

THEMATIC POLICIES ANNEX

GENERAL PRINCIPLES, POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

This thematic policy annex to the Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIP), in line also with the Communication on humanitarian action¹, outlines the general principles, policy framework, assistance modalities, crosscutting issues and thematic guidelines that need to be taken into account by DG ECHO partners in the design of humanitarian interventions supported by DG ECHO.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES OF HUMANITY, NEUTRALITY, IMPARTIALITY, AND INDEPENDENCE: In line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, respect of these principles and a strict adherence to a "**do no harm**" approach by partners remain paramount.

SAFE AND SECURE PROVISION OF AID: Partners are expected to include details on how the safety and security of staff (including the staff of implementing partners) and assets are considered, as well as an analysis of threats and plans to mitigate and limit exposure to risks. A transfer of risks to local and national responders, particularly in remote management contexts, would go against the principle of safe and secure provision of aid. Partners are encouraged to identify and mitigate risks, but also to report specifically on how they have been addressed.

DG ECHO can request the suspension of ongoing actions if the humanitarian context has changed in a way that no longer allows the implementation of the action in accordance with the description set out in the Single Form.

QUALITY OF HUMANITARIAN AID: The quality of any humanitarian aid operation is guaranteed first and foremost by the organisation that designs it and that will carry out its implementation. Partners are expected to take the following aspects particularly into account in the design and implementation of an intervention:

- Identification of beneficiaries and needs through robust, comprehensive and systematic methods, conducted in a coordinated manner with humanitarian partners (and whenever possible, participation in and use of joint needs assessment including beneficiaries and analysis tools and approaches);
- Identification and analysis of constraints and risks in terms of logistics, security and access, and the steps taken to mitigate them.
- Consideration on how to minimise the environmental footprint of assistance and on how to contribute to environmental sustainability;
- Consideration of risks and hazards, ensuring adequate protection for operations and vulnerable populations, to fully minimise risk and not increase vulnerability of beneficiaries;

¹ COM(2021) 110 final of 10.3.2021.

- Ensuring that all interventions are conflict sensitive and are designed accordingly (i.e. assessment of whether they may risk fuelling on-going or underlying tensions or promoting dynamics which may worsen specific dimensions of conflict and fragility such as denial of human rights, shrinking space for civil society, inter-ethnic divisions, land conflicts, gender-based violence);
- Management, monitoring and evaluation of interventions properly facilitated by adequate systems in place, and;
- Monitoring and reporting on activities, outputs and outcomes, through robust and SMART² indicators including DG ECHO pre-defined Key Result and Key Outcomes indicators.

EFFECTIVE COORDINATION can reduce the fragmentation of humanitarian action by joint assessments across sectors (including market analysis), enhanced integrated and multisector approach, common targeting methods, response analysis and monitoring and evaluation. Partners are expected to demonstrate how they support effective coordination as well as their active engagement in reinforcing, not replacing, in-country coordination mechanisms (e.g. Humanitarian Country Team, clusters and technical working groups). Partners are expected to actively engage with the relevant local authorities. Partners are also expected to share views on issues of common interest with other actors present in the field.

GRAND BARGAIN COMMITMENTS: DG ECHO and most of its main partners have signed up to the Grand Bargain, a set of commitments seeking to bring about substantial changes in terms of aid effectiveness and efficiency. In addition to the commitments covered by thematic sections in this annex (such as the one on cash transfers), partners are strongly encouraged to develop proposals that would enable the implementation of the commitments below:

- **Needs assessments and management costs:** Partners are expected to explore and propose concrete ways of reducing duplication and optimising management costs and contributing to joint and impartial needs assessments. In this context, partners should adopt a context- specific approach to joint needs assessments, demonstrating how they contributed to the exercise via data collection, data sharing and joint analysis. Partners should ensure that the data collected on needs assessment but also during project monitoring is adequately reported to DG ECHO.
- **Longer-term funding arrangements:** In crises where it is appropriate to engage in multi-year interventions (i.e. 24 months and longer), actions should be grounded in a longer-term strategy that includes contingencies and crisis modifiers for risks that may occur over the timeframe of the intervention.
- **Local organisations and national actors:** Local organisations and service providers have an indispensable role in responding to humanitarian needs and the Commission will strive to step up EU support for localisation. In the majority of cases, DG ECHO funding is translated into services and assistance provided via local actors. Partners are encouraged to work with hubs or networks or civil society organisations involving Red Cross entities, local NGOs, community-based foundations and women-led organisations. These partnerships should support the organisational growth of the local organisations, enabling them to invest in their core functions, and allow for their empowerment to meaningfully influence decision-making about humanitarian priorities in a given country/area.

² Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

PROGRAMMATIC PARTNERSHIPS: In line with its commitment to the Grand Bargain and efforts to maximise efficiency gains and effectiveness, DG ECHO is testing new ways of working with its main partners through “Programmatic Partnerships” with a limited number of partners.

On-going and future Programmatic Partnerships are expected to cover several geographic areas, sectors and years of implementation, and to form part of DG ECHO’s response strategy in the relevant crises.

CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact humanitarian crises and the provision of humanitarian aid. Further to the guidance below, partners with appropriate expertise in related sectors are expected to factor in the different elements related to the pandemic as appropriate in the design and implementation of their projects. This includes:

- mitigation measures for the continuation of the provision of safe humanitarian aid;
- considerations to minimise or actively contribute to prevention of spreading of the coronavirus, continuous monitoring of the changing context (closure of public places, border closings, economic consequences, etc.);
- the revision of project contingency plans to respond to the new context, and adaptability in the implementation of interventions.

ALL-RISK INFORMED APPROACH

DG ECHO partners are expected to consistently apply a holistic and inclusive risk-informed programming approach to inform all humanitarian interventions: actions must be based on a comprehensive evidence-based, context specific and gender–age sensitive all-risk analysis. Such analysis looks at specific threats and hazards that populations are facing or are likely to face, avoiding generalisations. The analysis should also make use of science-based and internationally recognised models, such as the INFORM Risk index³. Risks should not only be analysed individually but their interacting and systemic nature must be also considered, notably in complex scenarios. Furthermore, where feasible, a risk analysis (including triggers, dividers, connectors, etc.) should be conducted with and from the perspective of different groups of the affected population, thus ensuring their meaningful engagement in the analysis, decision-making and implementation of the assessment itself.

An all-risk-informed approach must integrate a disaggregated analysis accounting for detailed pre-existing, current and foreseeable threats/hazards, vulnerabilities, capacities, enablers and barriers for different population groups. This should be done to ensure that the interventions are effectively responding to their specific needs and strengthening their resilience.

Partners are expected to ensure that the all-risk analysis is a continuous process, with a view to generate updated contextual information that can inform decisions, such as adjustments and responsiveness across the entire programme cycle.

³ <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk>

Sub-sections below will provide further details on specific aspects of an all-risk analysis in DG ECHO funded operations, where applicable.

PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING

Protection mainstreaming in all interventions is of paramount importance and is key for “safe programming”.

What we expect from partners: the four elements of 1) Safety, dignity and avoid doing harm; 2) Meaningful access; 3) Accountability; and 4) Participation must be reflected in the proposal and monitored throughout the action:

- Safety, dignity and avoid doing harm when describing the risk analysis, response analysis and logic of intervention;
- Meaningful access when describing the response analysis, beneficiaries’ identification criteria, and logic of intervention;
- Accountability when describing the response analysis, beneficiaries’ identification criteria and logic of intervention, and;
- Participation when describing the response analysis, involvement of beneficiaries in the design of/an in the action, and logic of intervention.

For these elements to be comprehensively addressed they must be analysed and operationalised according to the different threats, vulnerabilities and barriers faced by different gender, age, disability and contextually relevant diversity groups and taking into account existing capacities and enablers⁴ of these groups to overcome the threats, vulnerabilities and barriers. Particular attention must be paid to ensure that issues of social exclusion and discrimination are not overlooked, and that the specific needs of groups most often affected by this – people with disabilities, LGBTIs, and very marginalised social groups – are appropriately addressed in the design and targeting of interventions.

Following a consultation with partners, DG ECHO has introduced a protection mainstreaming key outcome indicator (KOI). The indicator aims at ensuring that protection mainstreaming considerations are implemented and monitored at all stages and are operationalised as adaptations/corrective measures in programming. Partners are encouraged to use the indicator for all sectors.

Link to policies and guidance:

- https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/policy_guidelines_humanitarian_protection_en.pdf
- Protection Mainstreaming KOI Guidance [DG ECHO protection mainstreaming indicator - technical guidance.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴ Enablers are external factors that help overcome barriers hindering persons’ access and participation in society on equal basis with others.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS – PARTICIPATION REVOLUTION

Crisis-affected communities must be considered as partners in response and preparedness initiatives, not passive recipients of aid. Therefore, their voices need to be taken into account in the decisions that affect them.

Partners should regularly and systematically use beneficiary feedback mechanisms and apply course correction measures where appropriate in order to improve the quality of humanitarian responses.

In line with protection mainstreaming, DG ECHO partners should find ways to consistently communicate with affected people and create opportunities to ensure a meaningful participation of beneficiaries in decisions that affect them. Partners should systematically collect, report and act on feedback received while explaining how beneficiary views were integrated in all stages of the programming cycle. Information on the level of funding reaching beneficiaries should be reported in a transparent manner to the Financial Tracking System (OCHA-FTS).

GENDER-AGE MAINSTREAMING (INCLUDING GENDER-AGE MARKER)

Women, girls, boys, and men of all ages are affected by crises in different ways, and emergencies tend to exacerbate gender inequalities. The systematic incorporation of gender and age considerations into humanitarian actions is the main objective of the EU's gender humanitarian policy and a matter of quality programming. It ensures that humanitarian interventions reach the most vulnerable, respond adequately to their specific needs and do no harm. To this end, the needs and capacities of different gender and age groups among targeted populations must be adequately assessed, and assistance must be adapted accordingly.

What we expect from partners: Context-specific gender-sensitive needs assessments and gender analysis must be conducted to avoid vulnerability-related assumptions (for instance, women should not be considered the most vulnerable group by default) and to ensure a more effective targeting.

Based on the identified needs, practical examples of assistance adapted to the needs of different gender and age groups must be provided. Actions targeting one specific gender and/or age group – particularly when one group is clearly more vulnerable than others – may be deemed necessary in some instances. While assistance may specifically target one group, the participation of other groups may prove crucial for reaching the expected impact.

As part of the all risk analysis, all humanitarian interventions funded by DG ECHO must take into consideration any risk of sexual and gender-based violence and should develop and implement appropriate strategies to actively prevent such risks.

The Gender-Age Marker tool is aimed at assessing how strongly DG ECHO funded humanitarian actions integrate gender and age considerations. Partners are expected to apply the Marker at proposal, monitoring and final report stage, in accordance with the guidance provided in the Gender and Age Marker Toolkit. Since 2019, an e-learning for DG ECHO partners on the Marker is available on the partners learning platform (see link below).

Link to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_thematic_policy_document_en.pdf
- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/gender-sensitive-aid_en
- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_age_marker_toolkit.pdf
- [http://else.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/learn_\(for e-learning on DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker\)](http://else.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/learn_(for_e-learning_on_DG_ECHO_Gender-Age_Marker))

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, partners are expected to pay specific attention to the measures ensuring inclusion of people with disabilities in proposed actions. All suggested actions should comply with DG ECHO Operational Guidance on The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations.

What we expect from partners: Partners are expected to demonstrate how they plan to reinforce enablers and identify, remove, reduce and mitigate barriers preventing meaningful access to and full and effective participation of people with disabilities in EU-funded humanitarian assistance and protection programming. It is recommended to actively use the all-risk analysis and the four aspects of protection mainstreaming (safety, dignity, avoid causing harm; meaningful access; accountability; and participation and empowerment) to address the identified barriers and strengthen the enablers and capacities to overcome these.

Link to policies and guidance:

- https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/dg_op_guidance_inclusion_gb_liens_hr.pdf

RESILIENCE MAINSTREAMING (INCLUDING THE RESILIENCE MARKER)

DG ECHO's objective is to respond to the acute humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable and exposed people while taking opportunities to increase their resilience. By doing so, DG ECHO fully aligns with the EU's resilience approach, which was expanded over the last years to address state, societal and community resilience by placing a greater emphasis on addressing protracted crises, the risks of violent conflict and other structural pressures including environmental degradation, climate change, migration and forced displacement.

What we expect from partners: Partners are expected to use resilience-building opportunities to the greatest extent possible, without compromising the humanitarian principles. Four elements are key:

- Conduct an analysis of risks, hazards/threats, vulnerabilities and their causes;
- Be risk-informed (i.e. ensure that activities are based on risk analysis, reduce risks to the extent possible for humanitarian operations or at least do not aggravate risks or vulnerabilities);

- Contribute to building local capacities so that the most vulnerable can cope better with shocks in the medium term; and
- Where feasible, include a deliberate humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDP nexus) strategy to reduce future humanitarian needs. The nexus strategy should be adapted to the specific context and should be in full respect of the core humanitarian principles.

The Resilience Marker⁵ ensures a systematic attention to conflict, environment and climate risks as well as considerations on the environmental impact of humanitarian actions and inclusion of corresponding preparedness and resilience building measures in project proposals, implementation and assessment. Partners are expected to use the marker for all projects.

Link to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/resilience_marker_guidance_en.pdf

RISK-INFORMED PREPAREDNESS, EARLY ACTION⁶ AND RESPONSE

Risk informed preparedness, early action and humanitarian response are an integral part of the EU approach to resilience and are embedded in the majority of DG ECHO funded Humanitarian Aid programmes. This implies that all humanitarian actions are designed on the basis of an assessment and understanding of risks, and are implemented to respond to and possibly reduce these risks, with the final objective of mitigating their impact. Furthermore, preparedness should not be considered as a separate policy sector but as an essential element of all DG ECHO's humanitarian sector policies.

DG ECHO's approach to preparedness is multi-hazard/threat - i.e. it addresses natural and health hazards as well as human-induced threats such as conflict/violence. Furthermore, in view of the increasing impact of climate change and environmental degradation, DG ECHO's approach also specifically accounts for these factors and their interaction with situations of conflict and fragility, to help most at-risk countries to adapt and boost their resilience.

DG ECHO places an emphasis on anticipation and early action as a means to reduce the impact of shocks on vulnerable people and their livelihoods. Early action should be an integral element of DG ECHO funded interventions to achieve more effective and flexible preparedness and humanitarian response. This is particularly important in relation to climate related shocks. Boosting preparedness capacities to act early becomes even more critical to reduce the suffering from the impact of climate-related disasters.

What we expect from partners: Partners are expected to take the following elements into

⁵ For more information on the DG ECHO Resilience Marker refer to Section 4 of the electronic Single Form (eSF) at www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/ngo/action-proposal/fill-in-the-single-form and to the Resilience Marker guidelines - https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/resilience_marker_guidance_en.pdf.

⁶ For DG ECHO, anticipatory actions and early actions are the same concept. Anticipatory or Early Actions (AA and EA) are taken when a disaster is imminent (or, in the case of a slow-onset disaster, when it is about to reach a peak). Therefore, they are carried out before a crisis occurs, or before a significant development within a crisis. Early actions are implemented according to a pre-determined protocol, which describes the activities to be undertaken and pre-agreed triggers established on the basis of historical and current forecast analysis.

account when planning:

- Mainstreaming preparedness and risk-reduction measures into all DG ECHO's humanitarian actions, except in unpredictable and justified cases. The objective is to make humanitarian assistance more effective, while increasing the coping capacities and resilience of communities at risk;
- A needs-based approach that consistently integrates risk analysis and crisis severity must be adopted. This approach is particularly necessary for the design and implementation of early actions for climate related events;
- Targeted preparedness interventions and early warning systems that strengthen response capacities in advance of a hazardous and/or threatening event will remain critical to improving the effectiveness of the response and should therefore be considered as specific actions⁷.
- Early action and predictability of response can only be achieved if local⁸ preparedness and response capacities are in place and reinforced. The core objective of the interventions must strengthen, in a sustainable way, the in-country preparedness and response systems to act as locally and early as possible. To this end, partners are encouraged to take a system approach by strengthening national and local government capacities for preparedness on top of its community-based actions.

Different and complementary ways of implementation can be considered:

- Cooperation with development counterparts in a HDP nexus approach⁹ helps to achieve higher sustainability in humanitarian action and build resilience of the most vulnerable.
- Cooperation with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM): EU civil protection actors are active in disaster preparedness and they can reinforce humanitarian interventions through mutual collaboration. In this regard, the prevention and preparedness missions of the UCPM are of particular relevance as they are tailor-made and provide expertise and recommendations on preparedness at the request of a national government or the United Nations and/or its Agencies.
- Strengthened partnerships with key actors: in addition to its close collaboration with humanitarian actors, DG ECHO encourages collaboration with organisations specialised in social protection, climate, and research and possibly with private partners, to ensure the policy evolves along with realities in the field.

Link to policies and guidance:

- Disaster Preparedness Guidance Note:
https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/default/files/dg_echo_guidance_note_-_disaster_preparedness.pdf

⁷ These actions are funded by the dedicated Disaster Preparedness Budget Line under a limited number of priorities for a five-year cycle. See Technical Annexes for the various regional HIPs for further information.

⁸ *Local* refers to both national and local government actors, civil society, academia, private sector and communities. It also includes international partners working in country in support of preparedness and response systems.

⁹ See section on 'Humanitarian – Development – Peace Nexus' below.

MAINSTREAMING ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The gravity of environmental and climate-related challenges coupled with the dependency of affected populations on natural resources calls for a collective responsibility for humanitarian actors to reduce their programmes' environmental and carbon footprint. The greening of the humanitarian response, among others the greening of logistics and sectors like food assistance, shelter, water and health, by introducing environmentally sustainable alternatives, could directly contribute to the ambitions of the overall implementation of the European Green Deal.¹⁰

What we expect from partners: partners are expected to mitigate potential environmental impacts of an action by applying the following principles and related recommendations:

- Preserve natural resources: humanitarian aid delivery must seek to preserve existing natural resources or to minimize and mitigate any impact the intervention may have on them.
- Protect natural resources & existing use: humanitarian aid delivery must seek to avoid any damage to natural resources such as through pollution-or waste generating activities, which could have an impact on the quality of and services delivered by the environment.
- Reduce carbon footprint: between several modalities of interventions of similar efficiency, humanitarian aid delivery must always privilege the one that generates least CO2 emissions.

A list of requirements and recommendations is being consulted with partners. The final list will be shared with partners tentatively by the end of 2021/beginning 2022. An operational guidance will provide details on the requirements and will include recommendations as well.

HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

The objective of humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDP nexus) is to better link urgent relief and longer-term solutions, aiming at reducing needs and tackling the root causes of conflicts and crises. Without compromising the humanitarian principles, DG ECHO seeks to contribute to longer-term strategies to build the capacity and resilience of the most vulnerable people and address the underlying reasons for their vulnerability.

Linking humanitarian assistance with longer-term investments is also important for paving way to durable solutions for forcibly displaced populations. It includes developing strategies aiming at empowering displaced populations, including through access to livelihoods and self-reliance, and integration when appropriate and possible.

The appropriate nexus approach to be adopted differs by context, and a sound preliminary analysis and the definition of context-specific nexus objectives is required. Whereas in acute conflict settings the focus will be on protection of civilians and humanitarian access, in protracted/ more stable contexts the priority is to develop synergies among HDP actors at programme-level and to adopt a risk-informed approach working together towards an increased resilience of the populations.

What we expect from partners: Whenever feasible, partners are expected to apply a HDP nexus lens throughout the whole project cycle, in full respect of humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law. Partners are encouraged to provide an analysis of nexus

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

opportunities such as partnerships/synergies with other programmes and actors, as well as enhanced dialogue/advocacy opportunities and coordination mechanisms.

DG ECHO's Resilience Marker will contribute to a systematic assessment of project proposals in this regard (see above).¹¹

In practice, an HDP approach should include:

- sharing information and building evidence to strengthen analyses, preparedness and response;
- participating in needs assessments (including post-crisis) to help the systematic integration of preparedness, risk and vulnerability concerns into development processes;
- if appropriate, being actively involved in joint context and risk analyses with development and peace actors;
- engaging in a 'people-centred' dialogue with a view to addressing risks and vulnerability, in order to decrease humanitarian needs over time;
- pilot and advocate for approaches aimed at providing continuity of access to quality services by crises-affected people (continuity of service) in different contexts, without doing harm;
- ensuring a conflict-sensitive approach throughout the project cycle;
- engaging in humanitarian advocacy and mediation in relation to humanitarian access, whenever relevant.

Without compromising the humanitarian principles, partners should consider if it is appropriate to link humanitarian assistance to national social protection, or if it is possible to use the humanitarian response to trigger investments in the development of "nascent" social protection systems, with a view to make them more inclusive. Strengthening shock responsive social protection systems can also imply aspects linked to health protection (to ensure continuity of health user-fee exemption for most vulnerable population groups) and of social care (such as case management, psychosocial support and general protection services).

Humanitarian partners have an important role to convey expertise and knowledge to development actors in fragile and conflict contexts to trigger investment aimed at providing people-centred services without doing harm, and in partnership with the authorities and the private sector, for example linked to the creation of jobs and to digitalisation.

Link to policies and guidance:

- Council Conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, May 2017: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/24010/nexus-st09383en17.pdf>
- Joint Communication on "A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action", June 2017: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/join_2017_21_f1_communication_from_commision_to_inst_en_v7_p1_916039.pdf
- Communication on "Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance", April

¹¹ See 'Resilience mainstreaming – including Resilience Marker', page 6.

2016: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/refugees-idp/Communication_Forced_Displacement_Development_2016.pdf and accompanying Staff Working Document: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/refugees-idp/Staff_working_document_Forced_Displacement_Development_2016.pdf

- Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (“SPaN”) Feb. 2019, including a Supplementary Volume of Operational Notes, May 2019: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/sp-nexus/wiki/guidance-package-span-resources>

DIGITALISATION, INNOVATION AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Innovation can play an important role in how effectively and efficiently humanitarian actors can respond to emergencies; the COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the possibility for digital solutions to reduce gatherings and risk of transmission. Digital approaches and solutions built into the design and the proposed implementation of humanitarian actions, in particular those which contribute to the interoperability of systems and have data protection and security measures built in by design, will represent an asset when funding requests from partners are assessed. Programmes with a digital dimension should pay particular attention to data protection in the design and implementation, with a thorough risk assessment carried out and mitigation measures put in place, including data protection impact assessments (DPIAs) for all programmes involving the collection, storage or sharing of sensitive personal data.

Innovative partnerships with the private sector that seek to promote technological innovation, technical skills and to leverage local networks are also encouraged as a means to optimise the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action, against a background of environmental sustainability. Where it is in the interest of the action and without prejudice to the applicable legal framework, DG ECHO encourages partners to seek the increased involvement of a wide range of actors, including the local and international private sector, and to make use of new technologies and innovative practices to address humanitarian challenges.

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord) is the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies. It is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles; avoid competition; minimise inconsistencies, and; when appropriate, pursue common goals. Coordination can be challenging and always depends on the specific context.

Coordination strategies range from co-existence to cooperation:

- co-existence, focusing on de-confliction and on minimising inconsistency, which is typical of conflict settings with military actors involved in active combat;
- cooperation, focusing on harmonising a combined effort, could be adopted in natural disasters, as appropriate.

The military community has access to niche capabilities that may be required during humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. If the humanitarian community has exhausted its capacity, it might request specific assistance by the military, based on compelling humanitarian needs, as last resort, and according to internationally agreed civil-military guidelines (such as the Oslo Guidelines and the MCDA Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support UN Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies) and recommended practices. In January 2019, the EU Military Committee approved the “EU Concept on Effective CIVMIL Coordination in Support of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief”.¹² The concept provides operational guidance, lessons learnt and best practices from the interaction of humanitarians and the military in the EU, including the use of military assets.

Link to policies and guidance:

- Civil-Military Cooperation in Emergencies | European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (europa.eu)
- <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5536-2019-INIT/en/pdf>

ENSURING SAFELY BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE

All sectors requiring the implementation of construction and/or repair activities of permanent or semi-permanent buildings (i.e. health centres, schools, asylum or community centres) or other physical infrastructure (i.e. road, bridges, drains) should ensure that these structures are designed and built safely, using skilled personnel and according to local building codes. Expertise from professionals such as builders, engineers, architects should be sought and mobilised for their design, implementation and technical supervision. Such expertise may be available in sectors such as Shelter & Settlements, Camp Management and Camp Coordination (CCCM), Disaster Preparedness or WASH from local technical institutes, local authorities and/or technical departments of DG ECHO partners.

ASSISTANCE MODALITIES AND APPROACHES

BASIC NEEDS APPROACH (BNA)

DG ECHO prioritises an integrated multi-sectoral or cross-sectoral approach to the design of interventions that aims to meet or contribute to the basic needs¹³ of affected populations. Addressing people’s needs in a coordinated and demand-driven way puts people back in the centre of interventions and can improve aid effectiveness, especially where beneficiaries are empowered to make choices that enable them to closely tailor the assistance to meet their individual needs. In this way, impact, synergies, cost-efficiency and effectiveness can be

¹² EEAS(2018) 1293 REV 5.

¹³ Basic needs are the essential goods, utilities, services or resources required on a regular or seasonal basis by households for ensuring long-term survival and minimum living standards, without resorting to negative coping mechanisms or compromising their health, dignity and essential livelihood assets.

maximised. Using this approach should ensure the best assistance modality or combination of modalities is applied in each context.

A basic needs approach is a well-coordinated complete response, benefiting from sector specific expertise to ensure quality and strengthen an overall coherent response. This avoids uncoordinated and sub-optimal responses that often focus on narrow sectoral outcomes.

What we expect from partners:

- Protection-sensitive vulnerability targeting (see more under “Protection”) is an essential element of BNA, and targeting should never be dependent on status (such as registration or displacement) but rather based on vulnerabilities to specific issues/risks.
- Partners are encouraged to use common delivery platforms as well as joined up assessments, targeting, registration, Monitoring & Evaluation frameworks and independent accountability systems.
- Partners are requested to provide information on how their actions are integrated with those of other actors present in the same area, through joint and multi-sector assessments, identification of causes, problems and risks, as well as combined solutions and ongoing referrals.

CASH TRANSFERS

DG ECHO endeavours to increase the use of cash transfers, when appropriate, in the interest of the affected populations, of cost-efficiency and of effectiveness. If designed appropriately, cash transfers can confer choice and a sense of dignity, and empower people to tailor the assistance to meet their own priorities through transfers designed to meet multiple needs. With these objectives in mind, DG ECHO policy has an explicit preference for cash over vouchers.

DG ECHO’s cash policy is part of a basic needs approach. DG ECHO systematically considers the use of multipurpose cash (MPC) as a basis for meeting a range of basic needs, according to the risk analysis and context specificities, complemented by other modalities where relevant to meet specific sectoral outcomes.

What we expect from partners’ cash interventions:

1. Operationalise the HDP nexus: As far as the context allows, DG ECHO-funded humanitarian cash should link, preferably at the outset when possible, to a systems approach which strengthens local capacity and links to durable solutions.
2. Target the most vulnerable: All humanitarian programmes are based on an assessment and understanding of risks (contextual, programmatic and organisational), and are implemented to respond to, and possibly reduce these risks, including those related to protection. Targeting criteria for DG ECHO-funded cash assistance should include socio-economic vulnerability, and the protection concerns of individuals and groups.
3. Adequate, equitable and timely: Humanitarian cash assistance must be provided in a way that does not increase risks, and that upholds the safety, participation of and accountability to affected communities and individuals. It should be sufficient to cover or contribute to recurrent basic needs or other sector-specific needs, and should be complemented by other relevant sectoral interventions. Transfers should seek to be timely

and anticipatory where possible in order to meet needs with optimal efficiency and effectiveness.

4. Provide value for money: DG ECHO believes that cash assistance can substantially contribute to increasing the efficiency, effectiveness and strategic impact of its humanitarian funding. DG ECHO promotes a common programming approach to reduce fragmentation, with streamlined systems created to avoid duplication and parallel ways of working.
5. Accountable: DG ECHO prioritises cash programmes that put people at the centre, and that seek, share and act upon their feedback. DG ECHO cash programmes should also minimise financial risk, whilst safeguarding beneficiary data.
6. Measurable: The sectoral and multisectoral outcomes of cash programmes should be monitored against internationally accepted norms in a consistent way that allows comparisons over time and space. Systematic monitoring of outputs, through participatory process monitoring, should allow for timely adaptation of programmes, including responding to changes in inflation and the depreciation of currencies, as well as to potential risks that might arise. In line with the principle of segregation of duties DG ECHO encourages third-party arrangements.

For large-scale cash programmes (i.e. EUR 10 million and above), DG ECHO expects partners to apply specific requirements regarding segregation of functions, cost-efficiency and transparency.

Links to policies and guidance: Revised DG ECHO thematic policy on cash transfers (*to be published by end 2021*)

SPECIFIC SECTOR POLICIES

In the design and implementation of interventions dealing with specific sector policies, partners should demonstrate how they address the abovementioned considerations, cross cutting issues, assistance modalities and approaches. Partners are expected to adopt a risk-informed approach, including preparedness and anticipatory action in sectoral interventions where relevant (see section above on Risk-informed preparedness, early action and response).

Partners are expected to take a multi-sectoral or integrated approach, to improve the quality of interventions. Interventions should be evidence-based – partners are expected to carry out needs assessments, context and response analyses, monitor progress and adjust interventions if needed. Partners must provide a humanitarian response complying with internationally recognised minimum standards of quality, such as the Sphere standards.¹⁴ Additionally, partners should take into account sector specific issues elaborated below.

FOOD ASSISTANCE

¹⁴ The Sphere standards are a set of principles and minimum humanitarian standards including in the four technical areas of humanitarian response (WASH, food security and nutrition, shelter and settlement, and health), but also wider, for instance in Child Protection, aiming to improve the quality and accountability of the humanitarian sector. <https://spherestandards.org>

The main objective of the EU's humanitarian food assistance policy (HFA) is to save lives and preserve life, to protect livelihoods, and to increase resilience for populations facing food crises, or recovering from them. It intends to ensure the availability of, access to, and consumption of safe and nutritious food for the hungriest and most vulnerable people in anticipation of, during and in the aftermath of humanitarian crises. HFA also aims to protect and strengthen the livelihoods of a crisis-affected population, to prevent or reverse negative coping mechanisms that could engender harmful consequences for their livelihood base, their food-security and nutritional status.

What we expect from partners:

- Humanitarian food assistance interventions should be well targeted according to a commonly agreed methodology so that it is used only where it is most urgently required, on the basis of food security vulnerability;
- Nutritional perspectives should be incorporated into all HFA needs assessments and responses, paying particular attention to nutritional needs of specific groups (including of children under five years old and pregnant and lactating women);
- Emergency livelihood activities should be considered in the response as long as they are prompted by emergency needs, meet humanitarian objectives, and support strategies for self-reliance and livelihoods protection for the most vulnerable.
- The feasibility and appropriateness of the interventions, including seasonality factors, should be carefully considered and documented, and should not be confined to agricultural and pastoral livelihoods.

Links to policies and guidance:

- https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/food_assistance/them_policy_doc_foodassistance_en.pdf
- https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/food-assistance_en

NUTRITION

The main objective of the EU's humanitarian nutrition policy is to avoid excess mortality and morbidity due to malnutrition in humanitarian situations and to address the immediate and underlying causes of undernutrition.

What we expect from partners: When designing a nutrition intervention, the overriding aim should be to treat and prevent malnutrition based on needs assessment of the target population and at individual level, and look at nutrition outcomes from a multisector and integrated approach.

Nutrition interventions have to consider the response to defined humanitarian risks, which have an impact on vulnerable people more prone to mortality and morbidity related to undernutrition (children under five years old, pregnant and lactating women, elderly and chronically ill people).

In populations affected by emergencies, the priority focus is on severe acute malnutrition, which is associated with higher risk of mortality and morbidity.

Specifically, in emergency situations Commission interventions strives to:

- Reduce levels of moderate and severe acute undernutrition, and micronutrient deficiencies, to below-emergency rates, through timely, efficient and effective humanitarian response;
- Prevent significant and life-threatening deterioration of nutritional status by ensuring access by crises-affected populations to adequate, safe and nutritious food, through food and non-food responses depending on the context;
- Reduce the specific vulnerability of infants and young children in crises through the promotion of appropriate child care, with special emphasis on infant and young child feeding practices;
- Reduce specific vulnerability of pregnant and lactating women in crises through appropriate support of maternal nutrition;
- Address the threats to the nutritional status of people affected by crises from an inadequate public health environment, by securing access to appropriate health care, safe water, sanitation facilities and hygiene inputs.

Other areas of possible support have been identified as key to reach the above objectives, namely information systems, quality programming, capacity building, research and advocacy. However, these are neither entry points nor stand-alone activities.

What we expect from partners:

Nutrition interventions need to:

- Respond to the needs of the individuals the most vulnerable to undernutrition - mothers and children under 5;
- Use methods and tools which have demonstrated their efficiency and cost-effectiveness;
- Respond to well-defined humanitarian risks as well as immediate emergency needs;
- Promote a multi-sector approach, which is essential to tackle the causes of undernutrition;
- Promote a joint humanitarian and development approach to help build resilience.
- To increase transparency and accountability of nutrition expenditure partners are encouraged to consider the use of markers such as the OECD nutrition marker.

Links to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/media/publications/tpd04_nutrition_addressing_undernutrition_in_emergencies_en.pdf
- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/media/publications/2014/toolkit_nutrition_en.pdf
- https://scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/OECD_PolicyMarkerNutrition.pdf

HEALTH

The main objective of the EU's humanitarian assistance in the field of health is to limit excess preventable mortality, permanent disability, associated with humanitarian crises and improve overall dignity of affected populations.

What we expect from partners:

A quantitative health (needs) assessment should be conducted as soon as possible and repeated frequently due to changes in evolving circumstances; the health assessment is not only to guide health/medical assistance but should be a/the main guide for multisector assistance (social/economic determinants of health).

Health and multisectoral interventions that are contributing to overall health should be based on the best possible evidence of their effectiveness, to potentially save more lives and reduce excess morbidity in a timely manner.

High quality assistance should be accessible to those most in need. Other factors like feasibility and cost should also be criteria taken into account for the choice of interventions.

Assistance can be given as a support to an existing weakened or disrupted health system or in the form of a parallel additional healthcare provider, as required by the circumstances specific to the emergency or crisis.

Quality health services, adapted to the crisis situation (and its specific needs) must be accessible to all crisis-affected individuals without discrimination and to all segments of the population (including refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants and third-country nationals). Health services are a public good. All obstacles to accessibility (such as geographic, economic and socio-cultural) should be explored and addressed to the extent possible/feasible.

Health services should comply with recognised international quality standards such as those endorsed and promoted by WHO, the Global Health Cluster, or equivalent norms, including standards on quality of medicines.

All efforts to ensure the safety of health staff and supporting personnel need to be implemented.

The risk for disease outbreaks is increased in humanitarian crisis settings and early warning and response systems should be assessed for performance and supported in case of needs.

Links to policies and guidance:

https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/health2014_general_health_guidelines_en.pdf

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

The main objective of the EU's WASH policy is to save and preserve life and alleviate the suffering of populations facing severe environmental health risks and/or water insecurity in humanitarian crises.

What we expect from partners: when designing and carrying out WASH interventions (either stand-alone interventions in acute crises where the objective is the (re)establishment of WASH services, or otherwise, in support of other sector interventions or as part of integrated programming) partners are expected to take the following into account:

- When carrying out a vulnerability and coping capacity analysis, the targeting of humanitarian WASH programming should be based on priority humanitarian needs rather than on coverage of WASH services;
- All WASH outputs foreseen in an action should be supported by proper documentation of required inputs, in terms of material/equipment (i.e. designs, kits contents/specifications, materials, bills of quantities) and human resources (staff skills and numbers). Monitoring and the technical supervision of the effective delivery of these inputs should also be properly documented.
- Any WASH related support, whether part of a stand-alone WASH result or another result should be properly designed, implemented (resourced) and monitored to ensure the quality of this support.
- All WASH related services should be monitored in accordance with locally accepted WHO standards and guidance (if available) or international standards (WHO).
- Sustainability of WASH services should be taken into account from the outset: using locally appropriate technologies and designs, and considering covering costs of operation and maintenance (for instance through fee-based service provision);

Links to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/WASH_policy_doc_en.pdf
- <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37022/st13991-en18.pdf>
- <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/39776/st10145-en19.pdf>

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

The main objective of the EU's humanitarian Shelter and Settlements (S&S) assistance is to preserve life and alleviate suffering, for disaster-affected populations in need of basic shelter in secure and appropriate settlements, where conditions have significantly deteriorated and fallen below commonly-accepted minimum humanitarian standards, or are anticipated imminently to do so.

What we expect from partners: partners are expected to take into account the following principles in the design and implementation of S&S interventions:

- Interventions should focus primarily on enabling and assisting household self-recovery (partners can provide support but they must avoid anything best undertaken by crisis affected populations themselves);
- In principle, any S&S related support should be conceived and reported under a stand-alone S&S related result. Any deviation from this rule is to be properly justified;

- The S&S recovery process (both from natural disasters as in conflict) is a continuous process, rather than a set of isolated actions involving the delivery of tangible products and services;
- When conducting a risk analysis, the “build back safer” principle should be taken into account;
- All S&S outputs foreseen in an action should be supported by proper documentation of required inputs, in terms of material/equipment (i.e. designs, kits contents/specifications, materials, bills of quantities) and human resources (staff skills and numbers). Monitoring and the technical supervision of the effective delivery of these inputs should be properly documented.

Links to policies and guidance:

- https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/doc_policy_n9_en_301117_liens_bd.pdf

EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

The main objectives of the EU’s Education in Emergencies (EiE) policy are to restore and maintain access to safe and quality education during humanitarian crises, and to support out of school children to quickly enter or return to quality learning opportunities. DG ECHO works towards four EiE objectives focussed on access, quality, protection and capacity development. EiE actions must be tailored to the different needs of children based on their age, gender and other specific circumstances.

What we expect from partners: EiE actions should focus on children and young people (up to eighteen years) most in need, based on a strong needs and risk analysis. Relevant vulnerabilities are likely to include out-of-school girls and boys and those at risk of having their education disrupted, including:

- forcibly displaced children (refugees and internally displaced);
- children in host communities and returnees;
- children in hard-to-reach areas;
- children in active conflict zones and those living in areas with fragile education systems, and;
- vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including girls and children with disabilities.

Priority will be given to funding projects which target at least 50 % girls, unless there is a context-based justification for different targeting.

Projects should have a duration of at least two years and cover full academic year(s), unless there is a needs- or context-based justification for a shorter duration.

EiE responses may include non-formal and formal education to prevent and reduce disruptions in education, to develop learners’ skills and competences, and to support authorities to resume education services during or after a crisis. Actions should focus EiE support on the levels of education that are covered by State commitments to free and compulsory basic education - usually primary, lower and upper secondary levels of education.

Child protection must be considered as both a core component and key outcome of the EiE response, and all actions must ensure that child safeguarding mechanisms are in place.

In conflict-affected contexts, protecting education from attack and providing safe learning spaces with psychosocial support for children is essential.

All EiE actions are expected to be designed and implemented with due regard to the INEE (Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies) and IASC Minimum Standards¹⁵ to the principles of conflict sensitive education.

For cash in education projects, an exit strategy must be foreseen, and the cash transfers need to be accompanied by proactive measures to ensure sustainability and referral of beneficiary families to livelihood solutions.

EiE actions should promote an integrated approach with relevant sectors to ensure holistic responses to children's needs. Furthermore, they should also promote innovative approaches, child participation, and alignment across the HDP nexus, as relevant.

Links to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/news/Communication_on_Education_in_Emergencies_and_Protracted_Crises.pdf
- https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/news/eie_in_humanitarian_assistance.pdf

PROTECTION

The overall aim of the EU's Protection policy is to prevent, reduce, mitigate and respond to the risks and consequences of violence, coercion, deliberate deprivation and abuse for persons, groups and communities in the context of humanitarian crises.

Protection is viewed as a single sector, encompassing all aspects of protection, including e.g. child protection, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), Housing, Land and Property (HLP) and Mine Action. This stems from the perspective that a comprehensive analysis is needed in order to determine the most appropriate response "package" in a given context.

What we expect from partners: The design and targeting of all interventions should be based on an all-risk analysis as reflected above. The analysis should bring out external and internal threats, including from issues such as freedom of movement restrictions, as well as the coping strategies adopted to counteract these threats. It should take into account the protection concerns of individuals and groups based on:

- the risk of exposure to harm, exploitation, harassment, deprivation and abuse, in relation to identified threats;
- the inability to meet basic needs;
- limited access to basic services and livelihood or opportunities to generate income;
- the ability of the person or population to cope with the consequences of this harm, and;

¹⁵ 'INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery', <https://inee.org/resources/inee-minimum-standards>, and 'IASC Minimum Standards for Child Protection' <https://spherestandards.org/resources/minimum-standards-for-child-protection-in-humanitarian-action-cpms/>

- due consideration for individuals with specific needs.

SGBV prevention and response interventions should be built upon solid knowledge of the context of intervention and respect of ethical and safety considerations regarding the collection, storage and sharing of data must be demonstrated. Partners are expected to prioritise the establishment of quality, comprehensive and safe SGBV response services accessible to all from the onset of emergencies, ensuring that survivors' wishes, safety and dignity remain at the centre of the response.

Child protection interventions will be supported both as standalone programmes, as well as integrated into other sectors. Individual case management and the provision of specialised services such as family tracing and reunification (FTR) for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), alternative care and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) interventions for children at protection risks might be supported. Additionally, support to programs focusing on children associated with armed forces and armed groups and children deprived of their liberty might be considered. All child protection activities should be grounded in a thorough risk analysis and compliant with international guidance (e.g. Child Protection Minimum Standards).

Humanitarian Mine Action interventions such as non-technical surveys, marking and clearance (when feasible) might be supported with a view to ensuring access to life-saving and basic services, and particularly when longer-term development and recovery funding is not available. Explosive ordinance risk education and victim assistance may also be supported. Any victim assistance should be fully aligned to internally agreed upon standards for victim assistance and implemented in an integrated sectoral manner (e.g. with health, education in emergencies, and livelihoods).

Partners should consider the need for housing, land and property (HLP) interventions with a particular focus on ensuring security of tenure and prevention of forced evictions in displacement situations or to prevent forced displacement when forced evictions are used as a deliberate tool. HLP restitutions for durable solutions may also be supported. HLP interventions should always be implemented in an integrated approach with the Shelter and Settlements sector and when relevant (land rights) the Livelihoods sector.

In order to address protection issues fully, it is also necessary to consider the relevance and feasibility of advocacy (structural level) interventions aimed at stopping the violations by perpetrators and/or convincing the duty-bearers to fulfil their responsibilities. Opportunities for more effective advocacy should also be sought in the framework of the HDP nexus approach.

Link to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/staff_working_document_humanitarian_protection_052016.pdf
- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_thematic_policy_document_en.pdf

OTHER ISSUES

DG ECHO VISIBILITY

Partners shall ensure full compliance with visibility requirements and acknowledge the funding role of and partnership with the EU/DG ECHO, as set out in the applicable contractual arrangements.¹⁶

What we expect from partners: Partners are obliged to fulfil their contractual obligation regarding visibility through:

- standard visibility in the field, including prominent display of the EU humanitarian aid visual identity on EU-funded relief items and equipment; alternative arrangements are justified where visibility activities are not possible by the nature of the action (e.g. partners who do not provide any relief items), or where they may harm the safety and security of the staff of the partner, staff of the implementing partners, the safety of beneficiaries or the local community and provided that those alternative arrangements have been explicitly agreed upon in the individual agreements, and;
- standard visibility recognizing the EU funding through activities such as media outreach, social media engagement and provision of photos stories and blogs; alternative arrangements are only justified when based on security concerns.

For standard visibility activities, partners may, in principle, allocate a budget of up to 1% of the direct eligible costs of the action with an absolute ceiling of EUR 10 000. However, for individual agreements equal or above EUR 5 million this absolute ceiling does not apply. Hence, in such cases, the standard visibility budget may go up to 0.5% of the direct eligible costs of the action, even when this amount exceeds EUR 10 000. In the latter case, partners must provide a dedicated communication plan prior to signature.

The partner can also opt for "above-standard visibility". The purpose of these more elaborate communication activities is to raise awareness of humanitarian issues among defined audiences in the EU Member States, and to highlight the results of the partnership with DG ECHO.

DG ECHO can provide budget exceeding 1% of the direct eligible costs, when a partner wishes to engage in above-standard actions. To this end, a separate communication plan must be submitted to and approved by DG ECHO prior to the signing of the agreement. The plan must be inserted as an annex. A standard template is available on the visibility webpage, together with a guidance document on the design of communication campaigns.

Further explanation of visibility requirements and reporting as well as best practices and examples can be consulted on the dedicated DG ECHO visibility page.¹⁷

¹⁶ The full text of relevant documents, such as the Model Grant Agreement and the Single Form, will be available at a later stage.

¹⁷ <https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/reference-documents-visibility>