are deliberately mainstreaming preparedness.

3.2.4 Coordination of DP actions to link to Disaster Risk Finance actors and NGO recipients (JC2.4)

While Disaster Risk Financing only became a clear priority after the evaluation period, it is not clear to what extent DG ECHO has promoted Disaster Risk Finance linkages between other DGs and relevant recipients. While Disaster Risk Finance is only explicitly mentioned in the EU Action Plan on Sendai, forecast-based financing and anticipatory action are prominent in various DG ECHO policies. According to the team's portfolio analysis, Forecast-based Financing (FbF) is visible in only 4% of DG ECHO's portfolio across the evaluation period (mostly concerning the Red Cross and small to medium-sized projects), rising to 7% in 2020. DG INTPA and DG NEAR are more active Disaster Risk Finance actors than DG ECHO and have access to more appropriate and flexible funding instruments. DG ECHO's contribution to the use of innovative financial disaster-risk management strategies is limited by stricter instruments and legal aspects related to humanitarian principles. However, examples have been found. In Philippines, DG ECHO provides pre-disaster (typhoon / flood) support, enabling farmers to take pro-active steps to save their families, harvest and livestock, making recovery quicker and cheaper as a result. In Uganda aspects of Early Action and FbF are included in all DPBL projects. These are however sometimes confused with the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF)/START and the Crisis Modifier instrument. In Dominican Republic at least one DG ECHO implementing partners implements FbF, exploring linkages between FbF and EWS, but DG ECHO is not directly engaged in these efforts since the IP's FbF work is funded by a different donor.

3.3 EQ3 - Coherence between EU entities

To what extent are DG ECHO DP efforts internally consistent (i.e., across DG ECHO divisions) and compatible with actions of other EU entities (e.g., DG INTPA, DG NEAR, DG CLIMA)?



Summary answer to the Evaluation Question

DG ECHO efforts have been internally consistent and compatible with actions of other EU entities. However, coordination and joint planning are still limited.

Partly due to staffing constraints, the coordination of disaster preparedness inside DG ECHO is not sufficient to fully attain the desired outcomes. Anchored in practice, understanding of preparedness did not regularly trickle up to promote greater synergies centrally. As expected due to design, DG ECHO unit B2 has not played a major role in coordinating with the field level, and the exchange of lessons learnt within ECHO B was also found to be limited.

Taking into account large differences between DGs in regard to annual processes, implementing partners, time frames and regulations, collaboration between DGs was found to be noteworthy. Coordination at central level between DG ECHO and DG INTPA was moderate. The coordination is still recent and driven more by personalities than systems. Alignment between DG ECHO and DG INTPA at multiple levels has been growing and DP (or DRR) has often been an entry point for discussions between the two. At the field level, while still not institutionalised, collaboration was characterised by infrequent joint missions, assessments and at times handovers between DG ECHO and DG INTPA. Despite increasing collaboration, evidence did not support shared goals or collective outcomes among DG ECHO and other EU entities.

This question asks whether preparedness is strengthened and synergised through DG ECHO-internal coordination and whether appropriate relations with other EU entities (DG INTPA, DG NEAR, EEAS/EUDs, etc) result in the protection of development investments to the benefit of the end-user.

It is expected that ECHO has worked across the DG to synergise and coordinate preparedness actions consistent with other divisions and that DG ECHO has ensured that preparedness inputs and results were compatible with actions of other EU entities, thereby also contributing to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

3.3.1 DG ECHO internal coordination (JC3.1)

At directorate level, coordination of disaster preparedness inside DG ECHO was less than ideal. While DG ECHO units B1 (in charge of UCPM) and B2 (responsible for preparedness within DG ECHO) are both explicitly mandated to contribute to disaster preparedness, there have been no mechanisms in place for sharing lessons learnt between them. While B1 staff consulted were unfamiliar with the work of B2 and vice versa, there was some interest in improved coordination. Also, during the evaluation period unit B2 faced a strong turnover of staff, which may have further weakened internal coordination. The evaluation team learned about what some DG ECHO field staff call 'key critical elements for disaster preparedness' very late in the

evaluation process (e.g., EVA markers and annual country DP Fiches – strategy documents). Overall, human resources in B2 did not suffice to establish and promote a common understanding of preparedness with messages and instruments conveyed across DG ECHO units, levels or staff transitions systematically.

At field level, in most cases coordination on disaster preparedness was strong and staff were well informed. DP focal points representing the DG ECHO regions and Technical Assistants were committed to and often very well versed on the evolution of DG ECHO's preparedness approaches during the evaluation period. In Palestine, however, the evaluation found limited synergies established between the Gaza and West Bank Technical Assistants.

DG ECHO unit B2 played the expected role in coordinating with the field level through instrumental liaison with the regional DP Technical Experts. Country-level stakeholders (e.g., in Palestine, Philippines) exchanged on technical DP issues with the regional Technical Experts and the respective geographical desk officers. Exchanges with Technical Assistants and DP Technical Experts were reported to inform policy discussions and with geographic desks to inform strategic guidance. Regional DP Technical Experts report drawing on other sources of expertise rather than relying solely on DG ECHO unit B2 staff.

3.3.2 Alignment with other EU external action actors (JC3.2)

Taking into account large differences between DGs in regard to annual processes, implementing partners, time frames and regulations, collaboration between DGs was found to be noteworthy. Asked whether DG ECHO aligns disaster preparedness actions across the DG and with other EU external action actors, 38% of survey respondents did not express an opinion. Looking only at responses from EC staff, 55% agreed, while 21% disagreed. According to the SPA, recognition and the naming of development actors has risen from nearly no mention in the set of 2015 DG ECHO project documents to 30% in 2021. Both the nexus approach and investments of development actors (see ToC in section 1.2) were frequently cited in the project documents. Some examples of cross-DG coordination mechanisms on disaster preparedness-related themes are presented in Box 3 below.

Coordination at central level between DG ECHO and DG INTPA was moderate. The coordination is still recent and driven more by personalities than systems. Stakeholders consulted referred to the nexus as one solution to greater coordination between the DGs. The nexus approach has been recognised and efforts to reduce gaps and find synergies have been visible, but there is still room for improvement, e.g. in regard to funding instruments. As outlined by one EC informant, *"It would be great to have a bit more synergy between funding instruments and development funding. One of the great instruments that was out there for a while was the EU trust fund for resilience programming over an extended period of time, up to four years, which would include contingency funds to respond to shocks that may occur during implementation."*

Box 3 Examples of cross-DG coordination mechanisms on DP

- Collaboration between the DG ECHO Policy unit and DG INTPA on **forced disaster displacement** has resulted in a joint staff working document (SWD) on the topic.
- DG ECHO and EEAS have worked together to **promote DP in the 7-year multiannual financial framework** by considering geographical priorities, discussing potential thematic overlaps and considering joint or Team Europe approaches.
- There have been **informal monthly meetings** between DG INTPA and the DG ECHO DP team. DG CLIMA has participated at times to strategize on the nexus. Participants have been considering inviting DGs RTD and the EC Joint Research Centre. DG NEAR has been invited but does not have the appropriate focal point.
- While the **interservice consultation mechanism** was mainly used to share draft documents with other DGs, exchanges also went beyond that. DG CLIMA and ECHO have reportedly exchanged on / consulted each other on topics such as natural resource / ecosystem management, green logistics, and desertification / drought.
- DG ECHO has started a **tripartite coordination with DG INTPA and UNDRR** at technical level. Tripartite meetings have been organised twice a year and have been co-chaired by DG ECHO and DG INTPA. UNDRR has requested a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and in 2020/2021 a joint workplan was established.

Source: KIIs with EC staff

Alignment between DG ECHO and DG INTPA at multiple levels has been growing and DP (or DRR) has often been an entry point for discussions between the two. The distinction of DRR and DP has informed the establishment of mandates between DG ECHO and DG INTPA. This evaluation (and the reconstructed ToC) recognised a clear separation between DP and DRR, as evidenced by the 2021 Guidance, which carefully identifies a tighter role for DP with the express aim of leaving the wider scope of DRR to development actors. Interviews across DGs reinforced this concept, perceiving clearly different roles for the two DGs: while

DG ECHO was considered to be the guardian of everything related to the Sendai Framework, DG INTPA was considered better positioned for prevention, mitigation and reconstruction. DG INTPA also reportedly had a stronger, more active focus on Disaster Risk Finance (i.e., sovereign risk transfer) while DG ECHO focused more concretely on forecast based financing and anticipatory action. However, stakeholders consulted mentioned the ‘grey area between DP and DRR’ – seen today as fuelling an important debate between humanitarian and development actors. As explained by one respondent, *“the nexus between humanitarian DP and sustainable development related DRR is recognised and there are efforts to reduce gaps and find concrete synergies, but in practice this is not (yet) functioning due to the silo approach / different funding streams etc.”* At the same time, the precise differences between DP and DRR were found to be less important than context-sensitive and adapted handovers between EU external actors. Informants also highlighted possible dangers in rushed handovers and emphasised the need for planned transitions.

Collaboration between DG ECHO and other EU stakeholders has been visible at field level but is still limited. While still not an institutionalised effort, DG ECHO and DG INTPA informants reported good examples from LAC (primarily Bolivia), Philippines, Uganda and Vietnam, including joint field missions for needs assessment or project monitoring with EUD staff. However, informants described DG ECHO and EUDs as ‘two parallel universes’, but also took note of DG ECHO’s important role in liaising with EUDs, while they saw DG ECHO field staff and offices as uniquely making this possible. Joint assessments were common in the Caribbean, e.g., after Hurricane Mathew in Haiti 2016 and after Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. In Philippines, Dominican Republic and Uganda, DG ECHO Field offices have interacted on at least an ad hoc basis with EUD officers. By design, most focus countries do not have DG ECHO officers sitting inside the EUDs. Coordination, there, has required an extra layer of effort. In Philippines, this cooperation has been facilitated by sharing office floor. Cross-DG synergies in Palestine were strongest in the field of social protection, where DG ECHO and DG NEAR both supported the Ministry of Social Development in the development of the National Cash Transfer Programme to become more shock-responsive. However, this collaboration was not framed as DP. DG ECHO has made two presentations on DP to the EU Representation in Jerusalem, but without concrete follow up.

While there were good examples of handovers between DGs, shared goals and collective outcomes have been limited. There were isolated, but concrete examples of funding continuity – or handovers – between DG ECHO and EUDs, where progress made in DP with local authorities has transitioned into an ongoing programme supported by DG INTPA. In Uganda, prior DG ECHO projects that focused on drought in Karamoja led to more long-term support by EU Trust Fund. Government partners were in fact unclear of differences between DG INTPA, EU Trust Fund and DG ECHO actions. In Dominican Republic, mature relationships grounded in trust in-country and across the region have played an important role in finding synergies through coordination with DG INTPA, EEAS/EUD, and have resulted in funding continuity. However, despite increasing collaboration and isolated examples of handovers, evidence almost never supported DG ECHO and other EU entities officially recognising shared goals or collective outcomes (i.e., the most recognised ingredient of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus). Existing examples for this advanced level of coordination mainly came from LAC, although they were also sometimes challenged by small development budgets.

3.4 EQ4 – Added value

What is the added value of DG ECHO-supported DP actions compared to parallel DP efforts of other actors (e.g., EU MS acting on their own, other donors, development banks, implementing partners with own DP agenda)?



Summary answer to the Evaluation Question

DG ECHO has added value to preparedness efforts of European actors. It has been recognised for its funding (see section 3.8) and global operational capacity, which, in some instances, have been leveraged to influence the degree to which preparedness is considered at national level. DG ECHO’s added value also stemmed from its technical expertise on disaster preparedness, gained through its broad portfolio and specialisation, due largely to the innovative and long-running DIPECHO programme. This long-term investment and focus have also generated reciprocity with other donors and opportunities for collaboration.

An area in which added value was not uniformly perceived is partnerships and coordination capacity. On a global level, DG ECHO has been strategic in its partnerships and has been nurturing partnerships with actors that went beyond the conventional humanitarian arena. At the regional level, DG ECHO has also developed partnerships with a strategic purpose, such as with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and the French Red Cross. At national level, however, results were mixed. Moreover, despite their importance to DP issues, coordination with climate change and environmental actors

was not strong across DG ECHO's portfolio. Overall, there is an appetite for more coordination and partnership between implementing partners and between DP donors, with leadership by DG ECHO.

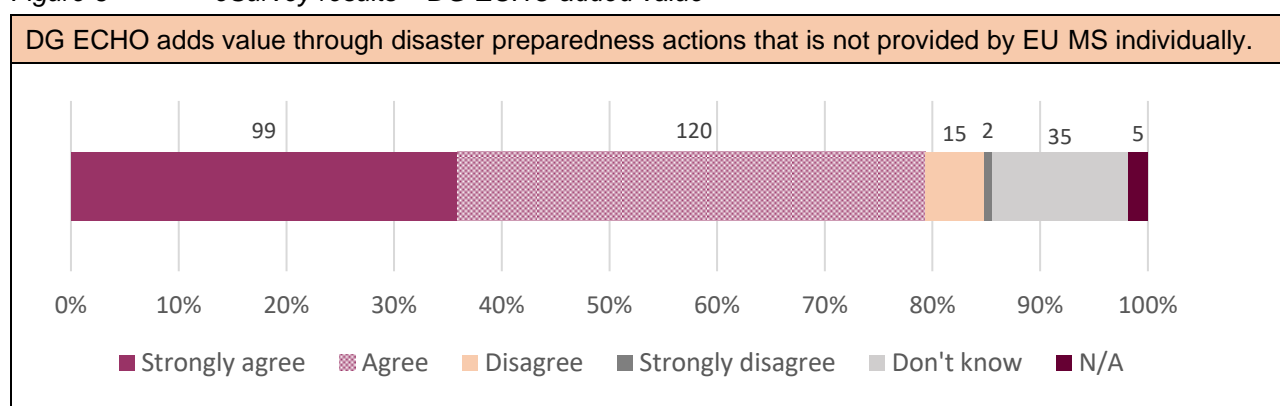
This question asks about the EU added value of DG ECHO DP actions compared those of individual EU MS and other donors and organisations, assessing the extent to which DG ECHO's organisational advantages provided added value that could not be provided by other stakeholders. It further assesses the quality of DG ECHO partnerships and its complementarity with other donors.

It is expected that DG ECHO has leveraged its financial, political and technical capacities to facilitate DP actions whose results could not have been (easily) achieved in DG ECHO's absence. It is expected that DG ECHO has avoided overlaps with other donors' DP actions and has built functioning partnerships with its implementing partners.

3.4.1 DG ECHO Added value to EU MS (JC4.1)

DG ECHO provided added value through DP actions that was not provided by EU MS individually. There is consensus about this among stakeholders consulted. Most respondents to the eSurvey agreed to some extent that DG ECHO has added value. When excluding the people who answered 'don't know' or 'N/A', the share of positive answers amounted to 93% of the 236 respondents – see Figure 6.

Figure 6 eSurvey results – DG ECHO added value



Source: eSurvey

Regarding the dimensions in which DG ECHO DP actions added value to other organisations' and donors' efforts, respondents placed 'financial' in first place (37%), 'technical' in second place (32%), and 'convening power' in third place (17%). Several respondents highlighted the importance of having a common political voice and the combined importance of both the financial and technical value added of DG ECHO.

DG ECHO's funding capacity has provided added value and capacity for leverage. As mentioned above, DG ECHO's financial capacity was its most important sources of added value according to survey respondent. While funding for humanitarian action remained very tight, DG ECHO has been able to sustain and slightly increase DP funding levels (see section 3.8 on budget allocations). Some reports in the portfolio suggested that DG ECHO may – in certain countries/regions – be the only donor investing in DP (e.g., Mongolia 2016). In fact, given the slow pace at which development donors have been scaling up financial support for long-term DRR and DP, humanitarian donors like DG ECHO have been obliged, according to survey respondents, *"to fill the gaps within the limit of their mandate, for instance through institutional capacity-building to create enabling environments."* Donors suggested that DG ECHO while being *"our moral compass on the humanitarian side"* (i.e., legislation that protects humanitarian principles), has been 'way beyond' what others were doing in terms of DP.

Influence with national authorities is a potential area of added value for DG ECHO. In most countries, DG ECHO tends to be 'listened to' by governments because they represent an important donor for response, and because of their technical experience (both preparedness and humanitarian). Furthermore, as one EU staff commented, *"DG ECHO has a dedicated expertise that a Member State might not have in humanitarian contexts."* In Uganda, DG ECHO has been instrumental in advancing disaster preparedness at many levels, including encouraging leadership of local actors, promoting contingency planning and facilitating warehouse stockpiling. The DG ECHO field office has been respected by the government and taken into account on strategic and operational levels. In Dominican Republic, DG ECHO's implementing partners have played a major role in the development of capacities for DRM (including preparedness) in governmental institutions and municipalities across the country, including in the capital, Santo Domingo. In Philippines, DG ECHO's political leverage could not be used directly in recent years because of the strained relationship between the outgoing government and EU. However, the volume of resources DG ECHO has provided to implementing partners and the support given by DG ECHO's field office has enabled them to play a more effective role domestically but also for Philippines to be regarded as an innovation hub by actors around the world.

DG ECHO's added value also stems from its support for disaster preparedness, as one of few donors.

Although once regarded as the donor that focused on the community level and used this level as an entry point to influence other levels, DG ECHO evolved in the latter years of DIPECHO funding to embrace a systems approach to preparedness that promotes innovation in many spheres. Examples found by the SPA included agricultural preparedness in conflict zones (e.g. Colombia); pioneering logistics and stockpiling for regional preparedness (PIROI Indian Ocean and PIRAC Caribbean); digitalisation and information management (South Pacific and Lebanon); a new focus on epidemic preparedness; and a willingness to explore and start to implement greening of humanitarian aid. 'Proximity to projects' was widely cited as a characteristic of ECHO's technical support, which paid dividends in terms of increasing understanding of contextual challenges and sharing learning and possible approaches. As mentioned above, survey respondents ranked DG ECHO's technical experiences as its second most important added value, after financial. The DIPECHO programme, launched in 1996 and transitioned into DG ECHO's current approach to DP within the period under evaluation, was both ground-breaking in its time, and provided fertile ground for technical innovation and dissemination of learning on DP. There were some exceptions to DG ECHO's capacity to enable innovation, however, e.g. in Palestine, where shock-responsive social protection systems were few, and technological innovation has also been hampered by weaknesses in the mobile network, movement and import restrictions. As explained by DG ECHO staff from the region, in Palestine there has been a constant need to adapt: *"Innovation is to know as much as possible about the frameworks in which we can operate."*

In some contexts, DG ECHO was regarded as being better able to advocate for preparedness because of its leadership on humanitarian action in general. For example, DG ECHO has been known among stakeholders consulted to 'push' for quality preparedness based on thorough risk assessments and for promoting a more holistic approach to preparedness than any single EU MS. Other voices however suggested that given the need to include governments as the key leader in preparedness, DG ECHO has to do so while carefully navigating principles to remain neutral.

Longevity of presence and support was one of DG ECHO's added values, although this is not specific to disaster preparedness. As highlighted by one stakeholder, *"the added value stems from the ECHO business model and notably the elements of partnership and field presence."* Consistent support over years was evident across all field visit countries. In Palestine, DG ECHO has been one of the very few donors working on DP from a civil defence and meteorology perspective and one of the very few donors that have looked at strengthening regional cooperation for preparedness. Also, DG ECHO funded projects¹⁹ enabled expansion at a larger scale of DP interventions, and this would not have been possible without DG ECHO's support. In Philippines, Uganda and Dominican Republic, stakeholders were convinced that the same results could not have been achieved without the years of DG ECHO investment. Furthermore, the extension of projects' durations to 24 months was seen as highly conducive to sustainable preparedness. This long-term investment has also generated reciprocity with other donors and opportunities for collaboration, e.g. in Central Asia, where DG ECHO was phasing out earthquake preparedness actions which were then picked up by USAID, albeit on a smaller scale. In Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, where DG ECHO has invested in DP for a long time and has been pulling back to invest elsewhere, other donors have been reported to taking over to keep DP moving forward. In Philippines, DG ECHO has had the strongest role of all donors in preparedness, with the US Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs (BHA), for example, focusing more on response.

3.4.2 Added value to other organisations and donors (JC4.2)

An area in which added value was not uniformly perceived is partnerships and coordination capacity.

On a global level, according to interviews DG ECHO has been strategic in its partnerships and has been nurturing partnerships with actors that go beyond the conventional humanitarian arena, for example, the World Bank on nexus and conflict issues. As highlighted in the SPA and interviews with key informants, partnerships were also surfacing with forecast-based financing actors, e.g. at the level of country teams in Asia (2019), in shock responsive social protection or health financing. At the regional level, DG ECHO has also developed partnerships with a strategic purpose, such as with CDEMA in the Caribbean and the French Red Cross. At the national level, however, the results were mixed. Some were clearly positive, such as in Uganda where DG ECHO has contributed to developing a cohort of partners that are knowledgeable about disaster risk and keen to work together to advance preparedness. Similarly, in Dominican Republic DG ECHO has funded consortia of implementing partners for several years, encouraging them to benefit from each other's expertise. Until the field office there closed, DG ECHO demonstrated a unique capacity to convene government, NGOs, UN and Red Cross on disaster preparedness. USAID has been the only other major preparedness donor in Dominican Republic (and in Uganda) and they were found to have a good level of trust in each other. However, in Palestine implementing partners had greater expectations of DG ECHO in leading and coordinating on preparedness. While DG ECHO's presence in Gaza was considered promising, and DG ECHO had a strong voice on humanitarian affairs in general, it has not brought together preparedness actors or actions. Although the West

¹⁹ e.g. 'Response and Preparedness to the COVID-19 Crisis and Escalations of Violence in Palestine' (2020/00926, Danish Red Cross), which worked closely with the Palestine Red Crescent Society.

Bank Protection consortium has been a positive example of ECHO using its political weight to engage in a politically difficult environment, which individual EU MS could not have achieved, no significant impact on preparedness has been noticed.

Despite their importance to disaster preparedness issues, coordination with climate change and environmental actors was not strong across the DG ECHO portfolio. In the words of one implementing partner, *“there is scope for MS to follow a coordinated approach, led by ECHO, especially in context of climate change.”* According to the SPA, coordination was more visible and uniform in other aspects of preparedness, including early warning, agriculture, and nutrition. In Uganda, contingency plans promoted by DG ECHO included national risk management and agriculture with some aspects of climate sensitive programming. The evaluation did not identify additional examples at country level. Box 4 presents further findings related to the thematic case study on climate change.

Box 4 Findings from thematic case studies – Climate change

The SPA carried out by the team shows that climate change has not been a main feature of the DG ECHO DP portfolio. Climate is not explicitly visible in many needs/risk assessments. Climate is more closely associated with targeted preparedness than regular humanitarian projects.

There are cases where climate risk and impacts are nonetheless taken very seriously. In Cuba, DG ECHO has engaged closely, using sophisticated statistical analysis and climate predictions, with national authorities on the likelihood of a hurricane hitting Havana. In Uganda, where drought is a key hazard in much of the country, IP's risk assessments are being revised to include climate change. At the broader level, DG ECHO funding for FAO's drought management work was informed by analysis of the trends and impacts of climate change.

While not widespread, climate preparedness projects reviewed model good practices. Compared to the larger portfolio, projects with a focus on climate change were more likely to be inclusive, to consider cost-effectiveness as a central criterion and to promote government preparedness. Climate change projects are also including components of climate-influenced biological – or health – hazards.

Despite their importance to disaster preparedness issues, DG ECHO's coordination with climate change and environmental actors has not been strong. There is an appetite among stakeholders, including EU MS, for greater leadership from DG ECHO on climate preparedness issues. Exchanges between DG ECHO and other EU actors suggest the need for DG ECHO to link climate change more closely with natural resource management. DG ECHO has demonstrated an interest in the greening of its humanitarian response as illustrated by the new Logistics Policy. DG ECHO projects are beginning to articulate ways to green logistics, which has strong implications for disaster preparedness.

Source: SPA, SLR, KIIs

Overall, there has been an appetite for more coordination and partnership between implementing partners and between DP donors, with leadership by DG ECHO. DG ECHO has held a position that could be capitalised upon in this regard. As one key informant expressed, *“I am continually frustrated on how much harder it is to coordinate on preparedness side (versus the response side). The mechanisms are just not there.”* Another stakeholder commented, *“Currently in the EU there are only a handful of Member States who are contributing significant finance for disaster response. ECHO makes up the greater proportion of funding. While often slow to get going ECHO can also provide a coordination function among MS and external donors and can add value in improving coherence in both preparedness and response actions.”* Another added that *“clear coordination/collaboration with INTPA & NEAR, would certainly increase the value addition of ECHO investments.”*

3.5 EQ5 – Effects at community level

To what extent has DG ECHO developed or reinforced DP capacity and practice at the community level?



Summary answer to the Evaluation Question

DG ECHO's preparedness portfolio has been known for its community focus ever since the DIPECHO budget line was launched. Based on all projects in the broader DG ECHO DP portfolio (including both the DPBL and regular humanitarian aid), about half were primarily aimed at communities and about half at other levels or other actors, indicating a balanced and diversified approach at all levels of the system, including the local.

Support for disaster preparedness among the projects sampled has been effective at the community level. In line with the guidance provided, DG ECHO implementing partners have generated greater awareness of disaster preparedness issues among their target communities. Building on this foundation, they have been successful at developing or reinforcing preparedness capacity of communities in all regions and in both urban and rural contexts. Targeted DP projects have done this more effectively than preparedness elements within regular humanitarian programmes. Effective community-level examples such as functioning EWS, contingency planning, logistics and stockpiling exist in all regions. They reflect application of the new disaster preparedness capacities acquired by communities through DG ECHO-funded projects. People in communities served by these projects feel more prepared than prior to these interventions.

As discussed in EQ1, the majority of DG ECHO support to DP reflects a good use of people- and community-centred approaches. Building on the proven contributions of such approaches to anticipating potential negative consequences and providing opportunities to mitigate them, the 2021 guidance strengthens DG ECHO's strategic focus in this area. Critical success factors in DG ECHO's portfolio include strong community engagement from the design phase and an established partner presence that generates trust and enables timely start-up.

This question asks about the level of preparedness among urban and rural communities to which DG ECHO-supported actions has contributed. It explores communities' awareness, capacity and ability to enact learned preparedness actions. It also examines to what extent community beneficiaries feel prepared.

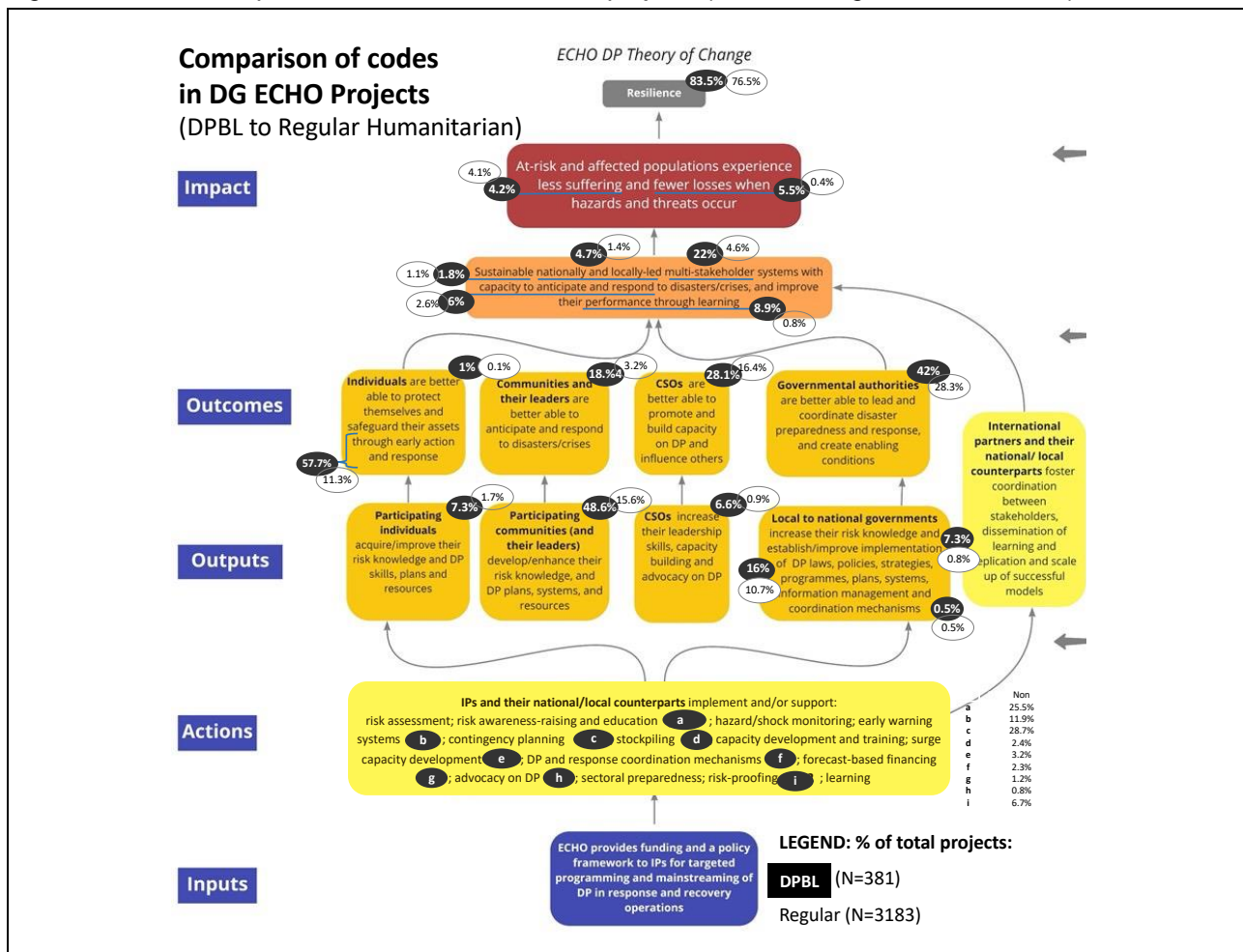
It is expected that DG ECHO will promote preparedness to systematically strengthen the capacity of communities and their leaders. It is expected that DP actions develop / enhance their risk knowledge, DP plans, systems and resources, thereby making communities better prepared to anticipate and respond to disasters.

3.5.1 Effects on urban and rural communities' preparedness capacities (JC5.1)

DG ECHO's preparedness portfolio has been known for its community focus ever since the DIPECHO budget line was launched. Its achievements are well-documented in summative learning reviews conducted in LAC and other regions during the period of this evaluation. The 2021 Guidance on preparedness still highlights 'the community' as both a target and agent of preparedness interventions, but it also describes the role and expected results for individuals, local organisations and governmental authorities, as depicted in the reconstructed Theory of Change in section 1.2. Figure 7 also shows the proportion of projects scored that reflect specific parts of this DP theory of change. In black are the proportions of the 381 DPBL (targeted DP) projects and in white, the non-DPBL. Fewer than half of the projects in DG ECHO's targeted DP portfolio (49%, and only 15% of the non-DP projects) explicitly state an intention to build community capacity to anticipate and respond to disasters. This is surprising given the well-known community-level focus of DG ECHO. Nevertheless, the most frequently cited activities – risk knowledge sessions (whose purpose is to increase community awareness) and EWS – are those implemented at community level and for communities' benefit. Generally smaller proportions are visible in the row indicating 'outcomes' – not limited to the community level, but also at the individual level.

Rather than a gap in programming, this suggests **a balanced portfolio, some projects aimed at communities and others at government and public authorities.** Such a balance is in line with recommendations of learning reviews on DG ECHO's long investment in DIPECHO. The SPA conducted for this evaluation found that, the mix between the number of projects designed and implemented primarily with communities in mind and the number of projects designed and implemented primarily with building capacity at different levels and of different actors was roughly fifty-fifty. Naturally, projects which aim to directly increase preparedness of national institutions indirectly benefit communities, as well.

Figure 7 Comparison of codes in DG ECHO projects (DPBL to Regular Humanitarian)



Source: Evaluation team, based on SPA

The DG ECHO community disaster preparedness projects examined have been found to be effective in raising awareness in both urban and rural settings. As highlighted in the mini-telephone survey carried out by the team, women, men, children and youth in communities assisted by DG ECHO demonstrate a good understanding of what preparedness is and why it is important. Across communities surveyed in Dominican Republic, Uganda and Philippines, individuals cited multiple actions they carried out prior to a recent disaster that align with those in projects implemented by ECHO's implementing partners. Examples include first aid, evacuation to higher ground or shelters, tying down roofs, protecting and preserving important documents and other assets, planting trees, isolating when sick, and others. A DP project in Palestine resulted in local organisations giving much more importance to disaster preparedness (essentially conflict-related) through the establishment of community awareness committees; in Philippines, the MOVE UP project in Metro Manila raised awareness of the need to financially prepare for possible adverse events, and in the Dominican Republic, awareness of the need for preparedness was raised among young people and the school population.

DG ECHO disaster preparedness projects have also resulted in community capacity being built. The eSurvey also indicates that over 80 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that DG ECHO's actions contribute to strengthening urban and rural community capacity to prepare for an imminent event. This is consistent with projects sampled. In Palestine, most sampled projects to build community capacity; e.g. health system capacity to respond to conflict-generated trauma, demolitions and settler violence and communities' capacities to undertake Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (VCA) were enhanced, which in addition to preparedness, contributes to improving DRR. In Philippines, all projects reviewed enhanced community-level preparedness capacities through preparedness trainings and drills; capacity that was used in real event. In the Dominican Republic, where the focus was on weather-related hazards, in addition to establishing community-level early warning projects and conducting training for local disaster management committees and first responders, DG ECHO funds have also strengthened capacities for preparing for drought at community level with material and technical support for adopting improved crop varieties. In Dominican Republic, as in the wider LAC region, successes are attributed to the strong legacy of DIPECHO projects and like in Philippines, to testing capacities in real and frequent disasters. Notably, DG ECHO-funded committees and mechanisms that were set up for other hazards were activated and functioned well for Covid-19. Uganda represents a unique case in that the current focus of targeted preparedness projects is on government systems and

contingency planning of authorities. Community-level preparedness under the current generation of DPBL projects takes place largely in regions coping with refugee influx and is at an early stage. Evidence beyond the countries studied in depth reflects the wide range of sectors in which DG-ECHO's funding is used – increasing capacity of health staff to deal with climate-related disease in Papua New Guinea, strengthening community health structures in Pakistan, training on volcanic eruption preparedness in Colombia (which probably saved lives when Volcan Galeras erupted after an ECHO-funded project).

Critical success factors of effective preparedness projects in DG ECHO's portfolio include engagement of communities from the design phase and an established partner presence that generates trust and enables timely start-up. The most challenging barriers that successful projects have to overcome are lack of adaptation of the project to the needs of the most vulnerable groups in the community, and weak local leadership and engagement. In Philippines and Dominican Republic, DG ECHO's legacy of community-based approaches is seen as a critical success factor. The learning generated by this specific focus and the capacities strengthened by repeated support for some actors and communities are considered to be strong foundations for future interventions. In Uganda, system-wide approaches are reportedly critical because they work both from governmental and community levels; they start with governments as the enablers and first responders before moving to increase their community focus.

DG ECHO's preparedness projects have had no unintended consequences of importance in the countries studied. Special care was taken by DG ECHO and implementing partners in Colombia to implement preparedness for protection in ways that avoided undesirable repercussions for victims of armed violence, conflict and displacement. In Uganda, an unforeseen benefit of DG ECHO preparedness work was to contribute to rebuilding the reputation of the National Red Cross Society and to build its awareness that its role is an auxiliary to government, not an independent agent with its own reputation and status to promote.

3.6 EQ6 – Effects at government level

To what extent have DG ECHO efforts in DP influenced multi-level government institutions, legislation, policies and practice?



Summary answer to the Evaluation Question

There is mixed evidence on the integration of DP in national sector policies and frameworks, in part because of the variable extent to which DG ECHO actually worked with governments. DG ECHO is not in a position to dictate national priorities, including preparedness, but nevertheless, it has supported the development or strengthening of national preparedness through organisational mandates, policies and frameworks. With the exception of Uganda, there is little evidence that governments played a role in coordinating DG ECHO DP-related actions. Despite the 2015 Sendai Framework, there are few autonomous national DRR and preparedness platforms, and in fact, DG ECHO has been moving away from supporting them in order to more tightly focus on preparedness and leave DRR to development actors.

Based on portfolio analysis, there was a degree of DG ECHO contribution to increased government DP awareness. DG ECHO implementing partners regularly organised awareness raising sessions which included government actors in about half of targeted DP projects and one quarter of regular humanitarian projects. Increased DP awareness among governments has been a moderate focus overall, but unevenly effective in the DG ECHO portfolio.

While DG ECHO support to build government preparedness capacity was excellent in some countries, it was entirely absent in others. Use of specific national DP instruments (e.g., contingency plans, shock responsive social protection, cash preparedness) was not systematic, although DG ECHO did systematically verify government structure operationality in project design, which builds chances for effective preparedness.

While some government actors and organisations have been increasingly acquiring knowledge and demonstrating skills in preparedness, they have been regularly prevented from acting on them due to lack of operational budgets, either for day-to-day operations or for emergency response. Nonetheless, some governments have increasingly been using newly acquired disaster preparedness capacity. Targeted preparedness projects funded by DG ECHO have produced higher levels of preparedness outputs, outcomes, and intermediate impacts for governments (measured against this evaluation's ToC) than the regular humanitarian projects.

This question asks about the level of preparedness among national and local governments to which DG ECHO-supported actions has contributed. It explores preparedness as supported by official architecture (policies, frameworks, platforms and institutions), coordination, and the governments' awareness, capacity and ability to enact learned preparedness actions. It also examines to what extent government beneficiaries feel prepared.

It is expected that DG ECHO will promote preparedness to systematically strengthen the capacity of first responders which includes “national and local governments”²⁰. It is expected that joint analyses, design and implementation engage governments, that funded efforts promote contingency planning and coordination among government agencies²¹, and that advocacy²² and risk communication “promote a culture of safety among local/national institutions”²³.

3.6.1 Effects on national DP policies, frameworks, platforms and organisations (JC6.1)

Evidence of the integration of DP in national sector policies and frameworks is mixed. In Palestine, DG ECHO did not work with the national institutions mandated for coordinating DRM and did not plan to do so. By contrast, in Uganda, DG ECHO was very active with government on preparedness issues. Ugandan government actors integrated preparedness systematically, as evidenced in the DG ECHO-funded development of district-level Contingency Plans by District Disaster Management Committees, whose membership covered a wide range of technical specialties. DG ECHO has widely contributed to the roadmap to the Ugandan DRM bill (currently under review). In the meantime, the UNDP-led DRM Plan, which covers DP, is now approved by Parliament and is pending final validation. In Dominican Republic, DG ECHO funding supported to the passage of new legislation on drought risk management. The national government had not previously regarded drought as a disaster; hence, it was excluded from the legal framework and funding for disaster management. Thanks to DG ECHO funding of an FAO-led consortium, drought has now been integrated into DRM legislation.

DG ECHO has directed (non-financial) support to governments despite not being in a position to dictate national priorities, including preparedness – humanitarian funding is imperatively neutral and must be activated even in emergencies neglected by national governments. Nonetheless, as reported in the Annex, more than 70% of eSurvey respondents (and over 20% strongly) responded that DG ECHO supports the development or strengthening of national preparedness through organisational mandates, policies and frameworks.

DG ECHO-produced risk and needs assessments at regional and national levels were not systematically developed in partnership with governments. There is no evidence that DG ECHO assessments systematically reflected governments’ needs and priorities. However, the field missions identified isolated examples where DG ECHO promoted joint country-level risk and needs assessments. Uganda has a government-owned National Risk and Vulnerability Atlas²⁴ that serves as a central repository and mapping of main hazards, and which directly informed many of the DG ECHO-funded actions and discussion (e.g., Contingency Planning, targeting of community EWS efforts, etc). In Dominican Republic (and Cuba) DG-ECHO funded a bi-national project²⁵ to institutionalise risk management tools, including for information management. This successful project has contributed to broader Caribbean initiatives for improving risk and needs assessments.

Evidence in the DG ECHO portfolio for DP-related coordination led by governments was mixed. It was strong in Uganda, where Government played a significant role in coordinating District Disaster Management Committees established under DG ECHO-funded DPBL projects in targeted districts. These committees have not yet been anchored in law (the Bill is under review), but have been functional and are exploring the allocation of 2% of their revenue for DP. They are made up of government staff, who claim ownership of Contingency Plans even though many government agents still look to DG ECHO to initiate or manage the biannual updating of Contingency Plans. In Palestine, government plays no role in DP coordination and DG ECHO has not actively explored working with government systems. The National Centre for DRM under the Prime Minister’s Office is mandated to coordinate DP but was found during the field mission to be unfamiliar with DG ECHO (and vice versa). In Dominican Republic, DG ECHO funded the telecommunications component of a wider EU-funded risk mapping project that aimed to support government capacity for preparedness and response.

²⁰ 2021 Guidance Note, p.4

²¹ 2021 DP Guidance Note p. 42: “Lack of coordination among governmental agencies and sectoral silos needs to be taken into consideration as this can limit the ability of local governments to actively pursue preparedness.”

²² 2021 DP Guidance Note, p.37: “Advocacy to promote positive change, and to influence the agendas and behaviour of national or local governments, organisations, or individuals must be systematically carried out. This can be pursued, for example, by demonstrating the benefits of preparedness and thus promoting the improvement of dedicated legal and institutional mechanisms or the scaling up of pilot interventions.”

²³ 2021 DP Guidance Note, p.37: “6.10 Advocacy and awareness, including risk communication, play an important role in strengthening preparedness by increasing knowledge and promoting a culture of safety among local and national institutions [...] and all other relevant stakeholders. As such, they complement activities aimed to strengthen capacity in preparedness. As awareness of the importance of preparedness measures increases, they are more likely to be included in broader national and local risk management policies and strategies.”

²⁴ <https://www.necoc.opm.go.ug/>

²⁵ ‘Be Alert Caribbean: Harmonizing Disaster Risk Management strategies and tools with an inclusive approach in the Caribbean’ (2017/00365, Oxfam).

Despite this substantial project and other institutional development projects, leadership on DRM by the national government of Dominican Republic was still weak and less visible than at municipal or provincial levels.

Autonomous national DRR and preparedness platforms, despite encouragement from the 2015 Sendai Framework, remain few and far between. In fact, DG ECHO informants reported a nuanced move away from DRR platforms, with the aim to more tightly focus on preparedness and leave DRR to development actors. This was promoted by the DP Guidance and stands confirmed by the very low presence of DRR platforms supported by the portfolio.

3.6.2 Effects on government DP capacity and promotion of DP practice (JC6.2)

Based on portfolio analysis, **DG ECHO has contributed to increased government DP awareness.** DG ECHO implementing partners regularly organised awareness raising sessions which included government actors in about half of targeted DP projects and one quarter of regular humanitarian projects. In Uganda, government officers interviewed at multiple levels spoke easily and knowledgeably about DP, demonstrating knowledge of multi-risk, Contingency Plans, integrated multi-sector approaches and synergies, forecast-based actions and the need to set up EWS at community level. In Philippines, DP advocacy focused on communities, not authorities (see EQ5 in section 3.5), but DG ECHO implementing partners influenced authorities' DP approaches and were successful in raising awareness, providing inputs and designing strategies and policies. In Dominican Republic, DG-ECHO funded trainings held for local or municipal governments by Oxfam, Plan and other partners have successfully engaged authorities in preparedness. The challenge they faced, however, was the high turnover of government staff. Palestine provides an example where DG ECHO support to awareness raising appears to have been mostly ineffective. Despite support for a WHO project to increase DP awareness at the Ministry of Health (MoH) Gaza,²⁶ a recent field mission by DG ECHO staff found a lack of ownership and understanding in the MoH.

Since 2015, three specific national DP instruments were featured in project design documents (eSF): Contingency Plans were mentioned in 78% of the DPBL projects (compared only 29% of regular humanitarian projects); Shock Responsive Social Protection was explicitly mentioned in 75 project documents overall; and Cash Preparedness was explicitly mentioned in 44 project documents overall.

In some countries, Contingency Plans and Cash Preparedness were flagship elements of targeted DP actions. At district level, in Uganda, the biannual Plans were key instruments upon which most preparedness discussions and actions were centred; they considered all pertinent threats mapped in the National Atlas and highlighted the top three. Contingency Plans have been put to the test and were used along with Crisis Modifiers for localised flooding, COVID-19 and population movement (i.e., refugee influxes highlighted in the Contingency Plans). There is yet no National Level Contingency Plan. National level instruments (i.e., the DRM Strategy) in Uganda have existed for many years but have never been given legal force. In Palestine, DG ECHO joined DG NEAR to support Shock-Responsive Social Protection, but neither party framed this as a DP intervention. As mentioned in other sections, in Dominican Republic DG ECHO has promoted the use of cash-based programming through funding to WFP,²⁷ who built capacity of the government's Social Protection entity to provide cash assistance to affected populations after disasters. The concept was successfully operationalised as a response to COVID-19 and will be further developed.

It is possible to infer overall contribution of DG ECHO actions to government capacity, but it is limited.

Roughly half of projects and two-thirds of DPBL projects scored on the basis of documentary evidence strongly and positively influenced DP capacity and practice at multi-level government organisations. Contribution to government capacity was also confirmed by close study of the projects featuring in the climate and conflict case studies. For example, in projects reviewed for the climate case study, more than half (7 out of 13) contained actions to increase government preparedness. At the same time, a substantial number of scored projects – 29% of all scored projects and 22% of DP projects – were judged to make no visible contribution to government preparedness capacity. According to eSurvey results in Annex, only 55% of respondents strongly agreed that DG ECHO actions have been successful in developing concrete government DP capacity. Some projects reviewed contain references to specific preparedness logistical concerns such as stockpiling, prepositioning, and warehouses; others do not. Box 5 presents additional information collected through the thematic case study on government preparedness.

Box 5 Findings from thematic case studies – Government

National governments have been a relatively new, exciting and important target of DG ECHO's preparedness action. Where government preparedness was a feature in DG ECHO actions, it has

²⁶ Through the project 'Building resilience of the health sector in order to reduce disease, deaths and disability during emergencies in Gaza' (2019/00172, WHO), and two follow up phases (2020/00333, 2021/00133).

²⁷ 'Enhancing humanitarian corridors in the Caribbean: Strengthening emergency supply chain preparedness and improving response modalities in the Dominican Republic to operate at national and regional levels (Haiti and Cuba).' (2019/00476, WFP)

established a system-wide approach connecting duty bearers (often also the first responders) to at-risk communities.

DG ECHO has effectively developed the capacity of duty bearers to respond to emergencies (of all types) in many contexts across the portfolio. In the most successful contexts, DG ECHO preparedness actions targeting governments went beyond simple awareness raising and inclusion in meetings to placement of paid staff inside the government offices (e.g., to help their disaster committees develop contingency plans or prepositioning of stocks). Another successful technique was to mobilise local Civil Society Organisations skilled to advocate on government spending issues.

While government preparedness was strongly promoted in the 2021 Guidance Note, explicit instructions or lists of good practice on how to do it have been lacking. Challenges that accompany the investment in government preparedness included the common lack of national legislation to support what decentralized governments are learning, and the latter not having operational budgets to put their knowledge to practice (or to restock the warehouses).

The thematic case study identified a number of factors that hinder or foster the effects of specific dimensions of capacity building:

- EWS were a strong and effective feature across most of the portfolio (a key feature in 69% of targeted and 12% of regular humanitarian projects), but are not 'end-to-end' systems. While information management such as through use of EWS was common in the DG ECHO project portfolio, there was little evidence for the national governments' role in managing the systems that have been set up.
- While government actors and organisations have been acquiring and demonstrating the knowledge and skills to engage in DP actions, they have been regularly prevented from doing so due to lack of operational budgets; e.g., access to neither DP budgets provided for DP by central governments to decentralised units nor to national contingency funds when a disaster strikes.²⁸
- Where capacity (and awareness) has been formed, it is being used – notably in Palestine and in Uganda – but lack of coordination and the multiplicity of roles and mandates are impediments.
- Targeted preparedness projects funded by DG ECHO demonstrated substantially higher levels of outputs and outcomes for governments (measured against this evaluation's ToC) than the regular humanitarian projects.

Source: SPA, SLR, KIIs.

Government staff consulted routinely expressed being more prepared for the next disaster event.

Uganda is a case where government agents have displayed growing confidence attributable to Contingency Plans processes promoted by DG ECHO and to work under the DPBL projects. In Palestine, as a result of ECHO funding, MoH Gaza felt better prepared for conflict related risks, and West Bank Government felt prepared to respond to flash floods and weather-related emergencies more efficiently and effectively, but the general feeling of informants is that the system remains fragmented and uncoordinated, with a financially constrained government that could not support disaster preparedness efforts because of competing priorities. In Dominican Republic, government representatives felt more prepared for storms and floods thanks to DG ECHO and wider EU support, but not to earthquakes, for which they have received little donor support.

The evaluation found few unintended effects from DP actions. In LAC, a long history of DG ECHO DP projects has produced a generation of preparedness champions at different administration levels. This community of preparedness practitioners at such a level was more than could have been expected from repeated short term DG ECHO projects alone. In Uganda, an unexpected effect of the DG ECHO work was to restore the trust in the National Red Cross society. Given the well-known auxiliary role of every National Society in support of national governments, this support made good sense at many levels.

As DG ECHO cannot allocate funds directly to government agencies, projects contributed to building national government preparedness indirectly through various techniques. The simplest solution is to organise capacity building targeting or at least involving government staff. This was found in the projects scored and supported by informants. The Red Cross, enacting its official auxiliary role, offers another opportunity to leverage actions to support governments. Red Cross representatives reported that their DG ECHO-funded work is framed directly around national priorities and systems. Processes are simpler where systems are stronger such as in LAC, Central Asia and Lebanon. Another option employed by DG ECHO is to fund preparedness-skilled staff that sits inside government entities for a short period of time (e.g. three months). This has long been the case in LAC (DG ECHO's original DIPECHO region) and also in Burkina Faso.

²⁸ Although the DP Guidance does not offer specific suggestions for what DG ECHO staff and partners do in this common scenario, DG ECHO proposes a variety of options to make funds available in a timely manner for anticipatory action and/or early response. These options (Crisis Modifiers and E/RRTs, etc) are not designed for use by governments, but are at times designed and implemented in concertation with governments.

Seconded DP experts have specific objectives such as supporting the government agency to set up EWS, conduct a joint needs/risk assessment or organise a Contingency Plan.

While success relies on or is challenged by many factors, the evaluation found some good practice examples in DG ECHO's work across many sectors. Relationships, existing capacity and the financial resources which disaster management authorities can access were considered success factors. Turnover of government staff also surfaced as a key constraint in LAC and fragility/conflict settings in Afghanistan. Political and technical rotations posed regular challenges to building preparedness due to a strong reliance on capacity development lost during turnovers, as an example from LAC demonstrated. Many good practice examples from DG ECHO's work on government preparedness exist. In Burkina Faso, health preparedness was piloted by an NGO consortium and has been prepared for handover to the government. Palestine evidence suggested that timeframes need to be realistic to avoid putting too much pressure on and to build/nurture relationships with national partners.

Conflict and civil-military preparedness was visible in a few settings. The DPBL supported the development and implementation of contingency plans in Burkina Faso that included conflict preparedness. In Colombia, DG ECHO linked authorities (at their request) to implementing partners that could build capacity in violence and conflict preparedness. In El Salvador and in Afghanistan, DG ECHO has supported certificate-based training for DP department staff. DG ECHO provided financial support to the Red Cross in Colombia to train the military academy in international humanitarian law, the role of the military in disaster preparedness and on the sphere standards, which later became well integrated by the military. Table 2 below presents more examples from the project scoring conducted for the national government preparedness case study. It seemed plausible that DP capacity was becoming anchored in awareness and training long (i.e. among implementing partners or communities) before DG ECHO influenced the official national level processes.

Table 2 Overview of national government preparedness actions

| Technique to build National Government Preparedness | Number (out of 10 projects scored) | Examples from: |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Conventional training/capacity building of government staff (event-based training, with government staff as 1 of many participants or the main target) | 5 | Mozambique – 2018 – WFP; Peru – 2015 – NGO; Bolivia, Ecuador – 2020 – Red Cross; Iran – 2020 – UNICEF; Pakistan – 2020 – NGO |
| Support for hardware: Funding or consultants assigned to support technical or hardware for Governments (not communities): e.g., EWS, warehouses, evacuation shelters, etc. | 5 | Bangladesh – 2019 – NGO; Mauritania – 2021 – WFP; Mozambique – 2018 – WFP; Iran – 2020 – UNICEF; Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon – 2016 – UNICEF |
| Support for software: funding or consultants assigned to support Government design or improvement of DP contingency, plans, processes, policy. | 4 | Bangladesh – 2019 – NGO; Mauritania – 2021 – WFP; Bolivia, Ecuador – 2020 – Red Cross; Pakistan – 2020 – NGO |
| Hands-on training: exchange visits with other countries OR DG ECHO/implementing partner staff posted inside gov for 3 or more months, etc. | 3 | Mauritania – 2021 – WFP; Pakistan – 2020 – NGO; Mozambique – 2018 – WFP <i>KIs suggest this was formerly common in LAC and has been noted in Burkina Faso.</i> |
| DG ECHO or implementing partner advocacy for DP in government (i.e. for awareness-raising, not linked directly to software above). | 3 | Mauritania – 2021 – WFP Mozambique – 2018 – WFP Bolivia, Ecuador – 2020 – Red Cross |

Source: SPA

3.7 EQ7 – Cost effectiveness

To what extent has DG ECHO achieved cost-effectiveness in its support to DP?



Summary answer to the Evaluation Question

Overall DG ECHO achieved good efficiency in the implementation of its support to DP. There have been positive examples of DG ECHO and its partners lobbying for more efficient use of funding at country level. However, DG ECHO has not systematically considered and monitored efficiency and cost-effectiveness of

DP activities during the project cycle. Consequently, the monitoring and reporting on such issues varied between DP activities and implementing partners.

The cost-effectiveness of preparedness as a concept (i.e. 'preparedness pays') has been widely accepted within DG ECHO. It has been acknowledged that preparedness makes economic sense by saving time and lives, making DP a cost-effective tool in itself. However, DG ECHO has not yet engaged in measuring the savings produced by preparedness and seems to have no strong detailed position on the cost benefits of DP.

Overall, evolutions in DG ECHO's policy were informed by planned monitoring and learning as well as organic learning. Learning and applying lessons learnt across systems has contributed to cost-effectiveness. However, there is no systemwide mechanisms to enable the cultivation, documentation and sharing of learning and good practice on DP in DG ECHO. While there have been positive examples of DG ECHO nurturing a culture of sharing and building awareness of preparedness at country level, there have been significant differences across regions and countries on how well learning was identified and captured.

This question asks about the level of cost-effectiveness and learning in DG ECHO's support to DP. It explores i) issues of efficiency, i.e. waste of resources, major delays implementation; ii) cost-effectiveness considerations with DP actions, i.e. in regard to specific geographic areas, actors and DP activities; iii) cost-effectiveness of DP compared to other humanitarian funding; and iv) learning mechanisms and sharing of good practices on DP across DG ECHO.

It is expected that DG ECHO will take sufficient actions to ensure efficiency and cost-effectiveness of DP actions throughout design and implementation. Further, it is expected that learning and applying lessons learnt across systems has also contributed to cost-effectiveness. Consolidating and applying lessons from a response or preparedness action enhances the likelihood of a repeat or scaled effort resulting in even stronger benefits for governments and communities.

3.7.1 Cost-effectiveness (JC7.1)

Overall, the implementation of DG ECHO support to DP has been efficient. The team didn't identify any efficiency issues in the projects reviewed. There have been positive examples of DG ECHO and its partners lobbying for more efficient use of funding at country level. The DG ECHO field office in Uganda was reported by multiple informants to have questioned extravagant uses of related funds. In Dominican Republic, WFP, one of DG ECHO's key implementing partners, made a deal with the government to exonerate it of any import and export charges, thereby making it a more cost-efficient preparedness hub for the humanitarian corridors project²⁹ and others. Similarly, DG ECHO's funding of a major warehouse managed by the Dominican Red Cross which supplied multiple other partners was an indicator of a cost-effective approach. Box 6 presents further examples on factors contributing to efficient and cost-effective DP actions.

Box 6 Factors contributing to making DP actions efficient and cost-effective

Looking across the portfolio and all sources, the evaluation found the following factors contributing to efficiency and cost-effectiveness in DG ECHO's DP actions:

1. **Localisation (active engagement of local actors in DP actions).** Localisation was found to be strong in Uganda, where local actors were built into every DP-BL consortium and had increasingly visible and instrumental roles advocating for portions of government budgets to be allocated to preparedness. DG ECHO also considered cost-effectiveness as high when national partners (through consortia with DG ECHO implementing partners) received a large share of the funding. A good example for this was a project implemented by the Danish Red Cross³⁰ in Palestine, through which the Palestine Red Crescent Society received a large proportion (80%) of the funding.
2. **Exchange between DG ECHO field offices/Technical Assistants and other DP stakeholders.** Strong or frequent exchanges between DG ECHO Technical Assistants and other DP stakeholders (implementing partners, EUDs, governments and other donors) were found to be instrumental to identify cost-effective solutions, e.g. by sharing positive examples and analyses. This was evident in Uganda, where implementing partners had a close relationship with the DG ECHO TA, and in LAC, where DG ECHO and implementing partners have been exchanging on the cost-effectiveness of different

²⁹ 'Enhancing humanitarian corridors in the Caribbean: Strengthening emergency supply chain preparedness and improving response modalities in the Dominican Republic to operate at national and regional levels (Haiti and Cuba),' (2019/00476, WFP)

³⁰ 'Response and Preparedness to the COVID-19 Crisis and Escalations of Violence in Palestine' (2020/00926, Danish Red Cross); while the project was not funded from the DPBL, it had a dedicated preparedness component.

preparedness activities.³¹ Meanwhile, in Palestine, the lack of communication within DG ECHO (between the Gaza and West Bank Technical Assistants) was found to be a limiting factor.

3. **Capacity building.** Developing skills in preparedness, especially among national actors not expected to leave the country, was widely found across all DG ECHO projects assessed. However, stakeholders consulted suggested that indicators in the SingleForms (eSF) for such training have not always been SMART and needed to go beyond the numbers of individuals trained. Further, it was found important to keep in mind that not all capacity building equals preparedness.

Source: SPA, KIs, eSurvey

DG ECHO, however, has not adequately considered and monitored efficiency and cost-effectiveness of DP activities during the project cycle. While survey respondents considered DG ECHO to ensure cost-effectiveness throughout the project cycle³², the evaluation found only few incentives and no tangible tools provided by DG ECHO to monitor and improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness during implementation. Overall, only 15% of projects scored in the SPA featured a strong documented approach to efficiency and cost-effectiveness. As confirmed by implementing partners, Ficheops contained little mention of requests to change proposed budgets for cost-effectiveness' sake. Country-level stakeholders consulted confirmed that cost-effectiveness did not play a role in selecting DPBL projects, partly because there were only few proposals to choose from. According to DG ECHO staff, *"once the budget is approved and grant agreement signed, DG ECHO's influence on cost effectiveness is less dominant."* According to both DG ECHO and implementing partners, the latter have the main responsibility to ensure cost-effectiveness during project implementation.

Consequently, the monitoring and reporting on cost-effectiveness varied between DP activities and implementing partners. According to the SPA, cost-effectiveness was more strongly considered in regular humanitarian projects than in DPBL projects.³³ As a potential reason for this, DG ECHO staff suggested that the cost-effectiveness of DP was more difficult to assess because of the nature of DP (as a process involving individuals and institutions). The SPA also found that the maturity and size of organisations affected the quality of cost-effectiveness monitoring and reporting in project documentation. Projects implemented by UN entities showed stronger monitoring of cost-effectiveness, while the sampled projects implemented by NGOs and the Red Cross received lower ratings.

It has been widely accepted within DG ECHO that preparedness as a concept is cost-effective. DG ECHO staff and partners consulted agreed that preparedness made economic sense. Pre-positioning locally produced food and non-food items for response was considered as more cost-effective than voluminous last-minute acquisition and imports. Providing early warnings that (e.g., via evacuation) halt or lessen the risk of death or injury to sudden-onset events has been a precious saving, and planning contingencies and early access to funds has been known to save time and lives. Informants believed that each Euro spent on preparedness saved several in response, making DP a cost effective tool in itself. This has also been confirmed by the 2017 SAIO DG ECHO Evaluation³⁴, which concluded that *"preparedness addresses the same needs as humanitarian response, but in a more proactive and cost-efficient manner, aiming to prevent the hazard from becoming a crisis"*, and reflected in the 2021 DP Guidance, which states that DIPECHO has *"shown that investing in preparedness and risk reduction is efficient and contributes to saving lives."*

However, DG ECHO has not systematically engaged in measuring the savings produced by preparedness and seems to have no strong detailed position on the cost benefits of DP. The evaluation found no evidence of DG ECHO calculating the effectiveness of a DP action after a disaster hits, assessing how much has been invested in preparedness versus response and converting this information into advocacy for future investment. Multiple DG ECHO staff highlighted that they lacked adequate evidence to advocate more strongly for an increase in the DPBL. The lack of DG ECHO internal evidence on this matter was also laid bare in the 2021 Guidance Note, which refers to a 2014 DG ECHO-external paper on the cost effectiveness of disaster preparedness³⁵. Nothing more recent has been produced by DG ECHO since, despite recommendations from multiple evaluations and learning reviews of DIPECHO and other investments.

³¹ They have been discussing, among other things, whether preparedness for protection, which is where the region has generated significant learning – was much more costly than other preparedness projects because of the high level of specialisation of the human resources required.

³² When asked about whether DG ECHO takes appropriate actions to ensure cost-effectiveness throughout the project cycle, 79% of survey respondents agreed (of which 22% do so strongly); 11% of respondents disagreed.

³³ Five of the 17 regular humanitarian projects scored (29%) featured a strong approach, with both DG ECHO staff and implementing partners monitoring cost effectiveness, while for the targeted DP projects, it was only 4 out of 32 (13%). Out of the 3,546 projects screened, up to 51% of all and 60% of DPBL projects demonstrated low or no efforts to ensure cost-effectiveness.

³⁴ DG ECHO (2017). Evaluation of the ECHO assistance in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Region, 2012-2015.

³⁵ Centre for Climate Research (2014). Disaster Mitigation is Cost Effective. World Development Report Background Note.

Some considerations of cost-effectiveness are also missing. A response effort repeated for multiple years in a row in the same community was proposed by some informants as an indicator that should trigger a targeted DP effort likely contributing to cost-effectiveness.

3.7.2 Learning Mechanisms (JC7.2)

Learning and applying lessons learned saves money. Across systems learning contributes to cost-effectiveness by making DG ECHO actions more fine-tuned, reflective of good practice and more likely to bear fruit. Consolidating and applying lessons from a response or preparedness action should enhance the likelihood of a repeat or scaled effort resulting in even stronger benefits for governments and communities.

There has been only limited tangible proof of institutionalised learning mechanisms across DG ECHO. While informants spoke vividly about what they had learned and applied in DP, no systemwide mechanisms were found to ensure the cultivation, documentation and global sharing of learning and good practice in preparedness. Nevertheless, 77% of survey respondents considered DG ECHO to be a learning organisation. The strongest learning mechanisms were found in singular regions, e.g., LAC, where the SPA found that lessons learnt were a visible component of nearly every project design document (and were slightly more prominent in larger and UN projects). Although learning from the LAC region has also reportedly influenced the global ECHO DP guidelines, some informants considered the transfer to the global level could have been even greater, *“given the volume of learning generated.”* While the repeat funding many DG ECHO partners have received year after year has allowed them to adjust project design based on previous experience, there has been no system in place insisting on higher learning.

Indeed, there have been positive examples of DG ECHO nurturing a culture of sharing and building awareness at country level. DG ECHO and its partners have engaged in looking for synergies and setting up opportunities for sharing and learning. Implementing partners in Philippines and Uganda confirmed that feedback from DG ECHO was frequent and the use of lessons-learnt was encouraged. For instance, in Uganda, with DG ECHO’s encouragement, there was a fruitful exchange between the DP consortia from different regions. Another example were joint missions between DG ECHO and EUD staff, which were reported to contribute to consolidate learning. Also, the District Disaster Management Committees have been a perfect venue to promote learning and sharing, as have been the national and some new regional DRR platforms (aligned with Sendai). In LAC, some projects were dedicated to systematising learning across multiple stakeholders (e.g., on urban preparedness). Also, the close network of DP professionals has promoted learning. In Colombia, implementing partners funded by DG ECHO have contributed to learning about how preparedness for conflict and protection differs from natural hazard-focused preparedness.³⁶ See Box 7 on further findings from the thematic case study on conflict.

Box 7 Findings from thematic case studies – Conflict

A minority of DG ECHO projects use ‘conflict sensitivity’ explicitly in their risk/needs assessments. This means that despite the use of the Resilience Marker, it is difficult to assess if DG ECHO projects are contributing to creating new conflicts or exacerbating old ones.

Projects that included conflict preparedness provided valuable new knowledge and practice to the preparedness field. Unlike preparedness for natural hazards, conflict preparedness sometimes requires that early warning is known to a limited group of people, messaging is highly targeted, and evacuation arrangements are not made public.

While conflict preparedness is not yet a common feature of DG ECHO actions, the official inclusion of conflict as one of the four groups of threats in the 2021 Guidance Note was welcomed by many stakeholders. However, some highlighted the need for more active collaboration between European actors on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Moreover, while DG ECHO has included conflict as a hazard to be addressed through disaster preparedness, national governments tend to continue to manage conflict risk and impacts through different parts of their governance structures to disaster risk, which hinders NGOs promoting a multi-risk approach.

Source: SPA, SLR, KIs

However, there have been significant differences across regions and countries with regard to how well learning was identified and captured. In Palestine, learning is limited by low information-sharing exchange within DG ECHO’s Gaza and West Bank portfolio. Attempts to replicate positive achievements were mostly IP-driven³⁷

³⁶ According to interviews with regional DG ECHO staff, recent work with IDPs has demonstrated that preparedness for conflict requires caution with information; for example, early warning messages need to be passed discretely rather than broadcasted widely, and instead of being easily-accessible safe havens from severe weather, large public shelters may be unsafe for people seeking to flee violence.

³⁷ E.g. through the project ‘Improved emergency preparedness, response and humanitarian advocacy for health for the most vulnerable in oPt.’ (2021/00133, WHO), which has aimed for replicating positive achievements in health preparedness from Gaza in the Westbank.

and implementing partners consulted highlighted that DG ECHO has not been capitalising on the potential opportunities for learning and further development of policy. In Philippines lesson-sharing across implementing partners has not become a common practice yet.

Evolutions in DG ECHO's policy were informed by planned monitoring as well as organic learning. All SingleForms (eSF) incorporated monitoring plans and a place for commentary on results and challenges. In some countries and regions, DG ECHO has invested in learning events and initiatives; for instance, in LAC, where DG ECHO has supported regional UNDRR conferences and has funded projects dedicated to documentation of learning generated by implementing partners. The close relationship between DG ECHO and their implementing partners in many contexts also has facilitated joint reflection and dissemination of lessons, which was appreciated by interviewees from both parties. Also, lessons learnt from evaluations commissioned during the evaluation period have been reflected in the design of DG ECHO's DP activities. For instance, the 2017 SAIO DG ECHO Evaluation³⁸ promoted the inclusion of drought and a greater focus on national government stakeholders, and the 2019 USAID IOM Nepal Evaluation³⁹ proposed the *"establishment and use of warehouses at provincial, municipal and ward level as a core part of disaster preparedness"* – all of which have been visible in the 2015-2020 DG ECHO DP portfolio and in the 2021 DP guidance. For further lessons learnt integrated into the 2021 DP guidance, please see Box 8.

Box 8 Learning in the 2021 DP Guidance

The 2021 DP guidance has integrated and highlighted lessons learnt from past activities. The guidance itself articulates a clear desire to learn. DG ECHO has promoted in the 2021 Guidance Note *"support for learning and the development of policy and good practice."* It recognises that *"evidence-based learning has a crucial role to play in the development of preparedness and effective response"* and that *"such learning requires a structured approach and resources"* which DG ECHO commits itself to. Examples of learning embodied in the DP Guidance include:

- While DG ECHO was previously focused on sudden-onset hazards (except for some regions such as the Horn of Africa), over the evaluation period their DP approach has grown to more widely include drought and slower onset hazards.
- DG ECHO has streamlined its role in preparedness (encouraging DRR, for example, to be taken up by development actors).
- DG ECHO has described setting up an internal mechanism to ensure more consistently the collection and analysis of evidence and lessons learnt from the implementation of DG ECHO funded projects. DG ECHO has also described developing new DP and Early Action indicators to facilitate monitoring and reporting on a mainstreamed preparedness approach.
- The Resilience Marker was revised in 2021 to offer opportunities for better monitoring and reporting on *"how projects include a preparedness dimension and how the variety of risks inherent to humanitarian crises are taken into account in project design and implementation."*

Source: 2021 DG ECHO DP Guidance

3.8 EQ8 - Budget allocations (efficiency)

Was the size of DG ECHO DP investment proportionate to expected achievement?



Summary answer to the Evaluation Question

DG ECHO has made solid contributions to DP with small budgets and took into consideration the action of other donors in its funding decision to avoid overlaps. Overall, DG ECHO spending on DP has increased during the evaluation period. However, the size of investment has not been proportionate to rising levels of risks and needs. 'Targeted' spending on disaster preparedness represented a very small proportion of the overall DG ECHO budget during the period under review, accounting for 24% of DG ECHO spending on DP and for less than 3% of the total DG ECHO funding. When comparing the DPBL disbursement to the regular humanitarian budget by region the evaluation found a strong inverse correlation. This mirrors a belief within DG ECHO that investing in preparedness lessens funds available for humanitarian response.

³⁸ DG ECHO (2017). Evaluation of the ECHO assistance in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Region, 2012-2015.

³⁹ IOM (2019). Final Evaluation of Technical Support to Government of Nepal to implement Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act Project.

This question asks whether DG ECHO budget allocations to DP are proportionate to expected achievement, based on needs and risk, and balanced with actions of other donors.

It is expected that DG ECHO DP investment was aligned with evolving needs and risks, considered the actions of other donors, and was commensurate to DG ECHO objectives and expected outcomes.

3.8.1 DG ECHO budget allocations are based on needs, evolving risks and balance other donors (JC8.1)

Estimated DG ECHO spending on DP⁴⁰ represented 25% of the total EU institutions' spending on preparedness (as reported by OECD).⁴¹ The estimate also represented 12% of the DG ECHO total budget. Overall, EU institutions during the evaluation period were the world's third largest contributor to disaster preparedness, contributing jointly a total of USD 4,752 million to this theme between 2015 and 2020, following USA and Japan. Among EU MS, Germany, Switzerland and France are the top three donors. As indicated in the evaluation's ToR, the total DG ECHO spending on DP during the evaluation period accounted to EUR 1.2 billion, including EUR 291 million for the DPBL and EUR 906 million of humanitarian response funding spent on preparedness activities.⁴² DG ECHO spending on DP made a substantial rise from 9% of the total DG ECHO budget (EUR 107 million) in 2015 to 42% (EUR 484 million) in 2020⁴³. Overall, for the evaluation period, this represents EUR 1.2 billion invested in DP – 12% of the DG ECHO total budget over the period. However, amounts spent on DP in humanitarian response projects could also have been calculated in a different way, coming to different figures; for further thoughts on this, please see Box 9.

Box 9 Tagging DP funding in the DG ECHO portfolio

The evaluation set out to explore the way DG ECHO had estimated the total contribution to disaster preparedness indicated in the evaluation's ToR. In fact, the team was unable to independently reproduce the numbers from the ToR. The measurement can represent a complex analysis with many moving parts based on a confusing definition of 'mainstreaming preparedness in response' that does not lend itself to easy calculations. The databases (HOPE and EVA) do not simplify the analysis and the existing markers in the eSF (Resilience, etc) are not digitally converted to fields in the database. Use of project titles or other key words is not conducive to this exercise, except for a very concise set of terms aligned to the 2021 Guidance Note preparedness definitions.

The evaluation team aimed to propose a way to simplify the estimation of DG ECHO total contribution to DP, supporting annual calculations. The modest proposal is featured in the evaluation recommendations below (see Box 10).

Source: document analysis

Targeted spending on DP has increased while the regular humanitarian budget has fallen. Importantly, targeted spending remains an insignificant proportion of the overall DG ECHO budget. DG ECHO's investment in targeted preparedness, as embodied by the DPBL amounted to less than 3% of the total DG ECHO funding, and to 24% of the total DG ECHO DP funding⁴⁴. The DPBL started in 2015 at EUR 37.3 million and reached EUR 75 million allocated to it through WWDs in 2020. Using totals calculated from HOPE data, this averages between 2 and 7% annually of the total DG ECHO portfolio, showing a small increase over the years under study. Further, the team's analysis of HOPE data showed that the average EC contribution to DPBL projects was smaller than for regular projects.⁴⁵ In LAC, as confirmed by interviews, there has been a trend to reduce the budget for targeted DP projects and increase integrated DP – and associated funding – into regular humanitarian projects. Despite an overall increase in DG ECHO spending on DP and in the DPBL, there were no clear trends for an increase in DP budget visible in the country contexts studied.

When comparing the DPBL disbursement to the regular humanitarian budget by region the evaluation found a strong inverse correlation. While spending on DP has risen (the highest volumes of the DPBL are in LAC and Asia), funding for regular humanitarian response has fallen (the lowest volumes are found in the same regions, see Figure 23). The MENA region, the region with the smallest DPBL funding, received the greatest volume of humanitarian response funding. A tentative explanation for this is that targeted DP activities

⁴⁰ The total is a sum of the total value of the DPBL (EUR 291 million) and a rough estimate of what regular humanitarian funding (for response) also contributed to DP estimated by DG ECHO and featured in the terms of reference. This second part of the estimate was not able to be replicated by the evaluation team.

⁴¹ 'EU institutions' budget allocations to sector '470 Disaster Preparedness, Total' between 2015 and 2020, as reported by the OECD DAC, amounted to USD 4.8 billion.

⁴² For 2015-2020, DPBL funding amounted to EUR 290.1 million; total DP funding was EUR 1.2 billion, and the total DG ECHO budget amounted to EUR 9.9 billion.

⁴³ See footnote 40.

⁴⁴ See footnote 40.

⁴⁵ HOPE database (N=3527 projects 2015 to 2021): The average EC contribution to regular projects is EUR 3.09 million compared to EUR 1.06 million for DPBL projects.

were directed to high-risk countries which have more stable and mature administrations that can absorb and sustain such investment. The list of countries that did not receive any funding from the DPBL⁴⁶ supported this.

Further, the share of DPBL projects varied substantially between countries. Every DG ECHO region had a set of countries that have not received any funding from the DPBL. Three regions also had a set of countries that received only DPBL (and no other) funding. For each country context, DG ECHO started in 2018 to prepare 'Country Preparedness Fiches' as a requirement to acquire funding from the DPBL. However, the evaluation found that not all country and regional offices submit Fiches to acquire DP funding. Informants also conveyed that the volume of DPBL per country depended on individuals (i.e., DG ECHO Technical Assistants) advocating based on perceived need. It also depends on experienced partner presence: some countries reportedly got too many proposals, while others reported few to choose from. The duration of DPBL proposals regularly extends 24 months which indicates that proposals may not be needed every year.

Overall, the size of DG ECHO total spending on DP was small and not proportionate to rising levels of risk and need. Of the survey respondents, 59% found that DG ECHO budget allocations to DP were not aligned to risks and needs. Respondents repeatedly insisted on the fact that the needs have far outweighed the budget allocations. DG ECHO field staff consulted also highlighted the 'top-down' nature of funding allocations, which were based on political decisions at HQ level. Stakeholders consulted across countries considered DG ECHO spending too small and have faced budgetary constraints in DP funding. In Philippines, for instance, DPBL proposals of good quality could not be funded, while in Uganda, stakeholders consulted found budgets for targeted DP too low to achieve sustainable early actions and government-owned response operations.

At the same time, there has been fear within DG ECHO that investing in preparedness lessens funds available for humanitarian response. DG ECHO staff repeatedly stressed that nothing was more important than having funds available and accessible for humanitarian response activities and expressed concerns that investing in preparedness could potentially divert funding from such activities. Debates on the commensurate amount of DP have been ongoing, e.g. some suggest to slowly increase the share of DP funding year by year, until governments have their own contingencies in place to manage inevitable responses themselves.

DG ECHO took into consideration the preparedness actions of other donors, overlaps in DP funding were not an issue in the portfolio. There was little risk for overlap with other donors because few donors were active in conducting targeted DP. Further, donor coordination was found to be good in the countries studied. Positive examples include the West Bank Protection consortium in Palestine, which is funded by various donors, including DG ECHO. In Philippines and Uganda, there has been a clear distribution of activities among donors, divided by geographical focal areas for DRR & response. In Dominican Republic, DG ECHO and the US Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs (BHA) enjoyed a good information-sharing relationship and shared and co-funded several key implementing partners for DP, such as WFP.

3.1 EQ9 - Sustainability

To what extent did DG ECHO achieve sustainable results through its disaster preparedness efforts?



Summary answer to the Evaluation Question

Despite an expressed intention to contribute to longer-term resilience, DG ECHO's preparedness portfolio has not yet consistently delivered sustainable results. Successful examples exist of preparedness mechanisms, behaviours and other capacities that were developed during DG ECHO-funded projects and continue to function several years later, but so do examples of DP support outputs and outcomes that were not sustained after projects ended.

While most DG ECHO-funded programmes integrated strategies and factors in their design that promoted sustainability, many challenges emerged during and after implementation. These include failure by governments to allocate a budget for preparedness after the project ends, high turnover of government staff whose capacities were built in DG ECHO projects, and a lack of follow-on projects to consolidate achievements resulting from preparedness mainstreaming in humanitarian response. Implementing partners have found ways to overcome these and other context-specific difficulties by focusing efforts at the level which promises most return.

Although preparedness and integration of risk reduction measures have been clearly considered by DG ECHO to be intrinsic to its humanitarian action, DG ECHO has also acknowledged that development actors play a key role in scaling up and complementing these interventions, and are thus needed for their long-

⁴⁶ E.g. Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan.

term sustainability and to ensure their contribution to developing resilience. However, while promising in some countries, DG ECHO's intention to ensure sustainability through coordination between preparedness and development actors and 'nexus programming' was only partially realised during the evaluation period.

This question asks about the level of sustainable results achieved through DG ECHO DP actions. It explores i) the integration of sustainability issues in the design and action of DP issues as well as ii) building links between DP and other mechanisms to promote sustainability, including the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

It is expected that DG ECHO DP actions have promoted the integration of supported solutions into national systems, have included exit strategies and have eventually been handed over to long-term development actors. Further, it is expected that actions have clearly linked preparedness to development and recovery.

3.1.1 Sustainability in design and implementation (JC9.1)

For preparedness to result in increased resilience, it must be sustainable; DG ECHO's performance in this regard left significant room for improvement. Increased resilience was the most common intended impact cited in DG ECHO funding decisions worldwide and was most frequently cited in project documentation from Asia and LAC. Approximately 85% of all scored projects in the portfolio analysis were rated as at least moderately sustainable. One illustrative example highlighted by DG ECHO staff was in Azerbaijan where, several years after an ECHO-funded project ended there was a strong earthquake and all children were evacuated from a school in two minutes, just before the building collapsed, thanks to the drills they had learned and practised during the DG ECHO project. Hundreds of lives were saved.

However, many project reports, especially for projects that intended to strengthen the preparedness of national government (20% overall and 33% DPBL projects) cited sustainability challenges. The reasons for this often relate to lack of funds after the project ends, or lack of political will to allocate funds. Other sustainability problems faced by DG ECHO-funded programmes that were identified in the eSurvey included high turnover of technical staff in governmental positions and lack of follow-up for emergency response operations with mainstreamed preparedness. Some implementing partners still regarded the maximum duration of DG ECHO preparedness projects (24 months) as being too short, although there is recognition that 24 months is much more conducive to lasting results than the initial maximum of 12 months for targeted disaster preparedness interventions.

At country level, evidence of sustainability varied. In Palestine the Danish Red Cross-implemented project⁴⁷ has achieved sustainable results in community preparedness through participatory vulnerability and capacity assessments that increased community ownership and even leadership of risk management on a local level. However, implementing partners have encountered limited possibilities for strengthening and sustaining government preparedness, due to the absence of relevant national policies and insufficient political focus on preparedness needs. In Philippines, implementing partners faced difficulties to strengthen government-level preparedness because of the poor relationship between the EU and the government. Nevertheless, DG ECHO-funded projects have been designed to contribute to sustainability in other ways, such as through intense community-level capacity building and local stockpiles of materials and equipment. By contrast, in Uganda, sustainability was likely to be achieved through a focus on district-level governments: DG ECHO strongly supported implementing partners to raise government technical awareness, advocate for governments to include preparedness in their budgets and develop enabling legislation.

In Dominican Republic ECHO has worked through WFP and the Dominican Red Cross, among others, to institutionalise preparedness in national and municipal governance systems. This approach – which centres on relationships with key institutions - appeared to be on track to deliver sustainable results. Several strategic partnerships exist with government departments, the national government has approved policies developed with ECHO funding, and governmental entities at all levels have some level of preparedness or DRR funding. Another feature of DG ECHO's preparedness work in Dominican Republic and elsewhere in Latin America is its longevity. As noted by ECHO staff, DG ECHO preparedness funds have been used to train so many people over the years that there exists a critical mass of technical knowledge and expertise that provides an enabling environment for new preparedness actions. Furthermore, in several countries of LAC new targeted preparedness projects built on the last ones, which helped to consolidate gains and increase the chances of sustainability.

Inadequate planning for sustainability may partially explain why DG ECHO has not consistently achieved sustainable results. Exit strategies were not explicit in project documentation for the majority of projects, suggestive of a need for bridging mechanisms to move from DG ECHO to other EU funding. This would require, in turn, better DG ECHO field staff knowledge of EU (or other donor) funding opportunities and

⁴⁷ 'Response and Preparedness to the COVID-19 Crisis and Escalations of Violence in Palestine' (2020/00926, Danish Red Cross)

EUD capacity to undertake technically complex, large budget DP interventions. Recommendations on this topic abound in evaluations of DIPECHO and other DP projects, but they appear to have had insufficient effect.

3.1.2 Building links between DP and other mechanisms (JC9.2)

Although preparedness and integration of risk reduction measures have been considered by DG ECHO to be intrinsic to its humanitarian action, DG ECHO also acknowledged that development actors play a key role in scaling up and complementing these interventions, and thus are needed for long-term sustainability of ECHO actions and for strengthening their contribution to resilience. DG ECHO documentation revealed a trend towards 'nexus' programming (i.e. coordination between humanitarian and development actors in the interests of coherence) to promote sustainability. References to 'nexus' across portfolio documentation were used to indicate current and potential connections between preparedness programming and social protection, developmental education and WASH interventions, and are more common than references to 'sustainability' per se. Yet, while there have been efforts by DG ECHO representatives to coordinate with EUDs, INTPA and other donors, in practice there were few examples of nexus programmes and relationships evolving from DG ECHO preparedness portfolio. One positive example of epidemic preparedness noted in Uganda is the embedding of the DP component in pillar 2, marking commitment to the EU Nexus Action Plan.

The slowness which nexus-programming has taken off globally reflects an excessively cautious approach, including at ECHO. On the one hand, it offers a chance to diversify beyond emergency humanitarian operations. On the other hand, it means moving into systems building, an area traditionally avoided by humanitarian actors. The triple nexus has been widely discussed but donors are as yet undecided on their roles and level of commitment. EU MS have expressed their wish for DG ECHO to play a strong role but, to believe partner perceptions, e.g. in Palestine, DG ECHO has been hesitant to fund proposals with a strong nexus component for fear of becoming too involved in systems-building. By contrast, in Uganda, DG ECHO has been willing to invest in systems building and most of the disaster preparedness portfolio reviewed has done so. In Dominican Republic, DG ECHO's strategic partnership with WFP has connected it with the national entity responsible for social protection, PROSOLI, that provided emergency subsidies to vulnerable populations during the COVID-19.

4 Conclusions

4.1 Key achievements

As one of few disaster preparedness donors, DG ECHO has made important contributions in this area since 2015. The most significant achievements included successfully strengthening the preparedness level of many beneficiaries and applying a systems approach – gradually more inclusive of government and development actors that increases chances for sustainability. DG ECHO has tightened its focus by narrowing the scope of activities categorised as 'preparedness'. This streamlining is likely to increase cost-effectiveness and adds an identifiably risk-oriented dimension to DG ECHO's humanitarian portfolio. Each achievement is described below.

Conclusion 1: Tangible contributions at the country and local levels

(Mainly based on findings from: EQs 1, 5, 6)

DG ECHO support to preparedness was very relevant and made tangible contributions at the country and local levels. It left beneficiary communities, government agencies, and implementing partners with **greater capacity to cope with the next disaster**, including applying knowledge gained and lessons learned to engage in more timely and effective humanitarian response operations (i.e., putting contingency plans to practice – often supported with crisis modifiers). DG ECHO should continue to enable the factors of success (e.g. reliance on the long presence of local partners) and to reduce the obstacles (e.g. low ownership by local governments) that have impeded greater achievement.

C2: Growing application of a systems approach

(Mainly based on findings from: EQs 1, 2, 5, 6 and 9)

DG ECHO's approach to preparedness has increasingly engaged and implicated national and local government actors, despite the fact that, because of its mandate, no funding was directed to governments. In fact, from the latter years of the DIPECHO approach to the current DP approach, DG ECHO has made an important visible **shift to apply a systems approach** to humanitarian programming. The emerging systems approach includes not only communities, but **local and national authorities** – the duty bearers and often first responders – as well as other development actors, who must be prepared, engaged and able to support those communities. While this broader way of working when contexts allow it (the inclusion of both governments and development actors) has not been evident in every country or project, it has been surfacing as a source of DG ECHO added value.

C3: A strengthened

Another important achievement was the promotion of a strengthened corporate **culture of risk awareness** in DG ECHO humanitarian programming. Since 2015, DG ECHO's

corporate culture of risk awareness

(Mainly based on findings from: EQs 1 and 9)

Projects that are risk-proofed to withstand future risk

concern with post-event 'needs assessment' is increasingly being complemented by awareness of the importance of pre-event 'risk assessment'. This has promoted understanding that the risk environment of targeted communities involves inter-related systems that give rise to multi-risk dynamics and, ultimately, cascading effects. While far from everywhere evident, the DG ECHO corporate culture of risk awareness has taken hold across much of the portfolio, using critically important elements to integrate preparedness and risk awareness into review and design.

Risk-proofing (i.e., do no harm) was a key part of what DG ECHO calls 'preparedness mainstreaming'; risk-proofing was successfully applied to ensure that projects (targeted preparedness and regular humanitarian- response and recovery) were carefully screened to create no new risk and to lessen existing risks that make up the context of a project. DG ECHO has effectively risk-proofed through the use of the Resilience Marker (in project review) and the Crisis Modifier (in project design). The Resilience Marker, improved in 2018, has asked implementing partners to defend their choices with risk analysis, risk-proofing, measures to promote local preparedness capacity and links to development spheres – all dynamics that have made project design stronger and results more likely to be sustained. The Crisis Modifier (first launched in 2015 in DG ECHO 'regular' humanitarian projects and growing ever since especially in DPBL) has successfully encouraged many implementing partners to identify the next most probable disaster event (or crisis within a crisis). It has effectively set aside pre-approved funding earmarked to respond to potential events. In 2021, close to 10% of DG ECHO projects have included Crisis Modifiers.

C4: A more limited, and strategically stronger, preparedness focus

(Mainly based on findings from: EQs 2, 3, 4 and 7)

DG ECHO has strategically limited the scope of its support to disaster preparedness for a narrower focus and reportedly greater cost-effectiveness by delegating the wider set of DRR actions to development partners. This tighter focus of targeted preparedness actions – which was part of the change from the DIPECHO strategy to the current DP strategy – has included EWS, contingency planning, stockpiling, evacuation systems and more generally capacity development. These were all 'no-regrets'⁴⁸ activities with benefits for multiple disaster types and direct influence on the effectiveness of regular humanitarian projects.

In addition, although coordination between DG ECHO and development actors and other donors was limited in some contexts, DG ECHO's intention to engage with development actors (e.g., DGs INTPA/NEAR and EEAS/EUDs) to explore comparative advantages, respective roles and at times even handovers between actors has increased (compared to earlier in the study period). The strategic focus of preparedness has also been enhanced because DG ECHO has decided to not include national DRR platforms as a priority (work is underway to gradually hand these over⁴⁹ to development actors, some of which are still reticent).

4.2 Main obstacles to greater preparedness achievement

DG ECHO has faced many challenges to fully integrate the changes cited above and in ensuring their true potential is met. The evaluation revealed three significant barriers to greater progress in DG ECHO's efforts in disaster preparedness. While external factors also influence DP progress, those described are in DG ECHO's realm of influence.

C5: A lack of corporate confidence in preparedness

(Mainly based on findings from: EQs 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9)

The most important obstacle has been **the variable corporate belief in preparedness**. DG ECHO staff's attention to save most funding for humanitarian response shows that 'preparedness pays' is not strongly embedded in the corporate culture. There is a limited use of the evidence of the return on investment of pro-active preparedness over reactive humanitarian post-disaster aid.

Lack of corporate confidence in preparedness, combined with an inadequate overall budget to address growing humanitarian needs, has resulted in **current funding for preparedness being insufficient relative to risk levels**. While DP actions are reportedly targeted to countries according to risk levels reported in INFORM, FCA and other tools, DPBL funding (guided by annual country office strategies referred to as 'country preparedness fiches' and debated in regional HIP events), relies on the presence of preparedness-experienced Technical Experts and Assistants.

⁴⁸ 'No regrets' is used here in line with IPCC. A 'no-regrets' investment is one that provides worthwhile benefits even if a disaster does not occur. It reinforces cost-effectiveness.

⁴⁹ The distinction of DRR and DP is key in the handover of results (or the establishment of mandates) between the two.

The evaluation team recognises the insufficiency of funding compared to humanitarian need worldwide and DG ECHO's specific mandate. It is precisely because of the recent dynamics observed at global level that increased investment in preparedness (versus an increase in humanitarian response) would have tangible benefits. There is little discussion inside DG ECHO on how support for preparedness should be increased over time until governments have the capacity to deal with disasters with less or no help from the international community. Funding trends (i.e., that continue to stage response operations for governments) do not convey that DG ECHO is expecting the primary duty bearers to fully assume their humanitarian responsibilities. There is little discussion as well as little political buy-in inside DG ECHO for this.

C6: Insufficient understanding of the concept of preparedness

(Mainly based on findings from: EQs 3 and 8)

A second impediment to greater effectiveness has been a **lack of documented evidence of what constitutes effective 'preparedness in response', and lack of practitioner-oriented guidance on how to replicate it.** The source of funding (DPBL or regular humanitarian aid) is irrelevant, as long as preparedness is being conducted and integrated across sectors.

This lack of evidence of preparedness-in-response makes it difficult for DG ECHO to monitor, evaluate, or estimate the full volume of funding that supports preparedness. Systems are not yet adapted for these purposes; this effort remains a work in progress and DG ECHO attempts to make an estimate each year since 2015. The calculations are not straightforward, simple, systematic nor easily replicated by an external expert.

C7: An institutional environment not fully conducive to stronger investment in DP







(Mainly based on findings from: EQs 2 and 6)

Lastly, **the DG ECHO institutional environment today is not sufficiently conducive to giving DP the prominence and resources needed for growth.** The organisational set up and internal communications do not lend themselves to institution-wide promotion of preparedness. Although the DPBL was established during the period under evaluation, progress such as this has been driven by individual personalities and their convictions more than the structures and systems in place. The unit responsible for preparedness within DG ECHO (Unit B2) faces numerous human resource challenges. The number of DG ECHO staff focused squarely on preparedness does not appear to have grown in line with the importance of the theme (i.e., Sendai priorities). Unit B1 (in charge of UCPM) has also an explicit role in disaster preparedness (especially among EU MS) but is largely disassociated from B2 and uses different funding mechanisms. Key messages about critical processes promoting disaster preparedness and entirely unknown to the evaluation team were disclosed very late in the process and by chance (EVA DRR markers and country fiches); this raises questions about the breadth or precision of historical knowledge across the DP team at the present moment and the quality of knowledge management and communication systems in place, especially relating to preparedness. The evaluation is not able to assess if this situation will have a lasting impact on the DP programme but notes it as a risk that requires prompt and sustained attention by senior management.

Most informants have not learned about the 2021 **Guidance Note**, raising questions on the dissemination strategy. Moreover, while the DP Guidance contains valid and important principles of disaster preparedness, it does not provide step by step instructions on what and how to "do preparedness". Requests for such support were vocalised in the field phase. For example, while promoting a focus on national/local governments, no section explains how to build government preparedness capacity without direct funding. No 'how-tos' exist either for localisation or use of the multi-hazard approach; no section focused on how to convert learning-on-the-job (in a humanitarian response) to preparedness outcomes. The compendium of experiences is a good start but needs further development to enable potential users to apply the learning.

4.3 Evaluation criteria synthesis

By way of summary, the key messages per evaluation criterion are summarised below with a qualitative score based on the overall assessment of the evaluation team. The strongest points in the DG ECHO disaster preparedness portfolio were relevance and added value. Effectiveness was generally strong where preparedness programming occurred but patchy and inconsistent across the portfolio, leading to the score of medium. Efficiency was medium and coherence was mixed; low for internal consistency and medium for external coherence. Sustainability was mixed but scored overall as medium to reflect DG ECHO's scope and mandate.

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| RELEVANCE | Disaster preparedness as promoted by DG ECHO is relevant to strengthen humanitarian action both at strategy/policy level and at the level of individual projects. |  |
| ADDED VALUE | DG ECHO adds key technical value in targeted preparedness and risk proofing and is often the only or main DP donor in many countries. |  |
| EFFECTIVENESS Community and Government | Community, government and implementing partners felt systematically more prepared following DP efforts funded by DG ECHO, especially through targeted DP support. A systems approach – acceptance that community-level DP is most effective when supported by national governments – is taking hold. Despite strong examples of effective community and government DP, results at government level are mixed. Imprecision in the preparedness terminology used obscures some results and hinders learning. |  |
| COHERENCE Internal (DG ECHO) and external | DP programming has decently aligned with evolving DG ECHO policies and approaches from the 2013 DRR Thematic Policy to development of the 2021 DP Guidance, but institutional set-ups are unlikely to take DP any further. Alignment between DG ECHO and EU and other development actors is growing – using DP or DRR as an entry point. |  |
| EFFICIENCY (Cost-effectiveness) | DG ECHO has considered efficiency and cost-effectiveness at critical moments of the project cycle. Moreover, overall, DG ECHO has done a lot with little. However, the level of funding is disproportionate to global needs and there is insufficient documented proof on the savings produced by preparedness to allow ECHO actors to advocate for more DP. |  |
| SUSTAINABILITY | Sustainability is not a consistent characteristic of DG ECHO's DP outcomes although some context-specific approaches have worked. The lack of resourcing of DP by development actors, including national governments and donors, curtails preparedness benefits catalysed by DG ECHO. |  |

5 Recommendations

5.1 Cluster 1: Strategic/central level

Recommendation 1 (R1): Establish a clearer corporate position on how important disaster preparedness is for DG ECHO.

This recommendation is mainly based on the conclusions: C1, C3, C4 and C5

To take the current preparedness portfolio to a more systematic and impactful level, it will be critical for DG ECHO to decide if they are ready to be one of the first donors to genuinely own and drive forward the fourth priority of the Sendai Framework: 'preparedness'. This should be a natural step forward for one of the few donors focused on preparedness – but one that will require serious leadership and numerous DP champions who will articulate stronger positions at leadership levels. The same leaders and champions will need to continue to promote innovation and ensure knowledge management and dissemination on preparedness.

The moment DG ECHO has the political energy to state publicly that 'preparedness pays' is the same moment they accept that an increase in preparedness funding will eventually result in less need for humanitarian funding. Advocate for a gradual increase in preparedness funding, estimate the volume of that increase and set it as a goal. Importantly, the position should not make funding for urgent humanitarian response in the near-term less available/accessible. As long as DG ECHO operates, a certain amount

should always be reserved for humanitarian response operations (without preparedness necessarily integrated).

To rally any remaining sceptics, DG ECHO should launch a global multi-site study to measure how well 'preparedness pays' across DG ECHO-funded projects. Conduct a participatory data party to analyse jointly the results with Technical Assistants while also earning buy-in. This will establish a clear quantitative evidence base for the precise cost savings DG ECHO preparedness provides to European citizens.

R2: Consider what institutional changes inside DG ECHO are required to promote, roll-out and scale up the new or enhanced 'preparedness position'

This recommendation is mainly based on the conclusions: C7

DG ECHO should seize the opportunity provided by the excellent 2021 Guidance Note to officially promote preparedness, increase preparedness funding (DP BL or wherever it is conducted) and systematically produce and apply learning. To do this, DG ECHO should consider if there is room to restructure internal architecture (roles and responsibility for DP, information, communication and capacity development systems) to adequately promote DP. Promotion of preparedness will require high ranking DP champions, a strong fully delegated team in headquarters and strengthened institutional communications and capacity development strategies.

After generations of excellent 'fire-fighter' Technical Assistants, increase Technical Assistants' training on disaster preparedness. It is time to systematise and scale up the good DP actions that are already happening in incubators across the portfolio. Identify "model DP countries" and those needing the most support; highlight and share their good DP practice using exchange visits including government officials.

5.2 Cluster 2: Operational, while awaiting the strategic changes

R3: Set up information or tracking systems to prioritise the geographical focus of preparedness actions and to engage in stronger preparedness accounting

This recommendation is mainly based on the conclusions: C5, C6, C7

Target all funding for preparedness by level of risk using annual INFORM updates⁵⁰. Lobby to attract the right implementing partners skilled in preparedness to provide services in those locations. Highest risk countries merit and should get the most attention in preparedness. There will always be valid exceptions; document them in light of national absorption capacity of governments, implementing partners and unrecognised governments. Apply a second layer of targeting by having Technical Assistants track all response operations that are funded twice (for the same hazard set and same location). For them, require a targeted preparedness project that integrates all pertinent sectors.

If DG ECHO needs to report a measure of its global investment in preparedness, identify a simple way to reach that estimate, document and defend it. Once identified, use it consistently over several years to enable trends to become visible. This is also an opportunity to make the preparedness actions visible and to incentivise donors to do the same. Until that date, consider applying the simplified approach in Box 10. HOPE datasets should eventually introduce corresponding new fields into the DG ECHO reporting forms, rendering these calculations more straightforward.

Box 10 DP accounting (or tagging) – a simple estimate

Proposed steps for the annual DG ECHO estimate of its financial contribution to disaster preparedness (not counting UCPM)

Each year, designate one B2 staff member to systematically:

1. Determine the total allocated to projects through the DPBL (A: Euro value).
2. Use Natural language processing (NLP) or MAXQDA type software to establish from the eSF/Ficheops for all projects in given year the aggregate value of regular humanitarian projects that:
 - o Are Risk Proofed or BBBetter: those for which the Resilience Marker receives the most complete / successful scores. (B1. Euro value * X%);
 - o Feature a Crisis Modifier even without being activated (B2. Euro value * Y%);
 - o Involve setting up or strengthening E/RRMs (B3. Euro value * Z%).

⁵⁰ Supplementary assessment criteria may be required for specific geographical contexts.

3. Determine the aggregate proportional value of Learning-from-Response type of preparedness. This is new and requires a more in-depth proof-of-concept and thorough institutionalisation (see recommendations below). For the time being, we use A% (C. Euro value of total annual regular humanitarian budget allocated *B%).

The percentages are to be estimated and trialled by DG ECHO.

SUM: A+B1+B2+B3+C > reportable preparedness contribution to OECD

Source: Evaluation team, based on SPA and SLR

R4: Clarify terminology and move from principles to step-by-step guidance and document “how-to” details to accompany the 2021 Guidance Note

This recommendation is mainly based on the conclusions: C3, C6 and C7

Words matter and concepts count. The DP Guidance is an excellent starting point that shares critical principles. Clarify the chapters therein that describe ‘preparedness mainstreaming in response’. The evaluation team proposes one overview and a checklist to add clarity to preparedness (see Figure 8 and Box 11). The pink shapes in Figure 8 are preparedness actions (shaded by how explicitly they comply to the official definition). Gray shapes are regular humanitarian response operations. Starting at the top:

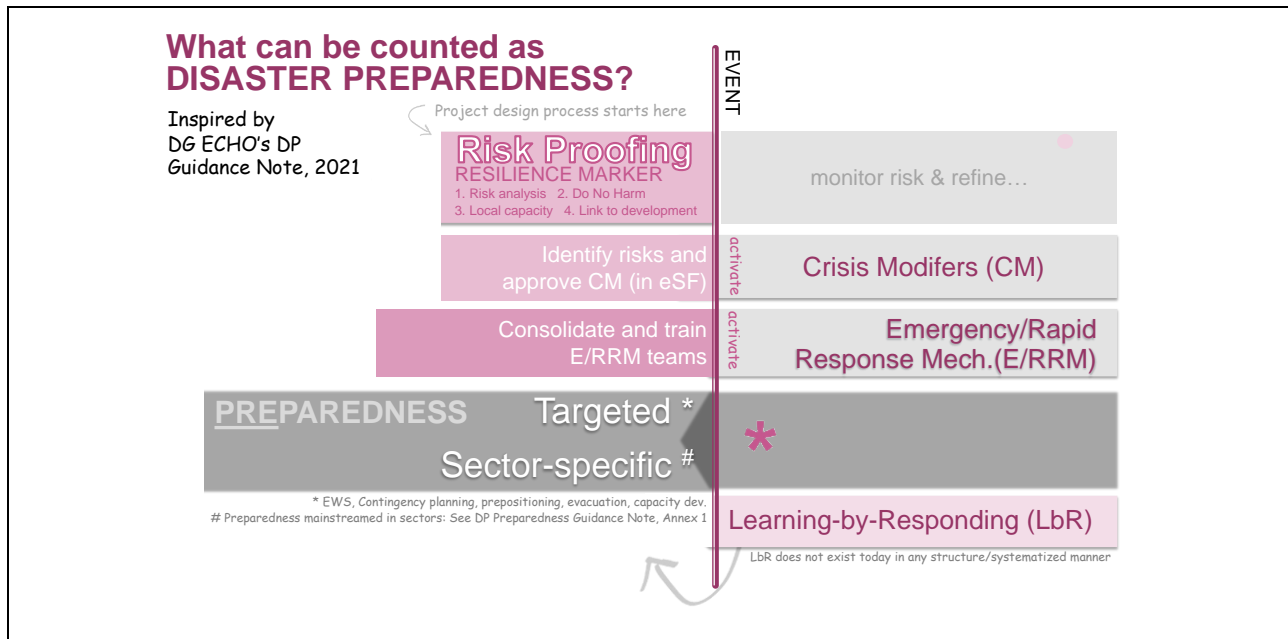
1. Continue to apply **Risk Proofing using the (RM)** in all projects. Regularly refine risk analyses during response operations to keep them relevant and flexible to needs.
2. Increase the use of **Crisis Modifiers** for all projects (with priority for the longer and larger ones). To do so, they identify risks through analysis and get the Crisis Modifiers approved in eSF. Setting them up is preparedness; once they are activated this is humanitarian response.
3. Strongly increase **E/RRM** as they comply directly to the preparedness definition. Consolidate and train E/RRM teams in all high-risk countries and zones. Once the E/RRM are activated, the actions belong to the humanitarian response sphere.

Preparedness: Whatever budget lines are used (and ideally multiple), continue to focus squarely on a concise set of preparedness actions with government and community actors appropriately (EWS, contingency planning, prepositioning, evacuation systems and capacity development) as well as through all sectors (i.e., in Annex 1). For all actions, especially those integrated into sectoral responses, it should be clear what they are preparing for, who or what is being prepared, and how. Given the time pressure in response situations, preparedness-in-response should be guided by tried-and-tested design elements and contextualised as needed. For this, identification, documentation and dissemination of learning is critical.

Develop a new component called ‘**Learning-by-Responding (LbR) preparedness**’ to institutionalise on-the-job learning for preparedness outcomes. This seizes the humanitarian response effort to establish system-wide learning that will loop back to inform the next response. This can be counted as ‘preparedness’ (and measured) because it is capacity development--but only if structured and systematised. Instead of trying to measure preparedness inside humanitarian response operations, develop a way to institutionalise Learning-by-Responding (to convert that learning to preparedness outcomes). Learning-by-Responding contributes to Commitment 3 of the Core Humanitarian Standard.

The 2021 Guidance Note is more justifiably named ‘principles of preparedness’. It holds important tenets that characterise good preparedness and clarifies which parts DG ECHO wants to promote. Prepare a set of How-To Notes as a supporting document. Crowd source with new Technical Assistants, implementing partners and targeted governments to identify which preparedness themes require How-To Guidance. For example, how should DP implementing partners build government capacity without allocating any funds to them? How to enhance a systems approach in preparedness? How to ensure that multi-risk is adequately staged? What are the best practices to promote localisation in preparedness? How to advocate for preparedness at the level of national governments?

Figure 8 What can be called 'preparedness'?



Source: Evaluation team, based on SPA and SLR.

Box 11 A checklist to define what preparedness is

In line with the 2021 DG ECHO DP Guidance, the evaluation team proposes the following checklist to define preparedness:

- DP Guidance points to risk-proofing of regular humanitarian actions as preparedness. However, while risk proofing is an important (and successful DG ECHO) action, it does not conform to the UNDRR definition of preparedness, i.e., *"The knowledge and capacities developed by governments, response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current disasters."* Risk-proofing is at the level of projects (not governments, organisations etc. and is complementary to preparedness as an element of DRR⁵¹.
- DP Guidance also includes Crisis Modifiers as preparedness; they do conform to the UNDRR definition of preparedness and could be more accurately described as 'preparedness tools'. However, the value of activated Crisis Modifiers envelopes cannot be included in the accounting of preparedness because Crisis Modifiers are not allowed to fund preparedness actions. A nominal value could be agreed for preparedness accounting purposes, to reflect the time invested in designing and activating Crisis Modifiers.
- 'Preparedness-during-a-response' is good practice according to humanitarian standards, and is feasible in many sectors, as indicated in the DP Guidance. This type of preparedness is understood as preparedness for the next hazard/event and is context-specific. However, clear and consistent documented examples of this are currently lacking. A description of which project components are intended to develop preparedness, for what, and of whom/what, is needed for this to be distinguishable, accountable and replicable. It should also be determined if and when preparedness is inserted into emergency projects due to lack of financial resources for the DBPL; this may be a valid strategic action to promote DP but would benefit from greater clarity.
- While it is conceivable that EWS in a response can inform 'the next event', with the possible exception of Protection responses, this is not supported in the portfolio literature examined and there are very few examples of a 'crisis within a crisis' (Source: HOPE data).

⁵¹ Disaster risk reduction is aimed at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE EU

In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct information centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you at: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

On the phone or by email

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696, or
- by electronic mail via: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE EU

Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en

EU publications

You can download or order free and priced EU publications from EU Bookshop at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publications>. Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en).

The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - ECHO

ECHO Mission

The primary role of the Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) of the European Commission is to manage and coordinate the European Union's emergency response to conflicts, natural and man-made disasters. It does so both through the delivery of humanitarian aid and through the coordination and facilitation of in-kind assistance, specialist capacities, expertise and intervention teams using the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)

Follow us:



:https://twitter.com/eu_echo



:<https://www.facebook.com/ec.humanitarian.aid>



:https://www.instagram.com/eu_echo/



:<https://www.youtube.com/user/HumanitarianAidECHO>

