

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP) ENHANCED RESPONSE CAPACITY

AMOUNT: EUR 29 500 000¹

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2024/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes² is to serve as a communication tool from DG ECHO³ to its partners and assist them in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

1. CONTEXT

Humanitarian aid continues to face a wide range of challenges. Humanitarian needs remain at an all-time high, driven largely by the resurgence in conflicts and exacerbated by the impact of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, combined with the impact of climate change, environmental degradation, global population growth, economic shocks and failed governance. At the same time, the gap between humanitarian needs and the resources available globally is increasing. Basic norms and principles are being challenged as rarely before, making the delivery of aid more difficult and dangerous. The United Nations (UN) estimates that 300 million people will need humanitarian assistance in 2024⁴.

As outlined in the Commission's *Communication on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles*⁵, strong support for the enabling environment for the delivery of principled humanitarian aid is crucial. With the Enhanced Response Capacity (ERC), DG ECHO dedicates part of its budget to support innovative and forward-looking initiatives that seek to increase the capacity of the humanitarian community to respond to crises in the most effective and efficient manner. The initiatives have to be global and strategic in their conception and inclusive in their approach in order to contribute to humanitarian system-wide change. The focus is on initiatives which would not have emerged or would not have the same systemic impact without dedicated funding, and which are complementary to DG ECHO geographic funding envelopes. At the same time, DG ECHO's ambition is that approaches and methods developed under the ERC strengthen the overall enabling environment, and thus support direct implementation of certain priorities on the ground.

¹ This amount covers the humanitarian aid budget line (EUR 12 000 000) of the Enhanced Response Capacity and the global component of two pre-identified pilot Programmatic Partnerships (EUR 11 500 000) and funding from the disaster preparedness budget line (EUR 4 million).

² Technical annex and thematic policies annex

³ Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

⁴ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Global Humanitarian Overview 2024 \(unocha.org\)](https://www.unocha.org/global-humanitarian-overview-2024)

⁵ COM(2021) 110 final

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Given the strain on humanitarian financing, it is imperative to continue building the capacity of humanitarian actors at global level in order to continuously adapt to ever changing circumstances and incentivise innovation. For the year 2024, DG ECHO has identified several areas in which global capacity interventions are particularly likely to contribute to an overall improvement of humanitarian action. These are topics on which DG ECHO expects progress to accelerate through targeted funding and where DG ECHO considers continued support necessary.

Humanitarian aid budget line

1. International Humanitarian Law, humanitarian access, and protection

Ensuring the protection of civilians, including children in situations of armed conflict remains a major challenge. Therefore, the EU is currently in the process of revising the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), in order to reinforce its action in this area.

In addition, securing humanitarian access to those in need remains an equally grave concern, coupled with principled humanitarian action being put increasingly into question.

Furthermore, destruction or damage to critical infrastructure for the survival of civilians, such as water supplies, health or energy facilities, in particular in urban contexts, is becoming a recurrent feature of contemporary conflicts and needs urgent response.

Building on the EU's commitment towards IHL and safeguarding humanitarian access, the ERC is expected to strengthen the system-wide tools on the critical issues linked to humanitarian access and protection in urban warfare, as well as to ensure the implementation of the new EU political and policy direction on children and armed conflict.

2. Digitalisation

DG ECHO published its Policy Framework for Humanitarian Digitalisation in March 2023. The framework is structured according to two general priorities: a) mitigating risks and building trust and b) supporting investment and scale.

To support the building of trust around digital tools, the key action proposed by DG ECHO in its policy was to support partners develop an ethical framework for the use of digital tools in humanitarian aid – representing a common approach to understanding and mitigating risks and a minimum assurance of quality when assessing projects with a digital dimension. With regards to supporting the scaling of digital tools, a key barrier remains a lack of interoperability and data sharing between humanitarian organisations.

Initial projects working at both the global level and in the context of South Sudan to promote a decentralised model for interoperability allowing users control over their data (the data steward model), a standardised data schema and technical tools for sharing data sets is coming to a close.

The ERC will be leveraged to support partners build on the lessons learned and products developed under this project, in order to create collective efforts to deliver interoperability as

a global public good as well as delivering a working interoperability solution for a key subset of countries.

3. Localisation

DG ECHO published its guidelines on Promoting Equitable Partnerships with Local Responders in Humanitarian Settings in March 2023. The ERC has been a catalyst for new approaches to fill localisation gaps, including on subjects linked to due diligence and/or ensuring adequate role of L/NAs in humanitarian coordination and leadership.

However, gaps persist in a number of areas including the involvement and participation of L/NAs throughout the humanitarian response cycle (needs assessments, design of response plans, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). There has been investment institutionally and across the system by donors and aid organisations in strengthening their relations with affected people to ensure transparency and a degree of accountability. However, in terms of increasing the actual influence that affected people have in the design, planning and delivery of aid at country level, there is still no evidence of a substantive shift in practice on the ground to deliver an accountable humanitarian response, where decision-making power is in the hands of those affected by crisis.

Furthermore, as part of the Grand Bargain, donors and aid organisations commit to supporting and complementing national coordination mechanisms, where they exist, and to including L/NAs in international coordination mechanisms, and in keeping with humanitarian principles.

However, there is little evidence that show international humanitarian interventions coordinating and incorporating existing national structures or, in contexts that do not allow for integration with national coordination mechanisms (e.g. in volatile conflict settings), that facilitate the inclusive and diverse participation of local actors in international coordination systems such as the cluster system, or to seek to support opportunities for L/NAs to shape and lead the agendas of coordination meetings and discussions.

L/NAs have a critical role to play in influencing decisions on humanitarian assistance, from needs assessments to the allocation of resources – how and to whom resources should be allocated, and what level of assistance should be provided to different recipients or for different elements of the humanitarian response.

4. Education in Emergencies

Despite its critical formative and protective role, education is often not prioritised nor included in the first phase of a humanitarian response. Strengthening the inclusion of education in rapid response mechanisms or complementing those mechanisms with rapid education interventions provides opportunities to enhance child protection and mitigate significant disruptions to children's education caused by the crises they are caught in.

Building on DG ECHO commitment to return children to learning within three months of an emergency onset, in the ERC HIP 2024 we would aim to support and promote proactive mechanisms to reach children and young people and enhance education preparedness for an effective rapid response and connection with longer-term interventions.

Specifically, the ERC funding will focus on building capacities to quickly return children to learning and supporting the global efforts of education stakeholders to highlight the pivotal and lifesaving role of education in humanitarian response.

5. Health

Epidemic prevention, preparedness and response remains one of the most pressing priorities in the global health policy landscape, but it also represents a crucial operational challenge in humanitarian contexts. For this reason, the ERC HIP 2024 represents an opportunity to implement initiatives to invest in preparedness for current and future outbreaks, in alignment with the global policy developments and with localisation efforts.

The provision of mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS) is a second important priority identified, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in reaction to the impact that humanitarian crises have on individuals and communities. Specifically, the ERC funding would focus on the crucial need for MHPSS capacity building, notably via the implementation and dissemination of the Minimum Service Package on MHPSS, published in December 2022 by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings.

Through these activities, DG ECHO will support the piloting of innovative epidemic methodologies where community engagement practices play an important role, as well as the systematic uptake of innovative MHPSS tools and guidance for a positive long-term impact in health preparedness and response.

6. Internal displacement

Addressing the challenges of internal displacement around the world will remain a priority for DG ECHO in 2024, which will mark the final year of the mandate of the UN Special Advisor on Solutions to Internal Displacement. Actions supported under this priority which would be in line with established policy approaches of DG ECHO, could contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, and its pillars 'prevention, 'protection and assistance' or 'durable solutions', including on subjects such as vulnerability targeting or evidence based programming as well as the implementation of the findings of the *Independent review of the global humanitarian response to internal displacement* which was commissioned by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

As such, ERC funding will support the above mentioned UN-led initiatives to strengthen and better organise the humanitarian community's response to the challenge of internal displacement in those areas of key concern for DG ECHO.

7. Renewed support to the continued adaptation of the humanitarian system

The EU is amongst the strongest supporters of the global humanitarian system, premised on the UN's central coordinating role of the international response to emergencies. DG ECHO is committed, inter alia through the Grand Bargain, to support efforts towards making the humanitarian system more effective and efficient to better address needs, increase accountability to crisis-affected people and sustain strong, impartial and independent country-level humanitarian leadership.

DG ECHO attaches great importance to enhancing and supporting the development and strengthening of country-level humanitarian leadership. Promoting collective, collaborative and adaptive leadership is essential to provide humanitarian leaders with the necessary skillset and expertise to deliver humanitarian aid in an effective, efficient and principled way, in an evolving and increasingly challenging humanitarian context. To this end, DG ECHO will continue supporting the Global Executive Leadership Initiative (GELI).

Disaster preparedness budget line

8. Disaster preparedness and anticipatory action

As the number of crises and humanitarian needs continue growing globally, with humanitarian budgets under increased pressure every year, the humanitarian sector is gearing towards reducing the needs and impact of disasters. Disaster preparedness, and especially risk-informed and innovative approaches, have a very important potential to limit the impacts of disasters in the future, and will therefore remain a focus of work for DG ECHO in 2024, in line with the 2021 ECHO Disaster Preparedness Guidance Note.

Globally, more people live in urban areas than in rural areas. By 2050, it is projected that more than two-thirds of the world population will live in urban areas. However, urban areas are generally poorly prepared to withstand the increasing extreme weather events created by climate change. Additionally, climate change is expected to drive an increase in conflict, affecting particularly the most vulnerable communities in fragile and conflict-affected settings. There is therefore an increasing need to explore innovative approaches to prepare cities to withstand and anticipate these shocks, as well as to increase preparedness for conflict and its consequences, including also anticipatory action.

DG ECHO would also like to explore possible ways to prepare for other man-made disasters, including especially industrial disasters causing severe humanitarian consequences such as oil spills, contamination of natural assets or environmental emergencies caused by the private sector.

Additionally, following the Commission's commitments to scale up its approach to Anticipatory Action (AA) in its *Communication on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles*⁶, DG ECHO will continue supporting the Start Ready initiative, which takes an innovative approach to using risk-pooling and insurance to pool funds and risks between large humanitarian partners and local NGOs. This innovative approach refers to the approach to scaling up AA and fostering localisation that DG ECHO is pursuing.

9. Addressing environmental degradation in humanitarian settings, including greening of humanitarian aid

To date, DG ECHO has supported green innovation, capacity building efforts and technical assistance through the ERC HIP to bridge gaps in partners' knowledge. These approaches have borne fruit, resulting in a variety of studies and guidance to support partners on greening. Building on the priority of 2023, the 2024 ERC HIP will support initiatives demonstrating how environmental activities in humanitarian contexts can generate livelihoods opportunities,

⁶ COM(2021) 110 final

broadening to other activities such as, but not limited to, waste management). The initiative should demonstrate the benefits that such activities bring to affected persons, by improving their living conditions, creating opportunities for income generation, and improving the environmental conditions people rely on for their livelihoods. Initiatives in urban areas will be prioritised, as so far, most activities have focussed on camps and settlements. The objective would be to fund a pilot in one or two locations, to be developed as an example for the humanitarian community to be replicated in other affected areas.

3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

This section outlines how DG ECHO intends to address the gaps identified above, and provides more concrete guidelines to partners on potential initiatives to be submitted. For technical and administrative details, please refer to section 3.2.2. of the Humanitarian Implementation Plan Technical Annex (HIPTA).

Humanitarian Aid budget line (EUR 24 000 000)

1. International humanitarian law, humanitarian access and protection

Building on the EU's commitment to support international humanitarian law (IHL) and the key role that the Commissioner and DG ECHO is playing in support of promoting IHL, the protection of conflict-affected civilians, including children, and safeguarding principled humanitarian space, we aim to support in particular the following themes in the ERC HIP 2024:

- strengthening the capacity of humanitarian actors to address and overcome access challenges in armed conflicts, including: 1. strengthening the available tools for the humanitarian sector on securing humanitarian access; 2. strengthening the capacity of humanitarian actors to undertake humanitarian negotiations, implement actions aimed at supporting the protection of aid workers in armed conflicts; 3. ensuring compliance with IHL by armed actors; 4. increasing the capacity of humanitarian actors to engage with these armed actors.
- addressing the challenges arising from urban warfare, with a particular focus on the protection of critical infrastructure for the survival of the civilian population. This may entail among others addressing advocacy, research and data collection linked to such challenges.
- follow up actions to accompany the revised EU guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC)

DG ECHO may also support other actions that address contemporary challenges linked to compliance with IHL, access and protection in armed conflicts, among others following up on the discussions at the European Humanitarian Forum 2024 and the ideas raised therein to address the existing challenges.

In addition, EUR 10 million will be allocated to the ICRC pilot Programmatic Partnership "Prevention of IHL violations" (year 3).

2. Digitalisation

Partners are encouraged to submit proposals aimed at:

- Delivering a framework for the ethical use of digital tools by humanitarians. This framework should bring together the wide range of resources available for assessing and tackling ethical issues related to digitalisation and the use of technology and translate them into practical steps and measures for humanitarians to take at the project level to ensure that technology is used responsibly. The partner should seek to convene a broad range of stakeholders from the human sector around this work, for their eventual endorsement of the final product.
- Supporting interoperability of systems and responsible data sharing. Proposals should aim to build cross-sectoral support at the global level across four interoperability layers (collective governance, technical platforms, legal frameworks, and standardised data) with the aim of developing a collective interoperability solution as a global public good. Proposals should build on existing collective efforts (including primarily the data stewardship concept set out by the CCD and DIGID consortia supported under a predecessor ERC project) and should aim to take practical steps towards delivering a working multi-organisation interoperability solution in at least one country – with South Sudan, the site of the previous ERC project, being a priority.

3. Localisation

Partners are encouraged to submit innovative global actions aimed at promoting local and national actors (L/NAs) equitable participation in the humanitarian aid delivery. As such, the ERC funding will promote system change and promote replicable and scalable good practice on L/NAs involvement in humanitarian response.

Through the ERC, partners are encouraged to pilot solutions to address key issues identified as existing gaps in the guidance, with a specific focus on strengthening institutional capacity of L/NAs, with a view to: a) ensure L/NAs' meaningful participation in local/national humanitarian coordination mechanisms and/or b) strengthening their participation and leadership throughout the humanitarian response cycle. Strengthening the engagement of local women- and refugee-led organisations will also be crucial to ensure an inclusive localisation agenda.

Recognising that capacity strengthening is not a one-way endeavour, DG ECHO will support capacity strengthening initiatives, with potential for scalability at more systematic level, that apply innovative and practical modalities and approaches between international humanitarian actors and L/NAs such as mentoring, shadowing, coaching, peer exchanges, etc.

4. Education in Emergencies

Strengthening the inclusion of education in rapid response mechanisms or complementing those mechanisms with rapid education interventions provides opportunities to mitigate significant disruptions to children's education caused by the crises they are caught in and enhance child protection.

Building on DG ECHO commitment to return children to learning within three months of an emergency onset, in the ERC HIP 2024 we aim to:

- Support strengthening education preparedness;
- Work on promoting replicable and scalable good practice in rapid education response and connection with longer-term interventions;
- Build capacities to respond to education needs in rapid onset emergencies;
- Support global efforts of education stakeholders to highlight the pivotal and lifesaving role of education in humanitarian response.

5. Health

Building on DG ECHO's commitment to improve the access to quality healthcare to vulnerable populations in humanitarian settings and in emergencies, we aim to support in particular the following themes in the ERC HIP 2024:

- Strengthening epidemic outbreak preparedness and response in humanitarian contexts, particularly vis-à-vis current and recurrent outbreaks, in line with localisation and a nexus approach and with a focus on community engagement;
- Providing quality mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS) in emergencies, including in the context of displacement to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, in reaction to the impact that humanitarian crises and natural disasters have on individuals and communities;
- Fostering MHPSS capacity building, notably via the dissemination and implementation of the Minimum Service Package on MHPSS, published in December 2022 by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings.

Through these activities, DG ECHO will support the piloting of innovative epidemic methodologies where community engagement practices play an important role, as well as the systematic uptake of innovative MHPSS tools and guidance for a positive long-term impact in health preparedness and response.

6. Internal displacement

Partners are encouraged to submit global innovative proposals aimed at strengthening the humanitarian community's response to the challenges of internal displacement, particularly by:

- Contributing to the implementation of the objectives of the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, notably its pillars '**prevention**, '**protection and assistance**' or '**durable solutions**', including on subjects such as vulnerability-based targeting, financing for solutions, data for solutions, or evidence-based programming

- Implementing the recommendations of the **Independent review of the global humanitarian response to internal displacement** which was recently commissioned by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

7. Renewed support to the continued adaptation of the humanitarian system

DG ECHO has been playing an active role in the Grand Bargain, including by providing financial support to its Secretariat. Considering that a strong Secretariat is key to achieve progress on the implementation of the Grand Bargain commitments, DG ECHO will continue its support to the Grand Bargain Secretariat. EUR 600 000 is allocated to this end through a multi-year funding modality.

DG ECHO will continue supporting the Global Executive Leadership Initiative (GELI) with an allocation of EUR 200 000.

DG ECHO will continue supporting the global strategic component of the OCHA pilot Programmatic Partnership “Strengthening humanitarian coordination and advocacy to respond to humanitarian crisis” (year 3) with EUR 2 000 000.

Disaster preparedness budget line (EUR 5 500 000)

8. Disaster preparedness and anticipatory action

Through the ERC HIP 2024, DG ECHO seeks to:

- Explore innovative approaches to Disaster Preparedness and Anticipatory Action focusing on urban and/or conflict contexts;
- Pilot initiatives to prepare for and anticipate other man-made disasters, especially industrial disasters causing severe humanitarian consequences such as oil spills, contamination of natural assets or environmental emergencies caused by the private sector;

Within these two priorities, DG ECHO will welcome initiatives that seek to:

- Increase the donor base by exploring ways to engage the private sector in Disaster Preparedness;
- Find innovative and effective ways to ensure the sustainability of localised Early Warning Systems (EWS);
- Explore the use of new technologies;
- Use a multi-risk, multi-hazard lens, and a nexus approach.

Additionally, DG ECHO will continue its support to the Start Ready pooled fund through Save the Children Germany in its role as grant custodian and member of the Start Network. A maximum amount of EUR 2 000 000 has been earmarked for this purpose.

In addition, EUR 1 500 000 from the disaster preparedness budget line will be assigned to the global strategic component on disaster preparedness of the IFRC pilot Programmatic Partnership “Accelerating local action in humanitarian and health crisis” (year 3).

9. Addressing environmental degradation in humanitarian settings, including greening of humanitarian aid

In line with DG ECHO’s priority to reduce the environmental footprint of humanitarian aid, we aim to support in particular the following theme in the ERC HIP 2024: initiatives demonstrating how environmental activities in humanitarian contexts can generate livelihoods opportunities for the targetted populations and their surrounding communities (e.g. environmental restoration, waste management, etc.).

These projects should demonstrate the benefits that such activities bring to affected persons, by improving their living conditions, creating opportunities for income generation, and improving the environmental conditions people rely on for their livelihoods. Initiatives in urban areas will be prioritised, as so far, most activities have focussed on camps and settlements. The objective would be to fund a pilot in one or two locations, to be developed as an example for the humanitarian community to be replicated in other affected areas.