

## EVALUATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (EN)

# EVALUATION OF HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S CIVIL PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN AID OPERATIONS, 2018-2022, AND OF THE MOBILITY PACKAGE WITHIN THE EMERGENCY SUPPORT INSTRUMENT RE-ACTIVATION, 2020-2022

July 2023

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Framework Contract: ECHO/E2/FWC/RC/2021/SI2

Contract No: ECHO/ADM/BUD/2022/012021

Contract title: Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022, and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022

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**Contents**

1.	PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION .....	5
2.	METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH .....	5
3.	CONTEXT OVERVIEW .....	6
4.	HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS .....	7
4.1.	Key findings and conclusions .....	8
4.2.	Recommendations .....	10
5.	UCPM TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS .....	11
5.1.	Key findings and conclusions .....	12
5.2.	Recommendations .....	13
6.	ESI MOBILITY PACKAGE .....	14
6.1.	Key findings and conclusions .....	15
6.2.	Best practices .....	16

## 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations from an external, independent, thematic evaluation of logistics activities funded by DG ECHO for the period of 2018 - 2022; and of the ESI Mobility Package (ESI MP), for the period March 2020 - January 2022.

The evaluation of humanitarian logistics activities of DG ECHO also serves to assess the role that DG ECHO has developed in the context of an increasing number of humanitarian crises and their growing scale, and the associated expansion of DG ECHO's capacities and intervention fields.

This evaluation also analyses the importance of strengthened logistical structures to respond to crises more effectively, and therefore contribute to a better evidence-base about DG ECHO's contributions and its work.

The results of this evaluation will feed into a forthcoming UCPM evaluation as well as a forthcoming comprehensive evaluation on humanitarian aid. It is also expected that the evaluation of the ESI Mobility Package will feed into an upcoming evaluation of the whole Emergency Support Instrument's activation in response to COVID-19.

The scope includes the three main components of the DG ECHO logistics portfolio:



**Logistics activities under humanitarian aid operations between 2018 and 2022**, covering protracted and sudden on-set crises, including the response to COVID-19 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The scope includes strategic initiatives and operational support to logistics but does not cover support to logistics that is provided through DG ECHO's geographically oriented Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs).



**UCPM transport and operations activities**, providing logistics support across the EU and in third countries, to confront the humanitarian emergency brought about by the pandemic and well as other crises, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The scope also includes the human resources for the coordination of logistics by ERCC (Emergency Response Coordination Centre) and EUCPTs (EU Civil Protection Teams) in specific emergencies.

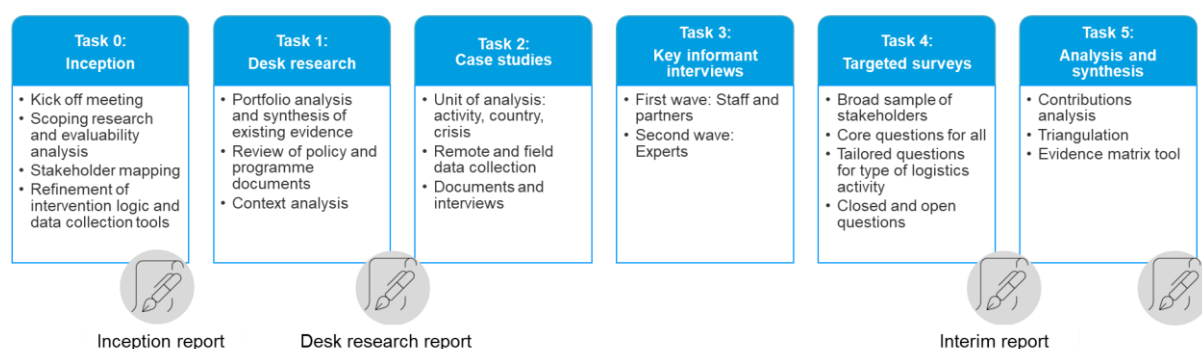


**The Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument** activation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, used in 21 countries, which is also presented separately in a longer case study report (Annex 10.1-3). The time period covered is 2020 until 2022 when the final payments were made.

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The evaluation followed a methodological approach aligned with the European Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines. The evaluation followed five tasks presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Evaluation tasks



It combined both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques (desk research, case studies, key informant interviews, online surveys) to gather information from various stakeholders, integrating an in-depth understanding of the logistics portfolio with contribution analysis to provide an assessment of the following criteria:

Evaluation criteria	Main topics
<b>Relevance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alignment of logistics activities' design with policy context, needs and priorities of humanitarian partners, Member States, UCPM Participating States, and final beneficiaries</li> <li>Integration of lessons learned from previous evaluation</li> <li>Strategic approach to humanitarian logistics</li> </ul>
<b>Coherence and Complementarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alignment and synergies among different activities</li> <li>Complementarity of Mobility Package activities with other EU and Member State instruments</li> <li>Coherence of policy and practice with international humanitarian standards</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achievement of logistics activities' objectives and concrete results</li> <li>Analysis of logistics arrangements contributing to or hindering an effective civil protection and humanitarian response</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost-effectiveness of logistics activities</li> <li>Allocation of funds and overall efficiency of logistics operations</li> </ul>
<b>EU Added Value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific added value and potential of DG ECHO in the field of humanitarian logistics</li> </ul>

The evaluation encountered limitations and challenges, including timing issues, evaluation scope complexities, data availability and quality concerns, as well as challenges in accessing some relevant stakeholders. While these limitations affect the validity of findings, conclusions, and recommendations to some degree in some areas, the evaluation team was still able to draw robust conclusions in certain areas based on the data available.

### 3. CONTEXT OVERVIEW

The Terms of Reference for this evaluation notes that logistics involves “*emergency logistics preparedness, the assessment of needs, the procurement of aid/the offer of assistance and its delivery*”. As such, it is useful to note how this broad definition is used in the evaluation across the three strands, including procurement, market/needs assessment, international transport (staff and goods), tracking and tracing, customs clearance, local transport, warehousing and stockpiling (and including prepositioning), distribution (including last mile delivery), and ongoing fleet and asset management.

Other useful concepts include common services (provided along the supply chain to users by a specialised organisation); pooled/shared services or resources (collaborative solutions to create

economies of scale and minimise risks); and logistics coordination (including strategic coordination, but also contingency planning, needs assessment, transport management and last-mile delivery).



#### 4. HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS

Humanitarian needs are increasing at a faster rate than humanitarian funding allocations, resulting in the needs of vulnerable people being increasingly left unmet. At the same time, basic norms and principles around humanitarian action are being challenged, making the delivery of aid more difficult and dangerous. In this sense, the importance of humanitarian logistics has increased in parallel with the recognition of old and new barriers, including poor infrastructure, lack of coordination, inadequate funding models, lack of common standards, but also protracted crises, environmental challenges, and difficulties in engaging with local markets.

Within this context, logistics is a key enabler for delivery of humanitarian aid assistance in an effective and timely manner, which in turn, determines whether lives will be saved.

DG ECHO's support to humanitarian logistics examined in the scope of this evaluation includes both strategic initiatives and operational support, via the following initiatives and activities:

- **Humanitarian Logistics Policy (HLP).** Launched in 2022 by DG ECHO to encourage and support improvements in effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian logistics across the entire sector.
- **European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC).** A set of operational tools designed to fill gaps in humanitarian response during sudden-onset natural disasters or human-induced crises. Managed by DG ECHO Unit A2 and funded by a dedicated Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP), it comprises European common logistics services (including EU HABs and EU HAFs (see below)), regional emergency stockpiles, and specialised expertise. It is an initiative under development and was examined in a case study as a part of this evaluation covering the EU response to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine.
- **Cooperation and collaboration initiatives.** Internally, the LOGIS and LOGIS+ advisory groups engage DG ECHO staff at headquarters and field levels to discuss logistics issues; externally, DG ECHO participates in discussions with international institutions and organisations involved in logistics to promote global cooperation, including the Global Logistics Cluster (GLC).
- **EU Humanitarian Air Bridge (EU HAB).** Established as a response to transport constraints during the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU HAB is fully integrated into the EHRC and provides common services to deliver humanitarian aid, emergency assistance, and transport humanitarian staff in fragile contexts. This was covered under case studies of the EU response to the earthquake in Haiti (case study 14) and air services in Afghanistan (case study 13).
- **EU Humanitarian Aid Flight (EU HAF).** EU HAF offers passenger and cargo air services to locations with limited safe and reliable transport options. It operates from hubs in DRC, Mali, and Kenya and has been integrated into the EHRC. This evaluation includes a case study for operations in DRC (case study 10).
- **Partnership with WFP.** DG ECHO has a close and regular dialogue with WFP and supports various WFP logistics services, including UN Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) and its role as the global lead agency and provider of last resort to the Logistics Cluster. These services facilitate access to remote and challenging locations and improve the efficiency of humanitarian response. This was examined in the context of South Sudan (case study 9).
- **Direct funding to NGOs.** DG ECHO provides funding to NGOs for dedicated logistics activities. Three of them are specifically analysed in case studies and include shared logistics services in Mali (case study 12); a cooperative for mutualised services managed by RLH/Hulo<sup>1</sup> (case study 11); and air services in Afghanistan (case study 13).

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<sup>1</sup> Hulo is the new name of Réseau Logistique Humanitaire (RLH), a cooperative of NGOs.

- **UN Humanitarian Response Depots (UNHRD).** WFP operates six depots worldwide, prepositioning relief supplies near disaster-prone areas. DG ECHO has an agreement with WFP/UNHRD to manage 4 regional stocks through the EHRC.
- **Humanitarian Procurement Centres (HPCs).** DG ECHO has a register of HPCs that provide access to high-quality products through common procurement services. This evaluation aims to assess the value and usage of HPCs by humanitarian partners.

This evaluation reconstructed the intervention logic, highlighting the supporting strategies adopted by DG ECHO: filling critical gaps in logistics preparedness, improving coordination and practice, enhancing humanitarian access, protecting aid personnel, and optimising resource utilisation.

#### **4.1. Key findings and conclusions**

**Relevance.** Overall, DG ECHO has demonstrated flexibility in adapting its logistics services to address emerging and protracted crises during the evaluation period. This includes responding to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine, with the development of new activities and mechanisms such as the EU HAB and the EHRC. The evaluation found the logistics portfolio of DG ECHO was adequately tailored to the needs of humanitarian partners and final beneficiaries, although the level of relevance varies depending on the specific context. The high strategic and operational relevance of adopted solutions is supported by a consolidated stakeholder engagement mechanism, and by thorough needs assessments for all logistics actions. When offered, technical assistance provided is perceived as useful.

The evaluation also examined the integration of lessons learned and recommendations from DG ECHO's 2018 Evaluation of Humanitarian Logistics into the 2022 Humanitarian Logistics Policy, concluding that DG ECHO largely integrated these lessons and adopted most of the recommendations.

The introduction of the HLP, with a dedicated HIP, the EHRC and LOGIS and LOGIS+ networks all seem relevant to push the objectives of efficiency, effectiveness, and environmental friendliness of DG ECHO's logistics work. The HLP is in its infancy, only now starting to percolate through the organisation and among logisticians/partners. There is a range of reactions on it, both positive and negative.

The negative reactions indicate resistance to change, with the policy being perceived by some as yet another top-down donor requirement. At the same time, it is impossible to promote innovation and change without some disruptive action, and its objectives are widely shared across humanitarian actors.

The evidence collected points in the direction of relevance; however, it is not sufficient to establish causal links between the still emerging effects of the HLP to measurable outcomes. In this sense, solid monitoring data will be needed to demonstrate that the support of DG ECHO to logistics is effective.

**Coherence and complementarity.** Internally, DG ECHO has made efforts to enhance coherence within its logistics portfolio. The introduction of the HLP, EHRC, and the LOGIS and LOGIS+ networks are notable initiatives that aim to promote better coordination in humanitarian logistics. These efforts demonstrate DG ECHO's recognition of the importance of coherence and complementarity within its own operations and should be continued.

Externally, the evidence is conflicting, but there are signs of increased coherence. DG ECHO's actions are not implemented in silos from other donors and partners but are rather meant to complement their actions, follow in a similar direction, or fill identified gaps. There are efforts to harmonise some activities with existing logistics solutions, especially in coordination with WFP (this is case, e.g., of the integration of EU HAF and UNHAS).

At the same time, some new initiatives providing direct support have led to the potential for duplication (e.g., EHRC logistics hubs in Ukraine and Moldova, see case study 15). This being said, very few specific overlaps have been identified.

The coherence between civil protection and humanitarian aid was seen as improving and is better than during the previous evaluation. However, there is a need to have a more deliberate approach to coordination, at HQ and in the field, to eliminate the potential for duplication.

DG ECHO has a clear aim at the strategic level to ensure complementarity between its approach to logistics in humanitarian aid and its approach in civil protection, while respecting the mandates and principles of both areas. For example, formal knowledge sharing, and common lessons learned processes would facilitate an improved ability to work together across strands, and allow cross-fertilisation from each strands expertise and could improve their own respective operations, especially as the UCPM continues to intervene outside of Europe.

**Effectiveness.** Overall, DG ECHO's logistics activities have proven effective in meeting the immediate needs of affected populations. While there are limitations to the analysis, it can be concluded that DG ECHO's support to logistics enables the effective delivery of humanitarian aid and civil protection and there are no specific examples where DG ECHO's efforts on logistics have hindered an effective response.

Most of the considered logistics interventions achieved the set outputs, especially when they have been set in an explicit way such as for EU HAF and UNHAS. Across contexts and sectors, the most important factor influencing effectiveness has been the flexibility and ability of DG ECHO and partners to meet changing demands and adapt to emerging needs. At the same time, there is a gap in the information collected by DG ECHO on the types of initiatives that work best in specific contexts, including innovative initiatives that might be replicated and scaled up.

For all activities evaluated, the analysis of this criterion has been hampered by lack of monitoring data. Lack of aggregated logistics data on the HOPE platform and of transversal information on logistics not only made the analysis difficult, but may result in suboptimal decision-making and resource allocation.

Secondly, and because of the available monitoring infrastructure, the same available data is mostly limited to the level of output and to single interventions, rather than outcome or impact, hindering analysis of effectiveness at these levels, and hindering identification of opportunities or threats.

In the analysed interventions, the lack of monitoring data is also compounded by a relative scarcity of technical analyses (by DG ECHO or its partners) on the interventions that are most innovative or disruptive, and that might constitute good practices for replication.

**Efficiency.** A common theme emerged from the three evaluation strands, and especially in humanitarian aid: as it is expected in humanitarian contexts, the need to act quickly and decisively in emergencies often suddenly disrupted by wars or natural disasters impacted cost considerations. In this sense, cost-saving practices such as pre-positioning stocks, local procurement, and market competition knowledge are promising options that have been used, although they are dependent on gaining familiarity with a given context, which requires time and investment.

More specifically for humanitarian aid, the evidence collected indicates that the costs supported by DG ECHO are generally in line with standards, and adequately monitored in documentation.

Efforts to achieve cost savings through joint procurement and common services have been successful in some cases. However, there is a large potential for further improvement in these areas and for understanding where and when the best opportunities lie: the mentioned lack of reliable data on costs at the portfolio level and the absence of clearly developed methodologies to measure savings hinder DG ECHO's ability to clearly identify best practices, possibly preventing it from supporting more efficient and cost-effective logistics solutions, which are identified as explicit goals in the HLP.

On the other hand, there is also limited evidence of funding overlaps across different portfolios, indicating that DG ECHO considers the actions of other donors and partner and ensures an efficient allocation of funds.

**EU Added Value.** All logistics activities evaluated are specifically designed to support the added value of the EU, and the evaluation finds many specific examples. In alignment with the HLP, is the added value provided by the EU due to its role in humanitarian advocacy and raising the profile of crises.

As a political actor that has developed strong diplomatic relations around the world, the EU can use these relationships to open doors and humanitarian access during a crisis. However, there are also drawbacks to this political role, as this may create perceived issues for INGOs and NGOs that rely on their neutrality to operate.

The HLP and its ambition for a paradigm shift also matches well with the size of DG ECHO: as a large humanitarian actor, it was able to provide harmonised and innovative services that other actors could not. This includes supporting initiatives such as air services, the RLH/HuLo platform and the EHRC, showcasing the EU's capacity for innovation.

In comparison with the previous evaluation period, DG ECHO has taken an increasingly proactive role in logistics. This is evident in the development of the Humanitarian Logistics Policy, that has emphasised DG ECHO's leadership in spearheading humanitarian logistics principles, but also in the setup of the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge and the EHRC.

On the one hand, this seems to be completely in line with the needs brought about by emergencies such as COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and welcomed by many stakeholders.

From another perspective, this could be seen as DG ECHO stepping beyond its functions and encroaching on the mandate of the UN, specifically logistics services provided by WFP as global lead agency and provider of last resort of the Logistics Cluster (with the exclusion of support to UNHAS and EU HAF, where integration is clear and well-established). Historically, DG ECHO has focused more on its role as a donor than as a doer, and some stakeholders appear to be concerned about who will hold DG ECHO accountable if DG ECHO is more than a donor. Such perception on the role and mandate of the EU in humanitarian logistics largely depends on the perspective of different stakeholders, but was especially confirmed by interviews and feedback from some UN partners.

#### **4.2. Recommendations**



### **1 Create better management systems for the set of supported logistics solutions, including for monitoring, evaluation, learning and decision-making.**

In order to identify and prioritise interventions that are likely to generate useful knowledge, through evidence-based decision-making and monitoring:

- Define a clearer intervention logic to identify the elements of desirable change in logistics and their relationship with internal and external factors, explicitly identifying milestones and how to reach them;
- Connect the intervention logic to DG ECHO's monitoring system, identifying and developing KPIs to measure the desired changes around efficiency, sustainable practices, and more prominent position of logistics in the humanitarian sector;
- Integrate a marker on funding and resources allocated to logistics in the budgets of supported interventions, for direct and embedded logistics services;
- Focus direct monitoring activities on logistics interventions with more promising perspectives to generate knowledge (particularly around common and shared services, digitalisation, localisation, and environmental sustainability);
- Leverage on DG ECHO's broad network of stakeholders to act as a knowledge broker.



### **2 Strengthen plan to apply and disseminate the Humanitarian Logistics Policy**

Following global assessment of logistical capacities and needs, adopt the following approach:

- Engage in advocacy efforts to secure buy-in from other stakeholders, including donors.

- Support the sustainable implementation and operationalisation of the HLP and its advocacy efforts with funding through the future HLP HIPs;
- Continue to internally push and mainstream logistics stakes in the work of the DG, e.g., inclusion of humanitarian logistics topics in dialogues with donors and partners or mainstreamed through the geographical work/HIPs;
- Develop or support knowledge management tools for easy access to policies and best practices in sustainable logistics, including an accessible and semi-interactive repository for guidance and good practices;
- Implement a detailed training plan led by a task force consisting of field logisticians, procurement specialists, and market localisation experts to address logistics capacity gaps and prioritise countries based on needs assessment.
- Establish a logistics help desk integrating experts from the task force to provide focused support to both staff and partner organisations.



### **3 Formalise a strategic partnership with the Global Logistics Cluster and support tailored logistics interventions complementing WFP's work.**

- Develop and formalise a strategic partnership with the Global Logistics Cluster (GLC) as the key player in the coordination of logistics activities in humanitarian operations. This partnership should clarify how DG ECHO and WFP complement each other, and how they should coordinate for different services, such as EU HAB, EU HAF, EHRC. The partnership should formally identify the type of DG ECHO interventions that can complement WFP's work, in areas such as last-mile logistics and low-value operations in hard-to-reach areas.

## **5. UCPM TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS**



The Union Civil Protection Mechanism was established with an aim to strengthen cooperation between the EU and the Member States and to enable coordinated assistance. The UCPM seeks to coordinate risk and disaster management at the EU level, to provide assistance to countries struck by natural or man-made hazards affecting peoples and/or territories, and to provide assistance where national response capacity is overwhelmed and national services are unable to respond to the crisis adequately.

The scope of the evaluation covered all UCPM transport and operations activities, providing logistics support across the EU and in third countries, to respond to the civil protection and humanitarian emergency triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as other crises, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The scope also includes the human resources for the coordination of logistics by the ERCC (Emergency Response Coordination Centre) and the EUCPTs (EU Civil Protection Teams) in specific emergencies. The period covered is from 2018 to 2022.

As part of evaluating the UCPM strand, seven case studies were conducted. Case study selection was based on ensuring diversity of crises (spanning both natural and human-induced), activations inside and outside the EU, and size of the response. Five case studies focused exclusively on UCPM responses. Two of these consisted of civil protection responses to crises inside the EU. Specifically, the response to the forest fires in Sweden in 2018 (case study 4), and the response to the forest fires in Greece in 2021 (case study 5). The Greece case study was designed to be compared Swedish forest fires in 2018, to analyse the extent to which logistics operations have evolved between these two crises. The case study on the COVID-19 repatriations and consular services response included activities both inside and outside the EU (case study 8).

Two case studies focused on UCPM activations outside of the EU, namely the response to earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia in 2018 (case study 6) and the response to the tropical cyclone in Mozambique in 2019 (case study 7). Another two case studies explored operations that included both civil protection and humanitarian aid strands. This was the response to the Haiti earthquake in 2021, which involved UCPM, EU HAB, UNHAS (case study 14). The second was on the response to Russia's

invasion of Ukraine, which involved UCPM emergency logistics hubs in Poland, Slovakia, Romania, and the activation of the EHRC in Moldova and in Ukraine (case study 15).

The evaluation reconstructed the intervention logic, highlighting the supporting strategies adopted by DG ECHO: to support, complement and facilitate coordination of Member States' actions to facilitate a rapid and efficient response in the event of disasters or imminent disasters.

### **5.1. Key findings and conclusions**

**Relevance.** DG ECHO logistics support and operations under the UCPM were largely relevant during the evaluation period. This was evidenced by the increase in demand for logistics support, the UCPM's demonstrated flexibility in responding to the unprecedented crises of COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and that the UCPM logistics services were perceived to be relevant to participating countries, key stakeholders, and ultimately also for the affected populations/or areas.

However, as noted under effectiveness, the relevance of the logistics operations supported under the UCPM, are limited by its human resource heavy application process (which was particularly problematic given the large-scale responses to the COVID-19 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine), co-financing set-up, IT systems, short rotation of staff in some instances, and access to specific transport resources. A strength of the UCPM is the trust and support bestowed on it from the Member States and Participating States. While changes are necessary to ensure that the UCPM stays relevant in today's crises, it is important that this process engages with and ensures the buy-in of the Member States and Participating States.

**Coherence and complementarity.** For the UCPM, there is strong internal coherence within the logistics support provided, with a clear logic between different measures. There is also strong coherence between logistics activities and the broader portfolio of UCPM actions. Logistics activities and coordination have a crucial enabling role for the response pillar of the UCPM.

For external coherence between civil protection and humanitarian aid see the humanitarian aid section above, for coherence with the ESI see the ESI section below.

**Effectiveness.** The logistics activities and support provided by DG ECHO was effective as it contributed to the effective delivery of civil protection. However, it is important to note that what constitutes an effective response is not explicitly set out in terms of set criteria but rather is based on the perception of Member States, Participating States, third states and organisations, and deployed DG ECHO and EU staff who have witnessed what the assistance contributed to with their own eyes in the field.

DG ECHO's coordination support was effective and the ERCC's role as a coordinator and facilitator at HQ and in the field was particularly appreciated by Member States, Participating States and third states (though the importance of this support depended on the context). UCPM transport and logistics co-financing provided valuable financial resources as well as an effective incentive to encourage Member States and Participating States to cooperate and work together and therefore to provide a cohesive EU response. In doing so, civil protection operations contributed to strengthening solidarity within the EU and to signal the EU's commitment to assisting third states in times of disaster.

However, there were also a number of barriers to effectiveness, which are especially pertinent if DG ECHO will continue to respond to large-scale, complex, and protracted crises as well as simultaneous short 'classic' civil protection emergencies.

The UCPM is limited by: the human resource heavy application process (which is intensive for both internal staff and Member States and Participating States); the relatively rigid co-financing set-up that prevents DG ECHO from adapting based on the context (for example in the case of a protracted crisis such as the Ukraine response where the burden is heavier on some Member States and Participating States and sustaining financing is more difficult); IT systems (particularly for goods tracking); short

rotation of staff in some instances; and access to specific transport resources (such as offloading and unloading equipment).

**Efficiency.** For the UCPM, there is an emphasis on timeliness and effectiveness over cost-effectiveness. DG ECHO does not take a strong role nor have the subject expertise necessary to scrutinise the budgets proposed by Member States and Participating States. As a result, there was evidence of both cost-savings through shared and common services, and examples of quite expensive transport options being used. For the UCPM, there was no evidence of a lack of funding for logistics.

While the increased co-financing rates were appreciated by stakeholders, there is some emerging evidence that the administration associated with the co-financing set-up makes the process unnecessarily complicated and a more flexible co-financing set-up is necessary to be able to adapt to different crises.

**EU Added Value.** The EU's added value comes from coordinating the assistance and national modules of the Member States and Participating States to provide a cohesive EU response. Although Member States and Participating States appreciate the transport and operations co-financing provided by DG ECHO, it is the coordination provided by the ERCC at headquarters in Brussels and in the field that was recognised as providing the most EU added value.

In comparison with the previous evaluation period, DG ECHO has also taken a more proactive and operational role in logistics in civil protection to respond to emerging crises. For example, by establishing logistics hubs to support the ongoing crisis in Ukraine and the logistics preparedness through rescEU. The extent to which DG ECHO taking a stronger role was seen as a welcome development varies across Member States.

## 5.2. Recommendations

The recommendations are addressed to DG ECHO and the Member States and Participating States of the Civil Protection Mechanism. They recognise that DG ECHO's ability to implement an effective response and make necessary changes are dependent on the support of the Member States and Participating States. As such, it is encouraged that DG ECHO maintains a regular and robust dialogue with Member States and Participating States.



### 4 Create better management systems for the UCPM, including for monitoring, evaluation, learning and decision-making, including improvement of IT and administration systems.

- An online database for all UCPM documentation, more similar to HOPE than the current system.
- Consider developing benchmarks for efficiency and effectiveness of transport operations (e.g. response times per delivery item, cost per output).
- More automated forms and recording to lessen the administrative burden on the Member States and Participating States and ERCC. At this stage, the evaluation has not been able to assess the extent to which CECIS 2.0 provides for these needs.
- A system for tracking and tracing transport through UCPM, ensuring that this system is available for a broader set of stakeholders than CECIS.
- Structured lessons learned process between civil protection and humanitarian aid.



### 5 Consider ways to expand and support development of the European Civil Protection Pool.

This could include:

- More experts with suitable country and regional experience, experience in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, appropriate language skills, more experts with logistics

capabilities. This could be done through additional cross-fertilisation between civil protection and humanitarian aid.

- Ensure that experts are trained on the UCPM and humanitarian aid assistance for emergencies outside of the EU, so they are aware of their roles within the UCPM, what it has to offer, and similarly on the UN and Logistics Cluster system.



## **6 Consider expanding partnerships with the private sector for specific logistics services and assets.**

- DG ECHO should consider engaging with the private sector to improve and streamline the tracking and tracing of goods, particularly for large, complex, and or protracted crises.
- DG ECHO should consider engaging a regular service provider to address the lack of certain assets that are needed in most responses, such as offloading and unloading equipment.



## **7 Consider reviewing the UCPM legislation.**

To allow for:

- Changes in co-financing in light of protracted emergencies and to simplify the application process.
- Extending rescEU for operations outside of Europe.
- Changes to deployment length and timing for EUCPT and ERCC Liaison Officers.



## **8 Adopt relevant approaches from the Humanitarian Logistics Policy.**

- The core principles and approaches embodied in the policy should also be adopted and applied to civil protection. For example, the policy's emphasis on raising the profile of logistics and on a greener delivery of humanitarian aid are equally relevant to civil protection.



## **6. ESI MOBILITY PACKAGE**

The Emergency Support Instrument (ESI) was first introduced in 2016 via the Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 of 15 March 2016 on the provision of emergency support within the Union. It is a needs-based instrument which is activated in the event of human-induced disasters and disasters related to natural events of exceptional scale with far-reaching humanitarian implications, helping EU Member States address such emergencies. It was previously activated between 2016 and 2019 to provide supplementary support for the management of refugees and migrants in the context of the European Refugee Crisis. Most recently, the ESI has played a pivotal role in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, making available a broad, flexible financial envelope of EUR 2.7 billion to support Member States, especially the healthcare sector.

The Mobility Package (MP) was first launched as part of the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI) in 2020 to address the COVID-19 pandemic. With a budget of EUR 220 million, it supported transport operations to help Member States in their immediate pandemic response. Through the Commission Decision of 24 April 2020 on the financing of Emergency Support under Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369, the following three actions were implemented through the ESI Mobility Package, managed by DG ECHO as part of the wider European Commission response via the ESI:

- Cargo transport (e.g., assistance and medical items, COVID-19 vaccination-related equipment and therapeutics) for any essential medical items from third countries into the EU and within the EU.
- Support to transfer of patients within the EU and from the EU to third countries.
- Support to transport of medical personnel and teams, within the EU and into the EU from third countries, as well as operational support for mobile medical response capacities.

EU Member State authorities were invited to submit applications to receive support for these actions via three calls launched on 19 June 2020 (call 1), 5 May 2021 (call 2), and 10 November 2021 (call 3). Support could be provided through grants and the use of the European Commission's transport broker. Depending on the type of funding, Member States could request support in a defined application period or on a first-come-first-served basis.

This evaluation examined the Mobility Package overall and through a case study in five Member States: Germany, Italy, Sweden, Romania, and the Netherlands. Additional interviews were conducted with authorities in some of the Member States which did not use the Mobility Package – France and Croatia. Further, an intervention logic was reconstructed, highlighting the support provided by DG ECHO: preparation and coordination of the MP, budget disbursements/reimbursements, and enabling access to a transport broker.

### **6.1. Key findings and conclusions**

**Relevance.** Overall, the ESI Mobility Package was relevant as it responded to the needs of Member States during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ESI MP specifically responded to the financial needs of Member States, providing additional funding to transport operations needed to address the pandemic. The ESI MP also demonstrated flexibility and adapted to changing needs and priorities. This is reflected in the changes implemented from call to call, e.g., introduction of cargo transport for vaccine-related equipment in the second call once COVID-19 vaccines had entered the market, and prolonging the application periods to meet Member States' needs for more time.

Further, the Mobility Package provided prompt and timely support. It was launched soon after the start of the pandemic and offered retro-active funding for transport operations to bridge the period before it was launched. DG ECHO also designed it in a way that it could provide continuous support throughout the pandemic.

Finally, the transport broker was generally viewed favourably by Member States; however, it was not used because Member States had already made some transport arrangements before the broker could be offered, making the Mobility Package's cargo transport grants the more utilised option.

**Coherence and complementarity.** The ESI MP was internally and externally coherent. There are clear synergies within the ESI MP in terms of design and function. The ESI MP was also coherent with Member States' own pandemic instruments. Finally, there was also coherence and complementarity between the ESI MP and UCPM. While the focus of the ESI MP was funding, the UCPM provided additional coordination and support.

**Effectiveness.** The ESI MP was an important instrument to support an effective pandemic response. Coordination from DG ECHO was considered forthcoming and effective by Member States, helping them understand which information and documents to submit to DG ECHO.

At output and results level, DG ECHO successfully provided financing for transport. Concretely, between 2020 and 2022, the Mobility Package supported the transport of about 308 million cargo items, such as medical equipment and therapeutics, as well as the transport of over 650 people, covering both medical personnel as well as patients. At impact level, the Mobility Package contributed to adequate and effective response to COVID-19 at country-level, but no clear conclusions can be drawn on the lives saved and human suffering prevented due to a lack of data.

While the Mobility Package was a newly introduced instrument, the UCPM had been well known among many Member States. Taking advantage of this opportunity, DG ECHO modelled the Mobility

Package after the UCPM to increase familiarity and effectiveness in encouraging Member States' engagement with the ESI MP.

**Efficiency.** DG ECHO took a number of actions to ensure cost-effectiveness throughout the project cycle, e.g., establishing clear budgetary strategies, rules, and limits; and monitoring expenditures and activities. The ESI MP was found to be robust, effective, and needs-based in terms of its budget distribution method. DG ECHO also considered other support actions of the EU to guarantee efficiency.

Further, DG ECHO was conscious of providing the fastest, most efficient support, while maintaining due diligence and fulfilling transparency obligations. To reduce administrative efforts, DG ECHO produced various communication materials (e.g., infographics, PowerPoint presentations, 'Frequently Asked Questions' papers), frequently participated in meetings to keep relevant stakeholders informed and up-to-date, and had calls and email exchanges with them.

The preparation and processing of documents presented some administrative effort for applicants and DG ECHO, but efficiency could not have been significantly improved, since the ESI Regulation (Council Regulation (EU) 2020/521) and the emergency nature of the pandemic did not allow for longer-term refinements to efficiency.

**EU added value.** The ESI MP generally provided EU added value to Member States' own pandemic response since it allowed them to dedicate financial resources to other COVID-19 response costs. Further, the MP had some added value in that it facilitated cross-border collaboration between Member States, fostering solidarity in a time of crisis.

Overall, the extent of the EU added value depended on individual Member State's health care system, the specific impact of the pandemic on the national health care system at different times, and the national pandemic response, including available funding and the level of familiarity with DG ECHO.

## 6.2. Best practices

No recommendations are provided for the ESI Mobility Package, since it was a one-time instrument activated to specifically address the Covid-19 pandemic. It is unclear what the next activation of the ESI will look like and if DG ECHO will be involved. Presenting best practices based on lessons learnt from the implementation of the Mobility Package was judged more relevant for this evaluation. However, one recommendation is made on an upcoming evaluation of the entire Emergency Support Instrument:

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### Recommendation

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## 9 Evaluate the appropriateness of ESI and financial regulations in emergency settings.

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The emergency nature of the pandemic coupled with specific financial and administrative requirements in the ESI legislation and the EU financial regulations caused a high administrative burden for DG ECHO and Member States' focal points and applicants. A future evaluation of the ESI as a whole should consider the extent to which the legislation could be adapted to allow operations under emergency settings to be more streamlined.

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### Best practices

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## 1 Adequate resourcing.

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A dedicated, permanent team, including a lawyer who can clarify regulatory issues, working on the Mobility Package can make the work more efficient.

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## **2 Retro-active eligibility for support.**

To cover needs of Member States during the entirety of the pandemic, even before the Mobility Package was launched, retro-active eligibility for funding was applied.



## **3 Continuous support over the course of the emergency.**

Disbursing the Mobility Package budget in several calls ensured that support could be provided over a longer period of time. This was important since, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was unclear how long it would last. Open-ended application periods, where meaningful, also ensured that needs of Member States could be met on a more continuous basis.



## **4 Supportive communication and information.**

Preparing and sharing a variety of communication materials to help Member States understand the Mobility Package, which was an entirely new tool to them, can enable a better understanding of the available support and procedures and potentially garner more interest in applying from Member States.



## **5 Improved IT and administrative systems.**

To improve efficiency when responding with more ad hoc emergency instruments, such as the ESI Mobility Package, an online platform which integrates more automated application forms and a section providing guidance documents and examples could be set up. This could remove the administrative burden from DG ECHO, national focal points, and applicants.

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## 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)

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