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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

General Orientations on Operational Priorities for Humanitarian Aid in 2026

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
ACTED	Acted International Foundation
ALERT	All Emergencies Response Tool
ARGUS	The Commission's duty system under phase 1 of the general rapid alert system
ASAL	Semi-arid lands
ATMIS	The African Union Transition Mission
CAR	The Central African Republic
CECIS	The Common Emergency Communication and Information System
COHAFA	The Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid
DFIs	Development finance institutions
DG COMM	The Commission's Directorate-General for communication
DG ECHO	The European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
DG ENEST	Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood
DG HERA	Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority
DG HOME	The European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
DG INTPA	The Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DG MENA	Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf
DP	Disaster preparedness
DRC	The Democratic Republic of the Congo
DREF	The IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Fund
DRM	Disaster risk management
EEAS	European External Action Service
EHRC	European Humanitarian Response Capacity
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EMM	Europe Media Monitor
ERC	Enhanced response capacity
ERCC	Emergency Response Coordination Centre
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FARDC	Forces armées de la république démocratique du Congo
FPI	European Commission Service for Foreign Policy Instruments
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GBV	Gender-based violence
GHO	Global Humanitarian Overview
HDP nexus	Humanitarian-development-peace nexus
HFLA	Humanitarian Food and Livelihood Assistance
HIP	Humanitarian implementation plan
HNRP	Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan
HQ	Headquarters
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IAS	The Commission's Internal Audit Service
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross

Abbreviation	Definition
IDP	Internally displaced persons
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IHL	International humanitarian law
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
INFORM	Index for Risk Management
INGO	International non-governmental organisations
IOM	The International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
MSF	Médecins sans frontières
NAs	local and national actors
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSAG	Non-state armed groups
NWSW	North- West and South- West
OCHA	Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPD	Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
RSC	regional security coordinators
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAIO	The Southern Africa and Indian Ocean
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SPaN	Social protection across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus
UCPM	The Union Civil Protection Mechanism
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNHCR	United Nations' Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	UN World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Introduction

The European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) manages the EU's humanitarian assistance for people affected by conflicts, and natural and human-induced crises in non-EU countries. DG ECHO provides humanitarian aid through life-saving operations, focusing on food and nutrition, shelter, healthcare, water and sanitation, and education in emergencies. These operations are implemented by UN agencies, international organisations, and NGOs, and are monitored and coordinated by a network of DG ECHO humanitarian experts working in over 40 countries worldwide.

DG ECHO's mandate is to save and preserve lives, reduce and prevent suffering, and safeguard the integrity and dignity of people affected by humanitarian crises by providing relief and protection. By taking anticipatory action and focusing on preparedness, DG ECHO seeks to save lives, preserve livelihoods and build up the resilience of affected populations. It also coordinates humanitarian assistance with and among EU Member States' humanitarian departments and agencies. The overall priority is to manage aid as effectively and efficiently as possible, to maximise the effect of EU-funded assistance, while observing EU law, international law and the principles of impartiality, neutrality, humanity, non-discrimination, and independence.

DG ECHO is also responsible for managing the [UCPM](#) ⁽¹⁾, which covers interventions in EU Member States and other countries on the basis of the UCPM Decision ⁽²⁾, and helps implement Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 on providing emergency support within the EU ⁽³⁾. Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 sets the framework for EU emergency support in the form of specific measures appropriate to the economic situation if there is an ongoing or potential natural hazard or human-induced disaster. This kind of emergency support can only be provided in exceptional circumstances where i) the exceptional scale and impact of the disaster is such that it has severe wide-ranging humanitarian consequences in one or more EU Member States; and ii) there is no other sufficient instrument available to EU Member States or the EU to address the situation.

This document, drawn up further to Article 16(1) of the Humanitarian Aid Regulation ⁽⁴⁾, covers humanitarian aid operations for 2026. It does not cover DG ECHO's activities in civil protection. These are covered by the annual work programme for civil protection actions to be adopted based on the UCPM Decision.

The Commission Communication titled *The EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles* of March 2021 (the 2021 Commission Communication on the EU's humanitarian action) ⁽⁵⁾ and the subsequent Council Conclusions of 20 May 2021 set out key actions to boost the EU's global humanitarian impact and address the substantial rise in humanitarian needs triggered by COVID-19 and exacerbated by recent conflicts and disasters.

2. General context for 2026

Humanitarian crises have become increasingly complex and severe in recent decades. This trend is expected to continue in 2026. Conflict remains the main driver of humanitarian needs. Disasters caused by natural hazards are becoming more intense and severe, worsened by climate change, forced displacement, and more

¹EU Civil Protection Mechanism

² [Decision No 1313/2013/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 924), as amended.

³ [Council Regulation \(EU\) 2016/369](#) on the provision of emergency support within the Union (OJ L 70, 16.3.2016, p. 1).

⁴ [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996](#) concerning humanitarian aid (OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1).

⁵ [The EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles](#)

frequent epidemics impacting larger populations. These events especially affect the most vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, the elderly, women, and children, resulting in significant social, health, and economic challenges. Amid these escalating humanitarian needs, compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is facing growing challenges. There is a worrying trend of civilians, civilian infrastructure, and aid workers being deliberately targeted and access to life-saving aid being denied.

This bleak outlook is further exacerbated following funding cuts by key donors, including the US, but also several EU Member States. These cuts have dramatically widened the gap between growing humanitarian needs and available resources, to USD 37.84 billion ⁽⁶⁾.

According to the Global Humanitarian Overview's July 2025 update, the funding requirements for the year stand at USD 45.48 billion to assist 181.2 million people across 72 countries. So far, only USD 7.64 billion has been reported. In June 2025, severe funding cuts forced OCHA to issue a global 'hyper-prioritised appeal' aimed at helping 114 million people with life-threatening needs.

Cuts in food aid due to underfunding are putting people at risk of starvation in places such as DRC, Haiti, Sudan or Yemen. Women and girls' ability to access sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn healthcare and services for gender-based violence have been compromised in multiple crises. Children in Mali, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and other countries are being deprived of their future due to education funding shortfalls while people are being put at greater risk of disease due to under-resourcing of water, sanitation and hygiene services in countries such as Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

The most underfunded emergencies to date (less than 15% funded) are emergencies in Syria, Venezuela, Honduras, Haiti, Mali and El Salvador.

According to the 2025 Global Report on Food Crises ⁽⁷⁾, in 2024 around 295 million acutely food-insecure people required urgent food assistance in 53 countries/territories. This confirms a daunting upward trend, as it is the sixth consecutive year of growing numbers of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity, which **have almost tripled** since the report was first published in 2016.

Hunger is becoming **increasingly severe**. In August 2024, a famine was declared at the Zamzam refugee camp in Sudan, marking the first such declaration since 2017. Meanwhile, in the Gaza Strip, hostilities and the deliberate blockage of assistance have left the entire population highly food insecure, with a worst-case scenario of famine unfolding ⁽⁸⁾. Overall, nearly 2 million people in five countries/territories were estimated to face catastrophe (IPC/Cadre Harmonisé ⁽⁹⁾ Phase 5) in 2024, the highest number since the Global Report on Food Crises was first published.

Sixteen countries considered to be the most vulnerable to **climate change** by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index ⁽¹⁰⁾ are also affected by armed conflict, making it even more difficult to cope with climate change's impacts ⁽¹¹⁾. They represent 79% of all people in humanitarian need.

Epidemics pose great risks to the health, lives and livelihoods of people worldwide, bringing into sharp focus the close links between human, animal and environmental health (One Health) ⁽¹²⁾. A new 'global health architecture' approach for more coordinated pandemic preparedness, prevention and response is now at risk of funding cuts, in a context where over 70% of outbreaks occur in fragile, conflict-affected and vulnerable

⁶ [Global Humanitarian Overview 2025, July Update \(Snapshot as of 31 July 2025\) | OCHA](#)

⁷ [Global Report on Food Crises \(GRFC\) 2025](#)

⁸ [IPC ALERT: Worst-case scenario of Famine unfolding in the Gaza Strip](#)

⁹ [Cadre Harmonisé](#)

¹⁰ [About // Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative // University of Notre Dame](#)

¹¹ [How to Make the New Climate Finance Target Work for Conflict-affected Communities | The IRC in the EU](#)

¹² [World Health Organization one health](#)

settings. There has also been a sharp deterioration in the humanitarian actors' ability to provide life-saving services and to protect vulnerable people, particularly in the areas of **gender-based violence** and access to **sexual and reproductive healthcare**, due to the shrinking humanitarian funding landscape. An increasing need for **mental health and psychosocial support** is observed all over the world, particularly in the Middle East.

Systematic **IHL violations** continue to be one of the key challenges for the protection of civilians and of infrastructure (such as water or energy systems, healthcare, and school facilities) necessary for their survival, for humanitarian access, and for the safety and security of humanitarian and medical aid workers. These violations are the main reasons for continuously expanding humanitarian needs. In 2025, over 168 million people need **protection assistance** around the world, facing growing threats to their safety and dignity.

The 2025 annual report of the UN Secretary-General on **children and armed conflict** drew attention to 41 370 grave violations ⁽¹³⁾ against 22 495 children in 2024. This represents the highest number of annual violations recorded since the monitoring and reporting mechanism on violations against children was established 20 years ago ⁽¹⁴⁾. It also marks the third consecutive year where steep increases in violations were documented.

According to the UNHCR, 122 million people (by April 2025, up from 117.3 million at the end of 2023) were **forcibly displaced** because of conflict, persecution and human rights violations. One in every 67 people of the world's population, is now forcibly displaced. This is nearly twice as much as a decade ago and the 13th consecutive annual increase. This includes 42.7 million refugees. The global number of IDPs has reached record levels, with almost 73.5 million people displaced in their own country at the end of 2024 ⁽¹⁵⁾. Children make up 41 per cent of all refugees and women and girls account for 50 per cent. The fact that 9.8 million displaced people returned to their areas or countries of origin, the highest number in two decades, is a sign of hope. Nearly two million of them were Syrians.

In humanitarian crises, access to quality **education** is not only a fundamental right – it is also life-saving and life-sustaining, prioritised by children and communities. Over 234 million crisis-affected children and adolescents are in urgent need of educational support. This represents an estimated increase of 35 million over the past three years. Of these, 85 million are out of school ⁽¹⁶⁾. Refugees, internally displaced children, girls and children with disabilities remain among the most impacted.

Global humanitarian needs are increasing dramatically, while funding is decreasing. It is therefore essential to prepare for, anticipate, identify and focus on the main priorities and to observe the principles for the EU's humanitarian budgetary allocations. In 2026, EU humanitarian aid will remain focused on supporting the people who most need it, affected by both acute and sudden crises, and protracted or forgotten crises ⁽¹⁷⁾.

It is also essential to maximise the impact of the scarce resources by enhancing both the effectiveness and efficiency of aid. This entails scaling up the use of cash transfers as default aid modality, improving targeting mechanisms, harnessing the potential of new technologies, or promoting anticipatory approaches.

Moreover, the impact of climate change, combined with floods and droughts, dramatically worsens dire crises by adding pressure on life-saving assistance, on food affordability and availability of water.

¹³ The six grave violations against children during times of armed conflict, enumerated by the Security Council in its resolutions, include: 1) recruitment and use of children; 2) killing or maiming of children; 3) sexual violence against children; 4) attacks against schools or hospitals; 5) abduction of children; 6) denial of humanitarian access.

¹⁴ [Annual Reports – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict](#)

¹⁵ [Five Takeaways from the 2024 UNHCR Global Trends Report](#)

¹⁶ [Global Estimates 2025 Update | Education Cannot Wait](#)

¹⁷ The methodology used to do this is supported by INFORM.

In the same vein, improving coherence between humanitarian, development and peace actions is more crucial than ever before, as part of an overall integrated approach to crisis and conflict. Closer cooperation is needed to develop sustainable responses to people affected by crisis.

The EU will continue to support the UN's in coordinating the international response to emergencies, in a spirit of effective multilateralism in order to finding collective solutions to global challenges.

3. Priorities

3.1. Horizontal thematic priorities: improving aid effectiveness and the efficiency and quality of operations

The 2021 Commission Communication on the EU's humanitarian action provides an overarching framework for its thematic priorities. Given the growing challenges, the EU will step up its work to address growing humanitarian needs.

Aid effectiveness and result-oriented actions continue to be priorities for 2026, centred around a needs-based and people-focused approach. The increasing scale of humanitarian needs, coupled with a significant reduction of aid, results in an urgent need to reform humanitarian action, including by promoting cash transfers as default aid modality, improved targeting practices, disaster preparedness and anticipatory action, quality funding to life-saving interventions, a more strategic approach to humanitarian supply chain, locally-led actions and the nexus⁽¹⁸⁾. The EU will continue to support the Grand Bargain⁽¹⁹⁾ process, fund the secretariat and implement the Grand Bargain commitments.

In 2026, DG ECHO will continue to promote **multi-year funding** and will aim to increase flexible funding.

In 2026, DG ECHO will pursue its collaboration with the ICRC, IFRC and the UN OCHA, notably through two programmatic partnerships initiated in 2025 for 24 months. DG ECHO continues to integrate the **multi-annual** programmatic partnership model in 2026 through the geographic and strategic policy HIP. Multi-annual strategies help address vulnerable populations' needs efficiently and effectively, giving partners more predictability while supporting strategic priorities of mutual interest.

Aid effectiveness and efficiency will also be achieved by communicating, disseminating, implementing and updating existing policies as appropriate.

Following the launch of the **Humanitarian Leadership Group on Supply Chain** initiative, DG ECHO will continue to promote a **strategic approach to the humanitarian supply chain** across the humanitarian sector to make supply chains more resilient, efficient and sustainable to the benefit of people in need. The supply chain is the backbone of humanitarian operations. Its components (such as procurement of goods, transport, personnel, etc.) represent an important part of humanitarian spending. Despite the significant opportunities that harnessing the capacity of humanitarian logistics offer to make efficiency and effectiveness gains and to support other key humanitarian priorities like preparedness, digitalisation or environmental sustainability, there is little cooperation across the humanitarian sector in this area. Amid a steep decline in funding, strategic joined-up approaches to supply chain can contribute to increased efficiencies and cost savings. Against this backdrop, DG ECHO will continue supporting a shift towards a strategic approach to supply chain through

¹⁸ [HDP Nexus](#)

¹⁹ [Grand Bargain](#)

specific funding. The support will be complemented by high-level engagement, advocacy and awareness raising.

DG ECHO will keep developing and deploying **ReliefEU capacities**, a set of humanitarian emergency response tools to provide rapid but temporary support to partners in the humanitarian response where the humanitarian community struggles to provide timely assistance. ReliefEU capacities help to (i) cover immediate needs of the affected population; (ii) fill operational gaps; and (iii) strengthen humanitarian access through the provision of safe and reliable transport, logistics and supply chain solutions, expertise and services. ReliefEU Capacities will continue to complement the funding earmarked for crises and further support humanitarian partners.

DG ECHO supports the **development of innovative solutions and approaches** in cooperation with a wide range of actors, including Multilateral and Bilateral Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) and the private sector. Supporting the development of common digital and data-related services, including promoting greater interoperability of information management systems and, where appropriate, harnessing the potential of artificial intelligence, will help support a more efficient and effective system that delivers for people in need. Equally, a scaled-up use of blended finance building on the pilot humanitarian blended finance exercise ⁽²⁰⁾, will (i) help harness new sources of DFI and private capital; (ii) provide ways of working with the local private sector; (iii) and help to link humanitarian and development assistance in fragile contexts.

In line with the ‘do no harm’ principle, DG ECHO will keep integrating **climate and environmental considerations** into its humanitarian aid policies and interventions. As the climate and environmental crisis deepens, humanitarian actors have a collective responsibility to ensure that their operations address the impacts of climate change and do not further harm the environment people live in, or their health and well-being. Reducing the environmental impact of EU-funded humanitarian operations helps achieve the objectives of the Commission’s 2021 Communication on the EU’s humanitarian action, which places a strong emphasis on addressing climate and environmental factors as part of humanitarian programming. It will also contribute to reaching the targets of the European Green Deal ⁽²¹⁾.

Since 2023, DG ECHO has been requiring mitigation of the negative environmental impacts for the actions it supports. This is mainly achieved by applying the minimum environmental requirements²² that came into force in 2023. To support this step change, DG ECHO provides capacity-building support and support for rolling out **environmental guidance for humanitarian projects** ⁽²³⁾. In 2026, DG ECHO will publish an evaluation of its approach to reducing the environmental footprint of humanitarian aid, which will provide further recommendations on how to effectively scale up this approach.

Thematic policies

Over the years, the Commission has developed humanitarian **policies and guidance**²⁴ in different areas. These documents outline the Commission’s position on key international frameworks and standards, provide its implementing partners with specific recommendations on programming, and promote a needs-based, people-centred and integrated approach across sectors. The overall objective is to ensure the quality, coherence and accountability of EU-funded humanitarian operations.

²⁰ [DG ECHO Pilot Initiative on Blended Finance for Humanitarian Aid: Lessons Learned \(europa.eu\)](#)

²¹ [The European Green Deal Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent](#)

²² [Guidance on the operationalisation of the minimum environmental requirements and recommendations for EU-funded humanitarian aid operations](#)

²³ [European Commission climate Change and environment](#)

²⁴ [DG echo policy guidelines](#)

As in previous years, the overarching priority of EU humanitarian aid operations will be to ensure protection and to meet the life-saving needs of affected populations, focusing on people in the most vulnerable situations.

Serious **violations of IHL** have been reaching alarming levels. Continued breaches of IHL are posing significant challenges to the protection of civilians, protection of civilian infrastructure, the safety and security of humanitarian workers, the access to services, as well as rapid and unhindered humanitarian access. The Commission intends to continue supporting actions to prevent IHL violations and improve compliance with IHL, including by boosting humanitarian diplomacy efforts.

In 2024, DG ECHO set up ‘Protect Aid Workers’, a mechanism that currently provides legal, medical and material support for humanitarian workers under attack in the European Neighbourhood, the Middle East, as well as in south-west and Central Asia. By 2027, ‘Protect Aid Workers’ is projected to achieve global reach while further refining its suite of tools to those on the front lines of crises, such as offering expert legal advice and mental health support.

Humanitarian access

Recognising humanitarian access as a key priority, DG ECHO contributes to the overall strengthening of analysis and tools aimed at helping humanitarian actors secure access, supporting capacity-building initiatives for individuals and organisations undertaking humanitarian negotiations and engaging with armed actors, and supporting the humanitarian community’s coordination efforts with respect to humanitarian access initiatives.

Protecting and focusing on the most vulnerable people

Upholding the rights and dignity of people in conflicts, fragile settings and disasters and ensuring a **people-centred approach** remains DG ECHO’s priority. In 2026, DG ECHO will keep prioritising protection in its humanitarian assistance, in line with the provisions of the 2021 Communication on the EU’s humanitarian action and the 2016 Commission staff working document ‘Humanitarian protection: improving protection outcomes to reduce risks for people in humanitarian crises’⁽²⁵⁾. DG ECHO will keep supporting targeted actions in the protection sector and integrating protection in its humanitarian interventions.

Humanitarian assistance must be inclusive and accessible to all, regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnicity or any other discriminatory factor. DG ECHO will prioritise safe and inclusive programming to ensure all affected populations have access to humanitarian assistance, particularly the most marginalised people and people who may have additional vulnerabilities in emergency contexts.

Humanitarian crises affect women, girls, boys and men differently. Their differing needs and specific vulnerabilities in crisis and post-crisis situations should be addressed accordingly. DG ECHO will seek to maximise the **integration of gender and age** across all sectors and apply this approach to SGBV in humanitarian crises as outlined in the Commission’s staff working document ‘Gender: different needs, adapted assistance’⁽²⁶⁾, the DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker⁽²⁷⁾, the DG ECHO Humanitarian Protection Policy⁽²⁸⁾ and other relevant documents. This is in line with and helps implement the EU Gender Action Plan III⁽²⁹⁾. The EU will also remain an active member of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies initiative⁽³⁰⁾. DG ECHO will help prevent and respond to SGBV through targeted actions and

²⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/policy_guidelines_humanitarian_protection_en.pdf

²⁶ DG ECHO Thematic Policy Document n° 8

²⁷ [gender-age marker toolkit](#)

²⁸ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/protection_en

²⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0284>

³⁰ [Call to action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies](#)

the mainstreaming of gender and age needs, including the needs of LGBTI people. It will also be looking into combining policies and strategies to promote inclusive programming.

Humanitarian crises expose **children** to unspeakable physical and psychological suffering. In line with the EU strategy on the rights of the child ⁽³¹⁾ and the EU guidelines on children and armed conflict, the EU will continue to prioritise child protection, addressing all types of violence against children, providing MHPSS and supporting child protection capacities. Specifically, DG ECHO continues to intensify its work to prevent and end grave violations against children affected by armed conflict, including through advocacy activities to promote compliance with IHL, and through targeted quality funding.

People with disabilities are often disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises and natural disasters and face multiple barriers which prevent them from benefiting from emergency assistance in a meaningful manner. DG ECHO remains committed to provide inclusive and accessible emergency assistance in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ⁽³²⁾. In 2026, DG ECHO intends to continue to ensure the implementation of the 2019 operational guidance on the inclusion of people ⁽³³⁾ mainstreaming disability inclusion across all sectors and providing targeted assistance to address disability-induced threats and vulnerabilities. It will also help implement the EU's 2021-2030 strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities ⁽³⁴⁾ by supporting the building of humanitarian organisations' capacity to adequately address their needs. Furthermore, implementing the commitments made at the Global Disability Summit 2025, DG ECHO will continue fostering disability inclusion in EU-funded humanitarian aid, promoting equitable partnerships with OPDs and advocating for disability inclusion in humanitarian aid.

Education

DG ECHO will continue prioritising support to **education** as a life-saving and life-sustaining priority for children and adolescents affected by humanitarian crises and emergencies. DG ECHO will promote effective and sustained investment in education, including education in the first-line response, earmarking **10% of the EU's initial humanitarian budget for Education in Emergencies**, and helping protect education from attack. DG ECHO's comprehensive approach to children's needs will continue to focus on four EiE objectives (i) access; (ii) quality; (iii) protection; and (iv) better EiE response capacity, including accelerated education and a rapid education response. Particular attention will be given to girls and children with disabilities, in line with the Commission staff working document 'Education in Emergencies in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations'³⁵.

Cash

DG ECHO will maintain its focus on a '**basic needs approach**': an integrated multi-sectoral or cross-sectoral approach to programming that aims to serve to a large extent the basic needs of affected populations. Addressing needs in a coordinated and demand-driven way puts people back at the centre of interventions, especially if they are empowered to make choices and tailor assistance to their individual needs.

In this regard DG ECHO will explore ways of expanding the use of **cash transfers**, which, in addition to demonstrated efficiency and effectiveness gains, give affected populations the dignity of being able to have more choices and flexibility and ultimately more control over their own life. Moreover, the modality works across the crisis cycle and can benefit local economies beyond direct recipients and stimulate markets. DG ECHO encourages the use of **multi-purpose cash transfers** (cash transfers beneficiaries use to meet their

³¹ [The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee](#)

³² [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

³³ [The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations](#)

³⁴ [Union of equality: Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 - European Commission](#)

³⁵ [Commission Staff working document Education in Emergencies in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations](#)

basic needs in order to maximise the flexibility and autonomy for recipients, allowing them to address multiple needs simultaneously).

Humanitarian Food and Livelihood Assistance (HFLA)

HFLA remains crucial for responding to the current global food crisis. In compliance with the HFLA policy guidelines adopted in 2025, DG ECHO will provide assistance adapted to the needs of specific groups and crisis situations. It will also increase its efforts to provide assistance in the most efficient and effective manner by (i) advocating for cash-based interventions whenever feasible; (ii) strengthening targeting to ensure aid reaches the most food insecure; (iii) integrating livelihood support into responses where appropriate; and (iv) emphasising the importance of acting ahead of disasters through improved disaster preparedness and anticipatory actions.

DG ECHO will keep political focus on the global food crisis and step up advocacy in relation to conflict, humanitarian access and the mobilisation of financial resources. It will collaborate with other EU institutions, Member States and partners to further operationalise the Team Europe Response adopted in 2022 and reaffirmed in the 2024 Council Conclusions, following the HDP nexus approach. DG ECHO also plans to update its humanitarian food assistance policy to bring it into line with the new global context.

Nutrition

DG ECHO plans to maintain support for **nutrition** in emergencies and to advocate for more consistent inclusion of nutritional needs in food security actions. DG ECHO is committed to implementing the 2023 WHO guidelines on the prevention and management of wasting and nutritional oedema (acute malnutrition), and to developing and encouraging the widespread use of tools and innovative approaches to ensure efficient and effective programming. Nutrition outcomes are multifaceted, so DG ECHO promotes (i) a multi-sectoral and integrated approach to addressing severe and high-risk moderate acute malnutrition; and (ii) closer coordination of humanitarian and development approaches.

The ultimate objective is to reach as many malnourished people as possible. However, DG ECHO closely follows developments and changes in the nutrition sector so it can adapt the way nutrition services are provided, better integrate them into healthcare facilities, with more efficient referral systems, and develop the local skills needed for the early detection and prevention of undernutrition⁽³⁶⁾, helping to make communities resilient. The EU's humanitarian nutrition approach⁽³⁷⁾ contains guidance on how to provide nutrition services for the most vulnerable population groups.

Health

Health assistance will remain a core area of DG ECHO's humanitarian aid intervention. Its overriding objective is to limit excess preventable mortality, permanent disability, and disease associated with humanitarian crises. DG ECHO will continue to work with its partners to ensure access to quality healthcare for the most vulnerable. Recognising the diverse nature of health determinants, DG ECHO will follow a needs-based and cross-sectoral approach (e.g. WASH, nutrition), in several health domains. These include emergency medical aid, epidemic outbreak preparedness and response, comprehensive primary healthcare and life-saving referral care, sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn care, childcare, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), capacity building and health infrastructure rehabilitation. MHPSS and the response to GBV will continue to be addressed through a multi-sectoral approach in tandem with protection efforts. The reviewed, 2025 DG ECHO health policy guidelines⁽³⁸⁾ ensure that DG ECHO-funded health interventions

³⁶ lack of nutritious food or nutrients in general.

³⁷ [DG ECHO Thematic Policy Document n° 4 Addressing Undernutrition in Emergencies](#)

³⁸ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/resources-campaigns/policy-guidelines_en#health

continue to be relevant and context-appropriate, aligned to other sectoral policies and compliant with the latest global international standards.

Shelter and settlements

The EU's approach to **shelter and settlements** (S&S) reflects the increased need for humanitarian interventions in this area and their importance for efficient and effective responses in acute emergencies, early recovery, protracted crises, and anticipatory actions. Shelter is crucially important in providing protection, strengthening health and re-establishing livelihoods. DG ECHO interventions in this area will be underpinned by (i) promoting context-adapted shelter solutions; (ii) strengthening local capacity and ownership; and (iii) addressing shelter and settlements' environmental constraints and opportunities according to DG ECHO's minimum environmental requirements. These activities are in line with the humanitarian shelter and settlements guidelines ⁽³⁹⁾.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

As one of the largest donors in this area, DG ECHO has significantly helped improve access to **water, sanitation and hygiene** (WASH) services for people affected by humanitarian crises. People's right to have access to safe water and sanitation are central to DG ECHO's WASH mandate, as are its efforts to integrate environmental considerations into humanitarian WASH actions in order to increase the resilience of people in need and affected communities. The main objective of the WASH policy is to save lives and alleviate the suffering of populations facing severe environmental health risks and/or water insecurity in humanitarian crises. Systematic quality control, compliance with international quality standards and systematic performance monitoring are key aspects of DG ECHO's WASH policy ⁽⁴⁰⁾. DG ECHO will assess whether its current WASH policy should be revised to enhance its effectiveness and ensure it is in line with the latest global challenges.

Strategic humanitarian supply chain

As indicated above, DG ECHO will continue to promote a more strategic approach to the humanitarian supply chain across the humanitarian sector. Better use of supply chains and greater efficiencies can ultimately result in:

- items arriving more quickly and through better access;
- higher quality items through better procurement;
- lower prices, making it possible to help more people;
- greener procurement and operations;
- positive contributions to the localisation agenda.

The intention is to continue encouraging actors to strategically take the humanitarian supply chain into consideration in all funding to ultimately increase the impact of aid.

Risk-informed preparedness for response and anticipatory action

³⁹ [DG ECHO Thematic Policy Document n° 9 Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements Guidelines](#)

⁴⁰ [DG ECHO Thematic Policy Document n° 2 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene](#)

DG ECHO's goal for 2026 is to further promote disaster preparedness, both by integrating preparedness activities into EU-funded humanitarian operations and by implementing targeted interventions to strengthen preparedness capacities ahead of a crisis (under the Disaster Preparedness budget line).

In line with the Disaster Preparedness Guidance Note ⁽⁴¹⁾, DG ECHO consistently integrates risk analysis into its needs-based approach to preparedness. Understanding and anticipating potential risks is crucial to be able to act early and intervene before a crisis hits or a situation deteriorates, in turn reducing suffering and humanitarian needs. DG ECHO will also continue to promote a people-focused approach to preparedness, prioritising assistance according to individual vulnerabilities and risk exposure and leaving no one behind.

The core objective of the preparedness interventions DG ECHO funds is to strengthen the capacity of in-country preparedness and response systems (all first responders) to act as locally and as early as possible. To this end, DG ECHO promotes a system-based approach, ensuring sustainability by focusing on strengthening the capacities of communities and national and local governments.

In 2026, DG ECHO will keep developing and piloting new approaches to scale up anticipatory action following the commitment it made in the 2021 Communication on the EU's humanitarian action.

DG ECHO will seek to create further synergies with the UCPM ⁽⁴²⁾ to work with and support local and national government bodies and response systems, including by using specific tools (such as civil protection prevention and preparedness missions).

The Humanitarian-Development Peace (HDP) nexus and cross-cutting issues

The objective of the HDP nexus is to better link urgent relief to long-term solutions in order to reduce needs and tackle the root causes of conflicts and crises. It is now well accepted that the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation also need to be considered, as highlighted by the Joint Communication ⁽⁴³⁾ on 'a new outlook on the climate and security nexus'. Without compromising humanitarian principles, DG ECHO will continue collaborating with development actors to (i) develop long-term strategies to build the capacity and resilience of the most vulnerable people and address the underlying reasons for their vulnerability; (ii) and shift towards more systematic and upfront coordination and complementary programming between humanitarian, development and peace actors in all relevant contexts. Where relevant, the synergies between EU Member States and multi-annual indicative programmes (MIPs) will be optimised. This will include coordination between EU institutions, EU Member States and other relevant organisations to find opportunities for creating links. In this regard, a new integrated approach to fragility will be developed in close consultation with other relevant services, ensuring complementarities between all existing instruments particularly in complex settings/estranged contexts.

Currently, over 122 million people are **forcibly displaced worldwide** due to persecution, conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations, disasters or the effects of climate change. The Commission Communication's '*Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance*' ⁽⁴⁴⁾ outlines a development-led response to addressing forced displacement. Its main objective is to strengthen the resilience and self-reliance of displaced people and their host communities through a multi-actor approach to displacement crises from the outset. Both development and humanitarian actors will expand the implementation of this approach in a growing number of countries.

⁴¹ [DG ECHO Guidance Note on Disaster Preparedness](#)

⁴² [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#)

⁴³ JOIN(2023) 19 final of 28 June 2023.

⁴⁴ [Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance](#)

DG ECHO will continue its efforts to raise awareness of the situation of vulnerable IDPs. This includes supporting the implementation of the objectives of the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement⁽⁴⁵⁾ launched in June 2022, and following up on the outcomes of the work previously done by the former UN Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement, Mr Robert Piper.

Displacement caused by disasters, environmental degradation and the effects of climate change is a growing challenge. DG ECHO will maintain its operational and policy engagement in this area, along the lines of the July 2022 staff working document addressing displacement and migration caused by disasters, climate change and environmental degradation⁽⁴⁶⁾. The **Global Compact on Refugees**⁽⁴⁷⁾ is a multilateral framework aimed at developing a more sustainable and dignified response to refugees' needs, in line with the EU approach to forced displacement and development. In 2026, the EU will work towards the implementation of the pledges announced at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in December 2023 and will reiterate its commitment at the GRF Progress Review that will take place in December 2025. This will notably take into account UNHCR's sustainable responses approach⁽⁴⁸⁾.

Social protection systems have been recognised as one of the key ways of strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations. While they are within the remit of the development sector, the humanitarian community continues to play a significant role in aligning with its work, and complementing these efforts. These include supporting the adaptation of social protection systems to respond to shocks or aligning humanitarian safety nets (such as cash transfers) with existing social protection programmes. This requires coordination and dialogue to create more links between humanitarian and development/state-led action.

In 2025, the Commission issued a booklet on shock-responsive social safety nets: DG ECHO's engagement in humanitarian crises, illustrating on some specific examples how synergies between humanitarian action and social protection could be sought in practice⁽⁴⁹⁾. Accordingly, DG ECHO will continue to work to support the development of shock-responsive social protection systems whenever feasible.

An increasing number of people in need of humanitarian assistance are seeking refuge in cities. However, cities' high population density means that crises affecting them tend to have a much more severe impact. DG ECHO will therefore continue to advocate for greater attention to be paid to humanitarian needs, preparedness and resilience in urban environments. It will also explore the potential of area-based approaches and other analysis tools to improve the assessment of, and response to, urban crises.

In line with the Grand Bargain commitments and the objectives outlined in its 2021 Communication on humanitarian aid, in 2023 DG ECHO published a 'guidance on equitable partnerships with **local responders** in humanitarian settings'⁽⁵⁰⁾. The guidance is intended to recognise and strengthen the capacity of local and national actors (L/NAs) to respond to crises. It sets out key recommendations and commitments for more equitable partnerships with local responders. In 2026, DG ECHO intends to continue to implement this guidance, focusing on (i) recognising the value and skills of L/NAs and supporting institutional capacities; (ii) establishing more equitable partnerships; (iii) ensuring the participation of L/NAs throughout the humanitarian response cycle and strengthening their participation and leadership in humanitarian coordination; and (iv) facilitating access to localised financing models, including through contributions to country-based pooled funds (CBPFs) and through a number of programmatic partnerships, including with IFRC. DG ECHO will

⁴⁵ [Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement \(un.org\)](#)

⁴⁶ [Addressing displacement and migration related to disasters, climate change and environmental degradation \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴⁷ [Global Compact on Refugees](#)

⁴⁸ [Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme - Defining sustainable responses](#)

⁴⁹ [Shock-responsive social safety nets - DG ECHO's engagement in humanitarian crises](#)

⁵⁰ [DG ECHO's guidance note - Promoting Equitable Partnerships with Local Responders in Humanitarian Settings](#)

also continue to scale up the share of humanitarian funding delivered to local actors as directly as possible, in line with its Grand Bargain commitments.

3.2. Operational priorities in the budget allocation

3.2.1. General methodology

In line with Article 214 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (⁵¹), the Humanitarian Aid Regulation (⁵²) and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (⁵³), and acting on the basis of the relevant financing decision (⁵⁴), DG ECHO is committed to providing relief and protection for populations affected by natural hazards or human-induced disasters in a safe and secure manner. The needs-based assessment leading to the allocation of funding is supported by its funding allocation methodologies, based on several factors, including INFORM Risk, INFORM Severity (see Section 2.2.2.), an overall security evaluation and expert input. This assessment also pays special attention to forgotten crises.

DG ECHO continually reassesses humanitarian crises as they evolve. As needs decrease, often thanks to rehabilitation and development, it scales back its efforts. Emphasis is placed on coordinating humanitarian aid and development through the HDP nexus approach.

3.2.2. INFORM Risk and INFORM Severity

The **INFORM Risk** Index (⁵⁵) is a global open-source risk assessment of humanitarian crises and disasters that analyses the following three aspects of risk:

- hazard and exposure (the probability of physical exposure to specific hazards);
- vulnerability (the economic, political and social characteristics of a community that can be destabilised if a hazard event occurs);
- lack of coping capacity (a country's ability to cope with disasters).

INFORM Severity (⁵⁶) is a composite indicator that measures and compares the severity of humanitarian crises and disasters, based on these three aspects:

- the impact of a crisis (the scope of its geographical and human effects);
- the conditions of the people affected by the crisis (information on the distribution of people affected by the crisis);
- the complexity of the crisis (factors that affect its mitigation or resolution).

The INFORM tools are scientifically rigorous and freely accessible, offering a common and objective language to analyse risks and crises.

⁵¹ Article 214 TFEU.

⁵² [Council Regulation \(EC\) NO 1257/96](#) of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid (OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p.1).

⁵³ [Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission on the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid](#) (OJ C 25, 30.1.2008, p. 1).

⁵⁴ Commission Implementing Decision financing humanitarian aid operational actions from the 2025 general budget of the European Union.

⁵⁵ [Inform Risk](#)

⁵⁶ [INFORM Severity Index](#)

3.2.3. Forgotten Crises Assessment

The Forgotten Crises Assessment highlights severe humanitarian crises where affected populations receive little or no international media attention, **insufficient or no international assistance and little humanitarian funding**. In principle, the EU, as a global principled donor ⁽⁵⁷⁾, allocates at least 15% of its initial annual humanitarian budget to forgotten crises. This assessment, based on evidence as far as possible, relies mainly on information from the INFORM indices (explained above), the EMM ⁽⁵⁸⁾, the OCHA’s Financial Tracking Service (FTS) ⁽⁵⁹⁾, and input from field experts. The final list of forgotten crises is prepared in agreement with the EU Commissioner for Crisis Management.

For 2026, DG ECHO identifies the following crises as forgotten crises:

Countries	Crises ⁽⁶⁰⁾
Afghanistan	Complex crisis in Afghanistan
Algeria	Sahrawi refugees in Algeria
Bangladesh	Rohingya refugee crisis
Burundi	Complex crisis in Burundi
Cameroon	Multiple crises in Cameroon
Central African Republic	Complex crisis in CAR
Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras)	Complex crisis in CAM (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras)
Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger)	Complex crisis in Central Sahel (Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso)
Colombia	Complex crisis in Colombia and Venezuela displacement in Colombia
Haiti	Complex crisis in Haiti
Iraq	Multiple crises (Conflict and Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Iraq)
Jordan	Syrian refugees in Jordan
Libya	Mixed migration flows in Libya
Mozambique	Cabo Delgado Islamist Insurgency
Philippines	Mindanao conflict
Somalia	Complex crisis in Somalia
South Sudan	Complex crisis in South Sudan
Uganda	Refugee crisis - International displacement
Venezuela	Venezuela Complex crisis
Yemen	Conflict in Yemen

⁵⁷ Principled aid is a term used to describe the allocation of international aid in a way that is consistent with the values of global solidarity and collective action.

⁵⁸ The Europe Media Monitor (EMM) explores and presents news reported by the world’s online media. Monitoring thousands of news sources in over 70 languages, the EMM uses advanced techniques to extract information to automatically determine what is being reported in the news, where things are happening, who is involved and what they said.

⁵⁹ <https://fts.unocha.org/>

⁶⁰ In this context, crises are defined as “complex” when natural and/or human-induced causes interact and overlap, making it often impossible to isolate the impact of each cause, and resulting in a uniquely challenging and severe situation. “Multiple crises” describes scenarios where several distinct crises occur at the same time, regardless of whether their causes overlap or their effects are interdependent.

3.2.4. Other considerations

DG ECHO strives to address numerous crises within its budget, ensuring swift, efficient and comprehensive responses. Funding is based on needs assessments and coordination with other donors. However, aid delivery can be compromised by the absence or capacity of implementing organisations and access restrictions due to insecurity or administrative obstacles. DG ECHO ensures proper needs assessment and monitoring, operating in remote management mode only when absolutely necessary and justified by humanitarian imperatives.

Partners face the most restrictions in conflict areas where the rule of law is weak or there are political and administrative barriers, often due to politically motivated obstruction by governments or de facto authorities.

3.2.5. Operational objectives and budget planning

The draft EU budget for 2026 earmarks EUR 1 849 812 048 for humanitarian aid and disaster preparedness⁽⁶¹⁾. This is to be used for operations essentially aimed at dealing with the priorities under Appendix 1 of Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of humanitarian aid actions from the 2026 general budget of the EU.

The sections below set out in more detail how DG ECHO will support humanitarian and food assistance for vulnerable people affected by disasters. They also describe in detail its disaster preparedness operations.

3.3. West, Central Africa and Great Lakes

The region includes two main crises, central Sahel/Lake Chad basin and Great Lakes/DRC, with spill over through violence and displacements into neighbouring countries. There are also standalone crises scattered across the region with significant needs and no clear prospect of improvement in the near future: North-West south-west Cameroon, north-west Nigeria, CAR and the specific situation of Burundian refugees in Tanzania. Chad is also affected by the flow of refugees and returnees leaving Sudan due to the extreme level of violence there. The total number of people in need of emergency humanitarian assistance in the broad region of West and Central Africa, including the DRC, reached 67.7 million in 2025. The number of people targeted by humanitarian assistance was revised down in the course of 2025 due to the decline in funding from other donors, but this rescaling did not reflect in any way a reduction of the needs. A total of 52.7 million people were food insecure (CH Phase 3+) between June and August 2025 in the Sahel and Lake Chad countries (including coastal countries), with 2.9 million people in emergency phase (CH Phase 4). The hotspots of this food crisis in the region were in Central Sahel (3.7 million people, with no data for Burkina Faso), Lake Chad Basin (6.4 million) and north-west south-west Nigeria (5.2 million). A staggering total of 27.7 million people were estimated to be in food crisis in DRC, including 7.9 million people in the conflict-affected Eastern province of the country. In West and Central Africa, according to UNHCR, forced displacement has risen to 12.7 million people, marking a 48% increase since 2020. In the DRC, a total of 9.7 million people are forcibly displaced. The aggravation of the conflict in Eastern DRC, as a result of the latest offensive by the M23 rebel group since late December 2024, prompted new displacements in the regions of south and north Kivu, hosting an estimated total of 3.8 million internally displaced people, including people who are out of reach for assistance after the dismantling of camps around Goma.

⁶¹ Draft budget for 2026, as proposed by the Commission, excluding the allocation for technical assistance. 10% of the initial humanitarian budget is earmarked for education in emergencies.

3.3.1. West Africa

The crisis in **Burkina Faso** has deteriorated in the first half of 2025, following a significant number of armed confrontations between armed groups and the Burkinabè armed forces backed by militias (Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie), mainly in the northern and eastern regions of the country. Civilians continue to be particularly exposed, including through retaliations by armed groups in response to operations by security forces. As a result, 262 000 people were forcibly displaced (18% more compared to the same period last year) and 1 292 civilians killed (50% less). Beyond the protection of civilians, humanitarian access to people in need (5.9 million people according to HRP 2025) remains very complex in Burkina Faso. Lately, gathering information on needs has become more difficult in Burkina Faso (for needs assessments, on food security and forced displacements).

The situation in Mauritania remains worrying, due to the spread of conflict and violence in neighbouring Mali. As of mid-2025, the country had registered a total of 270 000 refugees, and this number is projected to increase to 318 000 refugees by the end of 2025.

In **Mali**, attacks by armed groups are increasingly targeting localities in the South, including in the Kayes region, but central Mali continues to be today the epicentre of the conflict. Access to those in need remains challenging, especially in the centre and north of the country, due to the targeting of civilians by all parties to the conflict, and due to the deliberate strategy by armed groups of attrition of targeted localities through blockades. Mali has more than 400 000 internally displaced people due to the ongoing conflict. The number of refugees has also surged by 53% year-on-year, reaching 135 000 people in March 2025. FAO/WFP also included Mali among their ‘hunger hotspots’ for 2025. An approximate number of 1.5 million people were expected to be in acute food insecurity (IPC 3+) between June and August 2025, including 2 600 people in Ménaka at risk of famine (IPC 5). Due to lack of funding, WFP had to reprioritise and could offer reduced rations only to people in IPC 4+.

In **Niger**, the humanitarian needs remain considerable with 2.7 million people in need of life-saving assistance in 2025. From June to September 2025, 2.2 million people were projected to be at crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity during the lean season. As in the rest of the Central Sahel region, conflict undermines the resilience of the communities living in crisis-affected areas. Opportunities to earn a living become scarce in these contexts, as do also social services. As an example, more than a thousand schools remain closed, most of them in the Tillabéri region. The number of forcibly displaced people has risen in 2025, with 986 312 people registered as of August 2025. This represents roughly 120 000 people more than the previous year. Data on food security, nutrition and forced displacements are difficult to collect, validate and share, due to a sensitive context. Because of the political dynamics in the region, the humanitarian space is increasingly under stress given the growing mistrust by the authorities towards foreign organisations. In the regions bordering Nigeria (Diffa and Maradi) remain unstable due to the consequences of armed groups’ activity. A total of 762 000 people are in need of humanitarian assistance in these two regions, but access to them is very challenging, due to conflict but also due to administrative measures such as the imposition of armed escorts on humanitarian convoys.

In 2026, DG ECHO will continue focusing on the humanitarian consequences of conflict and violence, forced displacement and the food and nutritional crisis. It will fund the delivery of emergency multi-sectoral assistance (notably emergency food assistance, protection, healthcare and nutrition, EiE, water, sanitation, hygiene and shelter) to the most vulnerable conflict-affected populations (refugees, IDPs and host/local communities), as required, in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. DG ECHO will also, as appropriate,

boost preparedness and response capacity in high-risk areas (including through anticipatory actions), and early emergency response to epidemics and natural hazards and/or human-induced disasters.

3.3.2. Central Africa

In the **Lake Chad** region, over 2.9 million people are forcibly displaced due to attacks by armed groups and human rights as well as IHL violations by all parties. Inter-community conflicts, often driven by tensions over cattle and/or the use of natural resources, trigger more displacements of civilians. Major restrictions on the movement of civilians and humanitarian actors make access to livelihood opportunities and social services highly problematic. According to the March–May 2025 *Cadre Harmonisé* analysis, around 6.1 million people are severely/acutely food insecure (phases 3-4) including over 4.6 million in Nigeria alone. Close to 600 000 people are in pre-famine (IPC 4) condition in the region. Of the 1 827 non-functional schools in the Lake Chad Basin, 80% are in Chad, leaving thousands of children out of school.

Northeast **Nigeria** (the Borno, Adamawa, Yobe – BAY – states) constitutes the hotspot of the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin and hosts 7.8 million people requiring humanitarian assistance. Over 30.6 million people in Nigeria, around 15% of the assessed population, are projected to face crisis or worse acute food insecurity (CH Phase 3 or above) from June to August 2025. This prompted WFP and FAO to describe Nigeria as a ‘country of very high concern’ in their 2025 ‘Hunger Hotspot Report’. WFP expressed major concerns on the continuity of emergency food and nutrition aid for 1.3 million people due to critical funding shortfalls. In northwest Nigeria, the growing presence of armed groups involved in criminal operations, coupled with their attacks on and exploitation of civilians, worsens the impact of intercommunal violence on the vulnerability of local populations. The states of Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto constitute are the most affected by this humanitarian crisis - a total of 718 126 people are internally displaced in these states. Cross-border movement of banditry and armed groups also prompts refugee movements between Niger and Nigeria. Inter-community violence, especially between farmers and herders, has also become a recurrent factor of internal displacements on a significant scale in the Central Region, with over 600 000 people who had to flee their homes to seek safety elsewhere. According to the March 2025 *Cadre Harmonisé* (Harmonised Framework) analysis, in Zamfara, Katsina and Sokoto 5.3 million people are acutely food insecure, including 150 000 IDPs. Acute malnutrition among children is also a major concern, with upward trends. In December 2024, MSF reported a doubling of the levels of global acute malnutrition in parts of northwest Nigeria, compared to the previous year. The country’s Humanitarian Response Plan continues to leave out the humanitarian crisis in northwest Nigeria, and the current budget cuts in the aid sector create an increased risk of de-prioritisation away from this crisis. Sustained advocacy and attention are therefore required also for this crisis in Nigeria.

In **Cameroon**, over 2.1 million people are forcibly displaced within the country, including 1 million IDPs, 413 000 refugees (mostly from CAR and Nigeria), and 700 000 returnees. The country was ranked as the most neglected displacement crisis in the world in NRC’s 2025 report. Some 2.6 million people were projected to face crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+) during the 2025 lean season, representing an increase of 6% compared to 2024. The far north remains the most severely impacted, with recurrent violence and displacement severely undermining livelihoods and agricultural activities. In north-west south-west Cameroon (NWSW), the crisis is driven by the operations of secessionist armed groups and by the State forces’ heavy-handed response. The civilian population is bearing the brunt, and 1.5 million people were estimated to be in need of humanitarian in that part of Cameroon in 2025. This crisis has led to the displacement of around 661 000 people, in the two regions and the neighbouring West, Littoral, Adamaoua and Centre regions, and of an additional outflow of 71 000 refugees into Nigeria. Widespread insecurity persists in this region. Women, men, girls and boys are acutely affected by distinct protection risks. Conflict hinders civilians in their everyday

life, regarding their freedom of movement, their ability to earn a living, and to access social services. Food and drinking water are the top priorities for the displaced population in these two regions, followed by health and education. Education is a particularly sensitive sector, where the current situation undermines the prospect of a better life for future generations. Of the 5 098 total schools in the NWSW, 2 066 (41%) are non-functional due to school closures, repeated lockdowns, including regular ones, at the opening of the school year, and ghost town operations.

In **Chad**, an initial 7.8 million people were estimated to need assistance across the country. 3.7 million people are in food crisis (IPC 3+) of which 384 000 in pre-famine IPC 4. The **Lake Province** crisis remains volatile, due to the continuous conflict with NSAGs and to the extreme vulnerability of the local population, with more than 225 000 IDPs. More than 277 000 people have been affected by the 2024 floods in the **Lake Province** of Chad. Since the start of the Sudan crisis in April 2023, over 1 188 000 forcibly displaced persons have crossed into **Eastern Chad**, including about 875 000 Sudanese refugees and 313 000 Chadian returnees. For 2025 alone, UNHCR projects up to 250 000 new arrivals. More aid is needed not to only to cope with the constant influx of people displaced by the crisis in Darfur, but also to accelerate the relocation of over 239 000 Sudanese refugees stranded in overcrowded, insecure border areas of eastern Chad. As the conflict continues in Sudan, the relocation of refugees and returnees away from the border is a priority for their protection. The displaced population is living under dire conditions, with acute protection and humanitarian needs in all sectors, which becomes only more acute during the rainy season, when access is significantly constrained and water-borne diseases spread. The host population's coping mechanisms are under stress, with the risk that tensions may rise among refugees, returnees and host populations.

In the **Central African Republic**, some 2.4 million people (37% of the population) are in need, most of whom needing immediate food assistance (430 000 people in IPC 4, more than 1.8 million in IPC 3 in July 2025). Over 73 000 children are projected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition between mid-2025 and February 2026. Increased instability due to shifting allegiances among armed groups and cross-border conflict dynamics (with Chad and Sudan) maintain a volatile pattern of localised forced displacement.

In 2026, DG ECHO's humanitarian assistance in **Central Africa** will address the most acute humanitarian needs in these crises, focusing on supporting the humanitarian response in unstable and hard-to-reach areas, and particularly on food assistance, nutrition, WASH, protection, and access to social services (health and education). Assistance will include disaster preparedness wherever possible, following the HDP nexus approach. Support will also be aimed at boosting preparedness and response capacities in high-risk areas, including through anticipatory actions. DG ECHO will also advocate for a better strategy on humanitarian access and compliance with IHL.

3.3.3. Great Lakes region

The HIP Great Lakes region includes Angola, Burundi, Congo, the DRC, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia.

The humanitarian situation in the East of **DRC** has significantly worsened in 2025, following the major offensive launched in January 2025 by M23 with the backing of Rwanda. M23 seized part of north Kivu, including Goma and moved southwards, claiming Bukavu. The frontline stabilised further south before Uvira. These new conflict dynamics caused major displacement flows in an area already characterised by large scale and protracted forced displacements. The camps in and around Goma were dispersed, making access to more than 1.8 million aid-dependent people extremely challenging. Since January, an estimated 1.2 million people have been newly displaced across north and south Kivu provinces. The war in north Kivu has also greatly

increased insecurity in other provinces of the DRC because various NSAGs have been exploiting the resulting security vacuum. In the border region between north Kivu and Ituri provinces, renewed assaults by armed groups, especially by the Allied Democratic Forces, have killed hundreds of civilians, while inter-ethnic violence has been escalating in Ituri. The Ugandan armed forces have deployed to Ituri to respond to perceived threats by armed groups (in particular the Coopérative pour le Développement du Congo). However, the actual motivation may be linked to economic interests instead. Ongoing conflict and high insecurity are also partly responsible for the steady deterioration in food security because they often prevent farmers from cultivating their land and accessing local markets. The DRC remains one of the most food-insecure countries in the world, with a staggering 27.7 million people who have faced acute food insecurity so far in 2025, including 3.9 million people who faced ‘emergency’ levels of hunger (IPC 4). The protection of civilians in conflict-affected areas remains a major concern in the DRC. In addition to GBV used as a war tactic and spreading further due to the extreme vulnerability of the people entrapped in the humanitarian crisis, attacks bring about numerous civilian casualties and injuries as well as damaging essential infrastructure, including hospitals and health centres.

The regional crisis in the Great Lakes region, which already hosts over one million refugees from other countries in the region, is continuing and adding to the existing **Burundi refugee crisis**. Regional refugee flows resumed as a result of the offensive of M23 and of regrouping of the opposing parties i.e. FARDC, the Wazalendo and the Burundian forces. 70 000 Congolese civilians crossed the border with Burundi to seek refuge in the country. Meanwhile, returns to Burundi from Tanzania and other refugee-hosting countries have fallen, mostly for socio-economic reasons and because there is a lack of opportunities to earn an income.

As a priority, DG ECHO will provide immediate multi-sectoral assistance and protection to address the basic needs of refugees, while working with development actors on long-term solutions for more protracted situations (particularly in health and education). It will keep advocating for refugee returns to be voluntary. In Burundi, it will focus mainly on protection (including protecting returning refugees). All countries in the region are prone to natural hazards and human-induced disasters. DG ECHO already supports disaster preparedness actions in Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda and will reinforce its DP engagement in the DRC and in Tanzania in 2026.

Under its specific Gender-Based Violence response strategy for the DRC, DG ECHO plans to further support and consolidate the following approach: increase its overall support for prevention and remedial action, through activities related to sexual and reproductive health, access to justice and accountability, and emergency socio-economic alternatives.

3.4. Eastern and southern Africa

3.4.1. The Upper Nile basin

South Sudan

South Sudan continues to be affected by political instability and high levels of insecurity, which, combined with a deep and worrying economic crisis, large floods and the impact of the conflict in Sudan, continue to generate an unprecedented humanitarian crisis since the country became independent in 2011. With 9.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, South Sudan has one of the highest proportions of population in need worldwide (78%), with 7.7 million people set to be severely food insecure (IPC3+) between April and July 2025, including 83 000 people in famine-like conditions (IPC5). The Cholera outbreak which was

declared in October 2024 has led to 1 383 deaths (by June 2025) and a total of 75 196 cases across more than half of the country's counties. Over 4.3 million people are displaced, including almost 2 million who are internally displaced and almost 2.4 million living as refugees in the neighbouring countries. The sharp escalation of violence and insecurity in South Sudan, since March 2025, led to additional internal and cross-border displacement. The conflict in Sudan that started in April 2023 also continues to heavily affect South Sudan. The conflict cut supply lines from Sudan while severe disruptions to oil pipelines and revenues have considerably affected the economy of South Sudan. The conflict also generates considerable displacement. Since April 2023, the fighting has forced over 1.2 million people to seek safety across the border. Most (68%) are South Sudanese refugee returnees, but the number of Sudanese refugees has kept increasing since the end of 2023. The influx of people has created hotspots of congestion, creating a risk of disease, triggering inter-ethnic tensions and highlighting the inability of the country's infrastructure to absorb shocks. Half of the people at risk of famine in South Sudan also come from Sudan.

South Sudan remains one of the most challenging countries for humanitarian access, due to frequent operational interference and bureaucratic impediments, and an increase in reported attacks against humanitarian staff and assets. The cost of humanitarian operations keeps increasing because aircraft is the main means of transportation due to the very difficult road conditions during the rainy season (June-October).

DG ECHO's 2026 strategy for South Sudan focuses on life-saving interventions, notably to deal with new shocks, and to target the most vulnerable people in the most severely affected areas through emergency responses. DG ECHO will also aim to support the provision of humanitarian protection assistance to communities affected by violence in South Sudan, focusing on critical SGBV cases and children affected by armed conflicts. Continued support will be provided for EiE that includes child protection. To increase the impact of the assistance, DG ECHO will intend to support the humanitarian community's activities in coordination, logistics, safety and security, context analysis, data collection, monitoring and conflict sensitivity. Opportunities to connect HDP actions will be taken.

Sudan

The conflict that erupted in Sudan in 2023 has generated the largest displacement crisis worldwide. As of mid-2025, the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix reports over 10.6 million internally displaced people, including over 7.6 million newly displaced since the beginning of the conflict. Sudan continues to have some 800 000 refugees and asylum seekers, while over 4 million people have fled to neighbouring countries since the beginning of the conflict. Sudan is the world's largest hunger crisis with 24.6 million people in acute food insecurity (638 000 facing Catastrophe (IPC 5), and another 8.1 million people (17% of the population) face Emergency (IPC 4)). The country also has the highest rate of child malnutrition on a global scale, with more than 772 000 children under five suffering from severe acute malnutrition. On 1 August 2024, for the first time globally in over seven years, the IPC classified five areas in Sudan as famine areas. In December 2024, the Famine Review Committee projected that Famine (IPC 5) would occur between December 2024 and May 2025 in nine areas and warned of a risk of Famine in 17 additional areas in the Central Nuba Mountains, in areas expected to experience significant influxes of IDPs in north and south Darfur, as well as in Al Jazirah and Khartoum states. The situation has further worsened and the lean season, which runs from July to September, will push more families towards hunger. While data are lacking, there is strong reason to believe that similar famine conditions prevail in other conflict-affected areas. The ongoing hostilities, insecurity and attacks on healthcare facilities in Sudan continue to increase the risks of disease outbreaks across the country. The population suffers devastating increases in preventable morbidity and mortality. In July 2024, a cholera outbreak occurred and continues to spread. Between January and July 2025 alone, over 32 000 suspected cholera cases have been reported in Sudan, fuelling a total of more than 83 000 cases and 2 100 deaths since the outbreak began. Cases are currently rising in Darfur, with reports of cross-border transmission into Chad and South Sudan.

Civilians continue to be exposed to extremely high levels of harm. Reports of serious violations of IHL and international human rights law continue to surface, including grave violations against children, systematic gender-based violence, abductions and assaults, arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial executions. Humanitarian access remains extremely constrained, due to frequent operational interference and bureaucratic barriers, insecurity, logistic challenges and an increase in violent incidents targeting humanitarian workers and aid convoys. Under its 2026 strategy for Sudan, DG ECHO will focus on addressing critical humanitarian needs by delivering emergency life-saving basic services and protection assistance to populations forcibly displaced and affected by conflict, natural hazards, climate shocks or epidemics. It will provide an integrated response to health, nutrition and food security to prevent and/or reduce excess mortality and morbidity. It will continue to support EiE, focusing on giving children safe access to high-quality formal and non-formal primary education, integrating child protection, MHPSS into EiE programming. Given the current access constraints and increased bureaucratic barriers, DG ECHO will support actions aimed at improving the environment for humanitarian workers (e.g. coordination, logistics, safety and security, context analysis, conflict sensitivity). DG ECHO will continue to strengthen its and partner's advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy efforts. DG ECHO will also support cross-border humanitarian operations with a needs-based approach.

Uganda

Uganda is the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa and one of the five largest refugee-hosting countries in the world. It currently hosts more than 1.9 million refugees and asylum seekers, mostly from South Sudan and the DRC. The number of refugees has been steadily increasing, with peaks when violence flares up in neighbouring countries (e.g. DRC crisis first half 2025 and increased insecurity in South Sudan as of March 2025). The structural underfunding of the refugee response, combined with significant cuts to life-saving basic services (including food, protection and education), puts increasing pressure on the progressive and inclusive Ugandan refugee protection and assistance model. The scale and severity of the refugee crisis continue to outstrip national and local capacities. Uganda is also prone to disasters, such as natural hazards and epidemics.

Uganda is a pilot country for the HDP nexus and the UN Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and was a co-convenor of the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023. These processes are interlinked as the EU and its Member States are committed to addressing forced displacement in Uganda by establishing and supporting sustainable solutions for displaced and other vulnerable people. These processes are however threatened by global funding shortfalls.

DG ECHO's strategy for 2026 will focus on providing life-saving assistance for the most vulnerable among refugees and their host communities. DG ECHO will further develop the ability to respond in a timely, flexible, agile, and integrated manner to new shocks such as natural hazards, people on the move and epidemics while strengthening disaster preparedness capacities. The localisation of the response and strengthening nexus efforts will be sought.

3.4.2. Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa region includes Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

Ethiopia

The humanitarian situation in Ethiopia continues to be complex with overlapping crises. At the time of writing, there are no official 2025 HRP figures on Ethiopia due to disagreement between the humanitarian community and the authorities on the actual level of humanitarian needs in the country. Areas in northern Ethiopia that saw active conflict from 2020 to 2022 continue to face multiple needs, made worse by the absence of sufficient recovery efforts. 700 000 remaining IDPs in Tigray continue to require full humanitarian assistance. The

conflict in Amhara makes access irregular and unpredictable. In Oromia, while active conflict has slightly scaled down, access has only been restored in some areas. Other conflict hotspots have emerged in 2025 – on the Somali-Oromia border and in Benishangul-Gumuz, triggering further acute needs. There are at least 3.3 million IDPs in Ethiopia in 2025 and over 1 million refugees from Sudan, Somalia and from South Sudan, including the most recent influx in Gambella region. In 2026, DG ECHO’s focus will be on life-saving, integrated assistance for newly arrived refugees and the most vulnerable people in the priority areas affected by conflict, natural hazards and disease outbreaks, as well as disaster preparedness actions.

Somalia

As a result of conflict on multiple fronts, insecurity, and recurrent natural hazards, Somalia continues to be a complex humanitarian crisis. In 2025, 47% of the country’s population is affected by humanitarian needs and 5.98 million people are in extreme need of humanitarian assistance and protection. One in four Somalis is highly food insecure and 1.8 million children under the age of five are projected to be acutely malnourished by the end of 2025. While food is ranked first among households’ priority needs, half of Somalia’s population is water insecure and suitable living spaces remain a challenge. Access to adequate healthcare continues to be limited, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Somalia has one of the largest internally displaced populations, with close to four million people living in camps and settlements. Displaced communities are particularly exposed to vulnerabilities and at least 68% of them are assessed to be in need of humanitarian aid. For the first time in years, in 2024 conflict-generated insecurity was the leading cause (52%) for internal displacement. In 2025, forced displacement continues on a similar scale and is linked to conflict and climate shocks. While the country was still recovering from a historical drought (2021-2023), El Nino-induced rainfall turned into unprecedented flooding at the end of 2023/beginning of 2024 and La Nina brought about dry spells and drought-like conditions over the first half of 2025. Since the beginning of the year, NSAGs have seized several towns and villages in an offensive that reversed many of the territorial gains made by the Government of Somalia and forced people to displace. The offensive is likely to continue and intensify, leading to the capture of additional locations and further displacement. The future of the African Union Stabilisation and Support Mission in Somalia, established in January 2025 as a follow on to ATMIS, is extremely uncertain, with no stakeholder willing to take on its financial cost and the US opposing the use of UN assessed contributions. Against rising political tensions, the security situation in country will worsen, with potential implications for access to severely vulnerable communities.

DG ECHO’s strategy for 2026 will prioritise the most at-risk populations, i.e. displaced and non-displaced people affected by critical humanitarian needs caused by conflict and/or natural hazards, and communities most affected by acute malnutrition, high levels of food insecurity and epidemic outbreaks. To maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance, and ensure that it is people-centred, DG ECHO will continue to focus on integrated responses rooted in area-based coordination. As for DP, two interventions will be running in 2026, that started in 2024 and 2025 respectively and are multi-year. They are meant to strengthen local early action for climate-induced disasters and health emergencies, as well as to scale up coordinated, multi-hazard and conflict-sensitive anticipatory action.

Kenya

The government continues its plan to transform refugee camps into settlements where refugees can integrate into the local economy and access services alongside the host communities. Kenya is host to over 850 000 refugees, mainly from Somalia and South Sudan, and this number continues to rise due to regional instability. The impact of recurring climate events, such as drought and excessive rain-induced flooding, continues to erode people’s resilience capacities. Millions of people are food insecure, in particular in drought-affected areas.

DG ECHO's support for Kenya in 2026 will focus on basic survival services (food, WASH, healthcare and nutrition, protection and EiE) for the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers. DG ECHO will also continue to link humanitarian interventions for refugees to sustainable solutions. Food security and epidemic outbreaks in ASALs will be closely monitored and addressed if more funding becomes available. As for DP, two interventions will be running in 2026, that started in 2024 and 2025 respectively and are multi-year. They are meant to strengthen local early action for climate-induced disasters and health emergencies, as well as to scale up coordinated, multi-hazard and conflict-sensitive anticipatory action.

Djibouti remains a destination and transit country for migrants to and from the Arabian Peninsula. The influx of people on the move poses risks, generates significant needs as well as tensions with the host population.

DG ECHO will prioritise DP actions to strengthen early response capacity and coping capacities, thereby increasing the resilience of people and institutions.

3.4.3. Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean

The SAIO region includes Botswana, the Comoros, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The **southern Africa and Indian Ocean (SAIO)** region, composed of countries with different level of national capacities, faces a complex array of humanitarian challenges driven by conflict in northern Mozambique, climate change, environmental, social and economic factors. Conflict and violence have continued in northern Mozambique with 1.3 million displaced people over seven years of conflict, with the Cabo Delgado crisis part of DG ECHO's list of forgotten crises.

Three tropical cyclones hit the region between December 2024 and March 2025 while frequent floods and droughts, exacerbated by the impact of climate change, cause significant damages on a yearly basis. Some 25 million people across 14 countries are facing food insecurity. The region is also regularly affected by epidemics, notably cholera.

In this context, there is a need to expand further disaster preparedness and anticipatory actions in the region. Bodies like the southern African Development Community (SADC) have been developing their disaster preparedness and emergency response capacities and international support in this area should continue.

However, reduced humanitarian and development funding is undermining the response capacity and increasing vulnerabilities across the region. US aid used to represent about 60% of the total humanitarian funding in Madagascar, Mozambique and Malawi. The health sector is particularly affected but also food assistance and support to logistics amongst others.

The 2026 strategy for the SAIO region builds on the 2025 strategy, adapting to context changes and available funding, and is organised into two interconnected pillars.

- **Pillar 1:** emergency response, addresses shocks from conflicts, natural hazards, and epidemics. Mozambique, the most acute crisis in the region with a protracted conflict in the north, will continue receiving dedicated funding for emergency response and education in emergencies (EiE). Other vulnerable countries such as Madagascar, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe face also several humanitarian challenges due to the cumulative effects of shocks such as cyclones, floods, droughts and epidemics combined with chronic vulnerabilities. These countries will be supported with multi-country assistance and through multi-sectoral interventions.
- **Pillar 2:** disaster preparedness, will focus on urban preparedness and anticipatory action in Madagascar, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe and supports preparedness in conflict areas in northern Mozambique.

In addition, funding for key necessary activities in support of humanitarian operations will continue such as logistics, security, data and coordination. In 2025, disaster preparedness is funded through three regional/multi-country actions for a total amount of EUR 10 million that will also cover 2026. Actions focus on scaling up anticipatory action; epidemics preparedness and regional support to SADC Humanitarian and Emergency Operations Centre.

3.5. North Africa

3.5.1. Algeria – Sahrawi crisis

In the absence of a political solution to the 50-year-old protracted Sahrawi crisis, and extremely limited income-earning opportunities, the Sahrawi refugees hosted in camps in south-west Algeria remain almost entirely dependent on external assistance. Without major development donors, the main support comes from humanitarian funding. In 2026, DG ECHO will continue to focus on food and nutrition, WASH (including expansion of the water distribution networks over water trucking), health, education in emergencies and basic livelihoods. As the second largest donor to the refugee camp population, DG ECHO will also continue to push for greater burden-sharing among all donors and with other EU instruments.

3.5.2. Egypt

As of June 2025, there are 992 000 refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR, 73% stem from the ongoing conflict in Sudan. More than half of registered refugees are women, with many female-run households. Refugees reside in some of the most overcrowded and poorest urban areas of the largest cities, within highly vulnerable host communities.

In 2026, DG ECHO will further support refugees and asylum seekers through a ‘one refugee’, focusing on cash support to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable. It will also continue to support access to quality education, and mainstreaming protection activities through all its actions. The approach will also strengthen the HDP nexus framework, including coordination and advocacy initiatives.

3.5.3. Regional actions for the Neighbourhood, Middle East, south-west and Central Asia

Humanitarian aid faces an increasingly wide range of humanitarian challenges in the European Neighbourhood, Middle East and North Africa, south-west and Central Asia regions, marred by a common pattern of sudden on-set conflict and disasters, violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), shrinking humanitarian space and attacks against civilian infrastructure. These humanitarian protection related challenges often cut across national borders. Therefore, country-oriented actions in the region are complemented by a series of regional actions.

In the first place, DG ECHO will continue to support humanitarian workers at risk through the ‘Protect Aid Workers’ programme, which aims to strengthen assistance to aid workers in the region and beyond who have experienced security incidents, are under immediate threat of harm, or have been arrested and/or are facing legal charges.

Furthermore, to better protect civilians, DG ECHO will continue to support advocacy efforts and promote respect for IHL by engaging with armed groups and de facto authorities in the region.

DG ECHO will also continue to support a two-year pilot initiative with WFP to build regional preparedness for emergency responses in the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe.

3.6. Eastern Neighbourhood, Western Balkans, Caucasus and Türkiye

For this document the Western Balkans and Caucasus includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

3.6.1. Ukraine

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Ukraine remains the largest humanitarian crisis on the continent of Europe since World War II and one of the world's largest refugee crises. Humanitarian needs are at catastrophic levels, with over 12.7 million people in need of assistance⁽⁶²⁾ and 3.8 million people internally displaced⁽⁶³⁾. As civilians and civilian infrastructure continue to be targeted by the Russian forces, access to essential services such as healthcare, education, clean water and heating is becoming increasingly challenging across the country. Massive displacement continues as people flee from their homes amid escalating and intense fighting along the front line⁽⁶⁴⁾. During winter 2025/2026, the humanitarian situation is expected to remain difficult. The 2025-2026 Winter Response Plan aims to deliver essential multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance to over 1.7 million people, including more than 356 000 displaced people and approximately 1.3 million non-displaced conflict-affected people.

In 2026, DG ECHO will continue supporting quality multi-sectoral emergency assistance to address the primary needs of the most vulnerable people (such as IDPs, older people, people with disabilities, children, survivors of GBV) in a timely, flexible, agile, and coordinated manner. It will focus its intervention on frontline response, response to new shocks and assistance to people on the move. DG ECHO continues to advocate for the respect of IHL, humanitarian principles and humanitarian access, including to territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by Russia, where needs assessment and the provision of life-saving assistance are severely impeded.

3.6.2. Türkiye

Following the fall of President Bashar al-Assad in December 2024, there has been an increase in the number of Syrian refugees returning from Türkiye to Syria. However, significant concerns remain regarding the safety and sustainability of large-scale returns. Humanitarian needs in Türkiye remain significant, with approximately 700 000 highly vulnerable refugees, primarily from Syria- still requiring sustained support. DG ECHO assessments suggest deteriorating conditions for refugees, driven by growing service gaps, increasing pressure to return to Syria, and heightened protection risks, including potential restrictions on healthcare, education, utilities, and legal rights. In 2026, the EU's humanitarian support to refugees in Türkiye will focus

⁶² [Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 \(April 2025\) \[EN/UK\] | OCHA](#)

⁶³ [Ukraine | Displacement Tracking Matrix](#)

⁶⁴ [Ukraine Winter Response Plan \(October 2025 – March 2026\) | Ukraine Winter Response Plan \(October 2025 – March 2026\) | Humanitarian Action](#)

on vulnerable refugees in the sectors of protection, WASH, health, and EiE, complementing relevant development interventions.

3.6.3. Moldova

Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, over 2 million Ukrainians have crossed into Moldova ⁽⁶⁵⁾, most of them women and children. While most of the refugees have transited through the country into the EU or back to Ukraine, Moldova hosts a stable caseload of over 135 000 Ukrainian refugees and more than 10 000 non-EU nationals, mostly in private accommodations or hosted by local families. The most vulnerable among the refugees from Ukraine have no income and exclusively rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs. Approximately 21,500 refugee children out of 25,000 remain outside the Moldovan formal education system (either studying online or possibly not at all), widening existing educational disparities ⁽⁶⁶⁾.

The Temporary Protection (TP) regime, modelled on the EU example and presently extended until March 2026, provides refugees with a stable legal basis to live in the country. However, there remains a lack of clear pathways for the long-term local integration of TP holders under the 2025-2027 Moldova's National Development Plan.

In addition, the unresolved energy crisis in Transnistria, triggered by the suspension of Russian gas provision in January 2025, has escalated into the most severe economic downturn of the last three decades in the region, which risks exacerbating social tensions and could heighten political and social instability in the country.

In 2026, DG ECHO's priority will be to provide emergency assistance to the most vulnerable refugees and help them meet their basic needs, through multi-purpose cash assistance, protection, health, education and shelter, while working together with development actors towards the refugees' integration into the national social protection and education systems.

3.6.4. South Caucasus

The South Caucasus region is a vulnerable to natural hazards and human-induced disasters. DG ECHO intends to strengthen the preparedness capabilities of national authorities and civil society. DG ECHO will also closely monitor the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable groups, in particular refugees from Karabakh, and will consider funding, where deemed necessary.

3.6.5. Western Balkans

In the **Western Balkans**, DG ECHO will closely monitor the potential humanitarian consequences of mixed migration. Funding of life-saving activities will be considered, where needed and appropriate.

⁶⁵ [WFP welcomes €1.5 million from the European Union to support Ukrainian refugees and strengthen Moldova's national social protection system | World Food Programme](#)

⁶⁶ Roadmap of the Ministry of Education and Research for the Integration of Refugee Children in Schools of the Republic of Moldova

3.7. Middle East

3.7.1. Syria regional and Lebanon crises

Syria

Despite significant developments, including the fall of the Assad regime at the end of 2023, the Syria crisis continues to pose complex challenges and generate substantial humanitarian needs both within the country and across the region. The situation is further complicated by concurrent conflicts in Lebanon in late 2024 and between Israel and Iran in early 2025. Ten months into this transitional phase, the security situation in Syria remains fragile and unpredictable, with ongoing hostilities in various regions and recurrent sectarian violence targeting ethnic and religious minorities. Currently, 16.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, marking a 50% increase since 2020, amid dwindling international donor support.

In response, DG ECHO's strategy for 2026 will focus on addressing basic needs and protection challenges. Given Syria's continued volatility and susceptibility to natural disasters, an all-hazards approach will be a central component of the response plan. While the actual return of refugees to Syria remains limited, efforts must continue to ensure conditions for safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable returns are established. DG ECHO will strive for consistency and complementarity with development instruments, recognising that while humanitarian aid is vital, it must be effectively paired with increased development funding to support longer-term recovery and resilience-building efforts.

Lebanon

Still recovering from the conflict with Israel and widespread socio-economic vulnerability, Lebanon still hosts one of the highest numbers of refugees per capita worldwide, with an estimated 1.37 million registered and non-registered Syrian refugees. 44% of the Lebanese population live in poverty, while 90% of Syrian refugees cannot cover their basic needs. The country has also been faced with a sharp increase of over 100 000 arrivals from Syria, following an escalation of violence in the country following the fall of the Assad regime. Inter- and intra-community violence linked to competition over goods and services, fuelled by statements against the presence of Syrian refugees by Lebanese politicians and continued hate speech on social media. In this context, it is important that the protection of the asylum space in Lebanon is ensured, until the conditions for safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable returns in Syria are met. Lebanon also continues to host an important number of Palestinian refugees, including from Syria.

In 2026, DG ECHO will continue to focus on providing life-saving assistance and protection for the most vulnerable populations by addressing existing and emerging humanitarian needs, including those in relation to the continued instability in the south and new arrivals of Syrian refugees following tensions in nearby Syria. Protection and accountability remain key components of this strategy. DG ECHO focuses on Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese people, but other groups will also be considered in an integrated response. Close coordination between different EU services and instruments will remain of paramount importance to ensure the operational continuity of actions and assistance, and to address long-term needs.

Jordan

Jordan still hosts over 560 000 refugees, including 511 000 Syrians, of whom 82% live out of camps and close to 50% are children (UNHCR). 66% live below the poverty line. The registration of non-Syrian asylum seekers remains suspended, limiting their access to basic services and restricting their protection space.

In addition to the ongoing Syria crisis, the conflict in Gaza and recurring instability in the region have created new challenges, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities as donor support shifts focus. The US funding freeze has further contributed to humanitarian funding shortages. The decreasing funding landscape has forced many INGOs and several UN agencies to significantly reduce assistance, while camp responses suffer due to low donor funding levels. Reduced assistance is also jeopardising Jordan's positive stance on refugees.

In June 2025, the abrupt closure of the Emirati Camp in Jordan forced over 1 000 residents to transfer to the Azraq camp, and nearly 5 000 had no choice but to 'return' to Syria. In 2026, DG ECHO's assistance to refugees in host communities and camps, will primarily focus on access to protection and healthcare services. DG ECHO will also continue coordinating with other EU instruments, particularly DG MENA, to ensure a smooth transition to long-term solutions for refugees and host communities.

3.7.2. Palestine ⁽⁶⁷⁾

The full-scale military operation following Hamas' brutal terrorist attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023, along with the Israeli government's severe limitations to the entry of aid into Gaza, has brought the already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza to a catastrophic level for its population of 2.2 million. Gaza's entire population is exposed to security and protection risks, and have insufficient access to water, food, healthcare, and other basic services. In July 2025, the IPC reported that two out of three famine thresholds have been reached. Almost the entire population, displaced several times, has become fully dependent on aid. Severe bureaucratic limitations on the work of humanitarian actors continue to be imposed and have become progressively more restrictive, hindering relief efforts. The creation of an alternative, militarised, non-humanitarian aid distribution system by Israel has been accompanied by a high number of civilian casualties at distribution points and concerns of additional forced displacement.

In the West Bank, demolitions, access restrictions, discriminatory planning policies, settlement expansion, settler violence and deadly military operations in refugee camps have increased since 7 October 2023. This has increased the vulnerability of the population who must live in a coercive environment with little or no access to essential services and income-earning opportunities. This trend continued to increase at a faster rate in 2025. As of 11 August 2025, OCHA has recorded 178 Palestinian deaths and 2 452 injuries by Israeli forces or settlers in the West Bank in 2025.

In 2026, protection of and assistance for the most vulnerable people in Gaza will remain crucial, focusing on health, food, water and sanitation, and shelter/non-food items. In the West Bank, support for vulnerable communities who are being displaced or face this risk, and who do not have access to basic services, remains crucial. Across Palestine, support and protection of the principled, UN-led humanitarian system will remain essential against the backdrop of growing limitations imposed on its operations. Close coordination with other Commission departments and the EEAS will continue in areas such as health, WASH, social protection, and area-based activities, in case the situation should become more conducive to joint work on activities related to resilience-building or early recovery.

3.7.3. Yemen and Iraq

Yemen

Yemen is among the world's most severe humanitarian crises. A decade of conflict, economic deterioration, and the collapse of public services and recurrent climate shocks have left 19.5 million people. This represents

⁶⁷This designation is not to be construed as a recognition of a State of Palestine and does not affect the individual positions of the EU Member States on this matter.

over half the population in need of humanitarian assistance and protection services ⁽⁶⁸⁾. Over 4.8 million are internally displaced and 6 million women and girls are facing a higher risk of abuse and exploitation.

Sustained humanitarian aid has averted a catastrophe in the country, preventing health crises and famine. However, the situation is worsening. Funding is falling sharply, aid is becoming politicised, and the operational environment is shrinking. In addition, regional instability, the conflict spill over from Gaza, and military escalations in the Red Sea and Yemen, including repeated strikes on vital civilian infrastructure, have created new protection risks and disrupted supply chains in areas managed by de facto authorities. Since March 2024, a cholera outbreak has spread nationwide, with over 286 406 suspected cases of acute watery diarrhoea/cholera reported. Widespread violations of International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law, and Refugee Law continue, including gender-based violence, child recruitment, and migrant abuses such as killings, detention, forced labour, and trafficking.

In 2026, DG ECHO will prioritise life-saving assistance for the most vulnerable, solely based on their needs and regardless of their geographical location, considering the partners' operational capacities and in line with a Whole of Yemen approach.

Iraq

Nearly eight years after the military defeat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Iraq is still gripped by a protracted humanitarian crisis. In 2025, humanitarian needs remained persistent. Despite years of stabilisation and reconstruction efforts, the situation remains fragile, and the humanitarian caseload is far from resolved. Over 1 million Iraqis remain displaced, including more than 112 000 people still living in IDP camps. The humanitarian infrastructure that once supported these populations is rapidly dissolving, leaving thousands without access to basic services, protection, or pathways to durable solutions. At the same time, the barriers to returns or reintegration remain immense. IDPs face insecurity, destroyed housing, lack of livelihoods and are missing civil documentation, preventing them from finding durable solutions. Iraq is also hosting over 340 000 refugees and asylum seekers, mostly from Syria. Compounding the crisis is the growing impact of climate change. Since 2018, climate-induced displacement has surged, particularly among subsistence farming communities. As of early 2025, at least 170 000 people have been displaced due to water scarcity, land degradation, and failing rural livelihoods.

In 2026, DG ECHO will provide protection services for the most vulnerable displaced people living in camps and informal settlements, particularly people who lack key civil documentation. This will enable them to claim their rights and participate in society at an equal footing with any other Iraqi citizen. The needs of IDPs and refugees require a comprehensive response that goes beyond short-term humanitarian assistance. This makes the HDP nexus approach even more crucial.

⁶⁸ [Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 \(January 2025\) \[EN/AR\] | OCHA](#)

3.8. Asia

3.8.1. south-west Asia and the Central Asia region

Afghanistan

Afghanistan continues to face one of the largest humanitarian crises worldwide. The 2025 HNRP identifies 22.9 million people in need of aid, including 12.1 million children, requiring USD 2.42 billion. By August 2025, the response was only 26.2% funded, leaving priority needs unmet across all major sectors. Severe funding cuts by donors led to the HRP's further reprioritisation, now focusing on high-severity districts and reducing the 2025 target from 16.8 million to around 12.5 million people.

Repressive policies by the Taliban further exacerbate needs, particularly for women and girls. The shrinking humanitarian space complicates access and delivery, yet humanitarian organisations continue their work with the meaningful participation of women, despite additional challenges and costs.

Already faced with these challenges, combined with extreme poverty and climate hazards, the situation has further worsened with the recent large-scale forced return of millions of Afghans from neighbouring countries, adding pressure to an already overstretched aid response.

In 2026, DG ECHO will focus on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations, prioritising hard-to-reach communities. Special attention will be given to forced returnees from Iran and Pakistan, as well as host communities. DG ECHO plans to maintain multi-sectoral support for saving and sustaining lives, including disaster preparedness. Increasing restrictions on girls' education make EiE a priority. Advocacy for safe, unimpeded humanitarian access, protection, and adherence to IHRL will underpin the response. A strong commitment to the 'by women, for women' principle will ensure equitable access to assistance. DG ECHO will encourage coordinated approaches with basic human needs and development programmes to sustain essential services and enable linkages to mid- and long-term solutions.

Pakistan

In a context of high political and economic instability, Pakistan hosts an estimated 2.8 million Afghans (including 1.36 million Afghan refugees). However, since September 2023, Pakistan's government has started to repatriate more than one million (mainly undocumented) Afghans.

Meanwhile, malnutrition and limited access to water, sanitation and medical services have compromised the healthcare capacities for Pakistan's most vulnerable communities and an estimated 1.5 million IDPs have been displaced due to the ongoing conflict in north Pakistan as well as a series of natural disasters in recent years, such as floods and earthquakes. Nearly three years after the devastating floods of 2022, at least 20.6 million people are still in need of humanitarian assistance.

In 2026, DG ECHO strategy in Pakistan will focus on the Afghanistan regional crisis, to meet the humanitarian needs and protection of the most vulnerable Afghans, regardless of their status, their host communities, and of people affected by human-made and natural hazards. In line with the 'do no harm' principle, DG ECHO will focus on sectors that benefit Afghans and host communities alike, food security and nutrition as well as healthcare services, education, protection and water and sanitation. Its strategy will support the institutionalisation of multi-hazard approaches by strengthening the governance and ownership of Disaster Risk Management for risk-based preparedness. While DG ECHO's response has mainly focused in the past on Afghan refugees and natural disaster, it will also aim to address the caseload of Pakistani IDPs.

Iran

Iran is the largest refugee-hosting country in the world, with an estimated 6 million Afghans, of whom 3.8 million are considered refugees or refugee-like by UNHCR. The dramatic increase in the cost of living due to inflation, coupled with limited income-earning opportunities, has severely reduced the purchasing power of vulnerable Afghan nationals and refugees. Basic services, including health and education, are under increasing strain from over a decade of sanctions. Amid rising anti-Afghan sentiment and heightened security crackdowns, the government has begun forcing approximately 2.6 million Afghans to repatriate, despite UNHCR's non-return advisory.

In addition, climate shocks continue to exacerbate socio-economic vulnerabilities. Frequent earthquakes, droughts, floods, landslides, and major storms take a heavy toll on people and infrastructure, especially affecting the most vulnerable, such as migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and their host communities.

In 2026, DG ECHO will work with its long-standing and experienced humanitarian partners in Iran to address the needs of the most vulnerable Afghans, including those who are undocumented. Protection and support for basic needs will be priority sectors. Humanitarian assistance will be provided to those affected by natural hazards.

Central Asia

The region is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Natural hazards such as earthquakes, floods, droughts, heavy rainfall, avalanches, heatwaves, and other extreme weather events are increasingly impacting the environment, economy, and health of the region's inhabitants. These events cause loss of life, homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods, hindering long-term development. Local tensions over access to water and pastureland have also led to border clashes and armed confrontations in the past. In 2026, DG ECHO will focus on disaster preparedness by strengthening local preparedness and response capacity.

3.8.2. South and South-East Asia

Bangladesh

The congested refugee camps in Cox's Bazar host more than one million Rohingya refugees who *en masse* fled military exactions in the Rakhine state in 2017. Rohingya refugees are stateless and face restrictive policy from Bangladeshi authorities⁽⁶⁹⁾. For instance, not allowing the development of livelihood opportunities, making them entirely dependent on humanitarian aid. The 2021 military coup and the conflict in Myanmar have further reduced the prospects of the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees. The 2025 Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan (USD 934 million) is funded at 36%. The change of government in Bangladesh in 2024 has not brought so far substantial policy changes, despite some openings.

DG ECHO's strategy for Rohingyas in Bangladesh in 2026 is twofold (i) to ensure comprehensive humanitarian multi-sectoral assistance, and to respond to suddenly arising and unexpected needs; (ii) to advocate for policy changes to promote a more sustainable approach towards refugees and prevent forced repatriation.

Bangladesh is also one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, exposed to a whole host of natural hazards, including cyclones, floods and earthquakes. DG ECHO will help Bangladesh scale-up measures to improve its preparedness for natural hazards.

⁶⁹ [Restrictive broadcast policy in Bangladesh raises concerns - Committee to Protect Journalists](#)

Myanmar

There are around 22 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Myanmar, up from 1 million before the military *coup d'état* in February 2021. Large numbers of civilians have since taken up arms, joining a kaleidoscope of ethnic armed groups who have been fighting the military for decades. The UNHCR estimates that there are about 3.6 million IDPs in Myanmar. Almost the entire country is affected by the conflict. In Rakhine state, a deadly combination of conflict, blockades, and funding cuts is driving a dramatic rise in hunger and malnutrition. The 2025 HRP (USD 1 137.8 million) is only funded at 11.9%. In addition, Myanmar has been hit by a 7.7 magnitude earthquake on 28 March 2025. An estimated 14.9 million people have been impacted by the earthquake. After the immediate response, needs in term of early recovery remain important. The Flash Addendum to the HRP following the earthquake (USD 275.2 million) is funded at 63.2%.

In 2026, DG ECHO's strategy in Myanmar will address the acute humanitarian needs of IDPs and other conflict-affected people across the country, while maintaining essential assistance for long-term IDPs and people affected by the earthquake. DG ECHO's priority will be to provide emergency and life-saving assistance, while also supporting the nexus approach through appropriate operational synergies with other programmes. DG ECHO supports the capacity strengthening of local networks in collaboration with international partners to ensure timely and high-quality preparedness for a multi-sectoral response. DG ECHO will also support disaster preparedness in Myanmar, adapted to the prevailing situation.

Regional refugee crisis

Countries in South-East Asia are experiencing two regional crises rooted in Myanmar (i) Rohingya refugees (Indonesia, India, Malaysia and Thailand); and (ii) post-2021-coup refugees from Myanmar (Thailand and India). More than 500 000 people are estimated to need protection and assistance (most of them women and children).

In 2026, DG ECHO's response is based on a non-discriminatory 'one refugee' approach to supporting humanitarian interventions that target the most severely affected populations in need of protection and assistance. Advocacy to ensure access and response could also be considered.

Philippines

The Philippines is prone to significant humanitarian crises caused by both natural hazards (tropical cyclones, floods, volcanic eruptions, etc.) and conflicts.

In 2026, DG ECHO will focus on the unmet forgotten humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable families affected by internal conflict in Mindanao. To complement humanitarian actions, the disaster preparedness capability of local government will be improved to include strategies specifically aimed at reducing the vulnerability of conflict-affected families.

Nepal

Nepal is prone to significant humanitarian crises caused by natural hazards (earthquakes, landslides, floods, etc.) mainly affecting the most vulnerable populations.

In 2026, DG ECHO will help Nepal scale-up measures to improve its preparedness for natural hazards.

Disaster preparedness in South and South-East Asia

In other countries of the region, DG ECHO will pursue its targeted disaster preparedness investment to boost local preparedness and response capacity, working with government systems, and adopting a regional approach, whenever possible. The systematic inclusion of the most vulnerable people in relevant DRM plans at all levels remains at the centre of DG ECHO's activity.

3.9. Latin America and the Caribbean

3.9.1. Central America

The Central American countries and Mexico are affected by significant exposure to natural hazards and to high levels of inequality and poverty exacerbated by increasing and pervasive violence, and a significant number of displaced people. The 2025 Inform Severity Index puts Guatemala, Honduras and Guatemala in the high severity category as complex crises, with 4.6 million people in need of humanitarian aid. For Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama there are no official data due to the lack of HRPs. However, Nicaragua has intensified repression and human rights violations and restricted humanitarian space while reports on Mexico show a dramatic increase in the violence driven by cartels and criminal groups all over the country, targeting displaced populations and civilians for extortions, kidnappings, sexual violence, forced labour, strikes on schools, explosive devices and the use of chemical weapons. Successive climate shocks in recent years (exacerbated by droughts) and the drop in purchasing power have seriously increased food insecurity. About 4.5 million people are now food insecure in the region (2025 HRPs), mainly in the 'Dry Corridor' of Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras).

In 2026, DG ECHO will continue to support protection and relief assistance for populations suffering from the effects of multiple crises, including the most vulnerable victims of organised violence, forcibly displaced people and people requiring food assistance and short- to medium-term income support. It will also monitor population movements triggered by violence, poverty, food insecurity and social unrest, including mixed migration flows deportations.

3.9.2. South America

Forced displacement continues to be a critical humanitarian issue in the subregion, with people fleeing Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador due to violence and deepening political and socio-economic crises. The deterioration of the situation in different host countries of South America (restrictive migration and asylum policies and rising xenophobia) keeps fuelling secondary flows of people with people in transit presenting increasingly vulnerable profiles and facing growing protection risks and lack of access to basic services (healthcare, food, water and education). South America is also prone to recurrent hazards (including floods, earthquakes and forest fires). Large indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable to these multidimensional threats, further aggravated by climate change and the weather-related events it gives rise to.

In 2026, DG ECHO intends to consolidate its current response to human mobility, focusing on protection and life-saving operations for the most vulnerable groups in areas of transit and agglomeration. DG ECHO will also focus on the needs of indigenous populations across the continent, who have been traditionally marginalised. In the framework of the EU-LAC MoU on DRM, it will also continue supporting disaster preparedness activities to strengthen local, national and regional responses and coordination capacities to better tackle the multiple humanitarian challenges and work with the UCPM.

Colombia

Humanitarian needs have been rising in Colombia over the past decade, despite significant development gains such as the 2016 Peace Agreement. Fights for wider territorial control by armed groups (particularly in rural areas) has escalated the conflict, leading to increased displacement, confinement and reduced humanitarian access. The situation has been further exacerbated by the human mobility crisis (mainly, but not only, Venezuelan refugees and migrants), Colombia's exposure to natural hazards and the high level of socio-economic inequalities (25% of the population faces food insecurity). These overlapping factors further deepen humanitarian needs, with ethnic minorities, both indigenous and Afro-Colombian, and underserved rural communities disproportionately affected.

In 2026, DG ECHO intends to focus on the humanitarian consequences of the conflict, the mixed migration flows, and the disasters caused by natural hazards. Support will be given to the most affected and vulnerable populations (such as Afro-Colombians and indigenous people) in the areas of protection, healthcare, EiE, disaster preparedness and food security. Some cross-cutting policy aspects, such as IHL, the HDP nexus, and localisation, will remain a priority.

Venezuela

A decade of political deadlock, authoritarianism, economic crises and inflation rates (among the highest in the world) have plunged up to 20 million Venezuelans into a humanitarian crisis. Basic goods are scarce and basic services have collapsed, with a government that denies humanitarian needs. Venezuela is also highly exposed to natural disasters, putting pressure on humanitarian resources. Politically, the authoritarian regime has hardened its position and control after the 2024/2025 electoral cycle pushing the country into further international isolation and intensifying the crisis.

The vulnerability of very large sections of the population is compounded by the effects of US funding cuts and major changes in regional migratory policies which has increased the complexity of displacement patterns and left hundreds of thousands in precarious conditions in host and transit countries. With 8.9 million people displaced and 6.6 million of them still in the region, Venezuela ranks first globally in terms of number of refugees and people in need of international protection and displacement flows toward other South American countries continue, with rising levels of vulnerability among those on the move, including unaccompanied and separated children, GBV survivors, and malnourished children. The drastic reduction of humanitarian funding forces refugees to choose between seeking asylum in countries where protection risks are high, or attempting to return to Venezuela, exposing themselves to violence, extortion, and kidnapping. Meanwhile, 10 000 people, mostly with vulnerable profiles, have been forcibly returned (deported) to Venezuela by the Trump administration in the first six months of 2025.

In 2026, DG ECHO will keep its humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of vulnerable Venezuelans inside the country and in the region. Multi-sectoral actions will focus on providing basic healthcare services, protection, education, food and nutrition assistance, WASH and shelter support for the most vulnerable people in the least accessible areas and people on the move. DG ECHO will continue to implement its disaster preparedness actions. Nevertheless, the volatility in the political context and an aggravation of the economic negative trend could lead to the emergence of new needs or shift in existing humanitarian needs. Flexibility in operations would be necessary to ensure emerging risks are integrated into programming and are prepared for.

3.9.3. The Caribbean

The Caribbean is increasingly prone to climate-related risks. Disasters are changing patterns and intensity, increasing humanitarian needs and reducing capacities to cope with recurrent disasters. Geographic isolation, small size, high costs of living and large exposed coastal zones are adding to the complexity of the subregion. The violence, heightened protection risks and food insecurity are also resulting in high mobility and displacement, exacerbating the protection crisis. These compounding factors are causing a significant spike in poverty and food insecurity (more than 3.2 million people in the Caribbean are food insecure).

DG ECHO will maintain its support for disaster preparedness at community and institutional level, to ensure identified needs are addressed. Alignment with the overall objectives of the EU Latin America and Caribbean MoU on disaster risk management will be pursued, and synergies will be sought with the activities outlined in its implementation plan. DG ECHO will stand ready to provide rapid humanitarian assistance in response to sudden-onset disasters and will seek continued synergies with UCPM interventions. It will also keep intervening in emerging or deteriorating contexts resulting from displacement and protection needs, helping displaced populations (particularly refugees from Venezuela and displaced people from Haiti, Haitian descendants and stateless people in the Dominican Republic) and other groups forcibly displaced by disasters.

Haiti

In 2025, six million Haitians (nearly half the population) are in need of humanitarian assistance. The dramatic increase in gang-related violence in the metropolitan areas of Port-au-Prince and its spread to several departments (Artibonite and Centre) are making the situation worse. Gangs control 85% of Port-au-Prince, with indicatively 1.5 million people living in the areas controlled by the gangs, exposed to extortion, killing, gender based and sexual violence, and forced recruitment. People have very limited access to basic services such as healthcare and education. Some 1.3 million people are internally displaced, many of them living in spontaneous sites in the capital, such as schools, churches and other buildings, or in host families in provinces. Acute malnutrition affects 277 000 children under five and pregnant and breastfeeding women while 5.4 million people are in high acute food insecurity (IPC 3+). The healthcare system in Haiti is on the verge of collapse, only 20% of healthcare facilities in the capital are functional and medical supplies are dwindling, with one of the three laboratories in the country closed and the other two functioning at low capacity. On top of this, the Dominican Republic is conducting a mass deportation campaign, over 150 000 people, including children, pregnant and breastfeeding women have been deported only in the first half of 2025.

In 2026, DG ECHO will further support food assistance for vulnerable populations facing a food emergency and nutritional inputs for children under five with severe acute malnutrition. It will also continue to address the protection and healthcare needs of victims of gang-related violence, as well as those of forced displaced and deportees.

3.10. Emergency Response Tools – Relief EU

In 2026, DG ECHO will continue to address immediate humanitarian needs arising from unforeseen sudden-onset natural disasters or human-induced crises (e.g. epidemic outbreaks, cyclones, floods, earthquakes, landslides, population movements, etc.). The needs will be addressed through ReliefEU which streamlines and simplifies the different response instruments (formerly the EHRC and Emergency Toolbox) and integrates them into a unique and more coherent emergency response tool.

ReliefEU will cover unexpected humanitarian needs, including the unforeseen deterioration of ongoing crises, complementing funding for such crises. ReliefEU includes the following response tools which allow to responses to be swift and agile.

A) **ReliefEU funding**

All Emergencies Response Tool (ALERT): ALERT's purpose is to provide rapid first-line funding for an immediate response (including anticipatory action) to cover the pressing needs of the most vulnerable people in any type of emergency that has led, or is likely to lead to, loss of life, physical, psychological or social suffering and/or material damage.

Support for the IFRC through the DREF and Emergency Appeals: in most emergencies, assistance is first provided locally or nationally. National Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, supported by the IFRC, are well placed to provide an immediate response because they are rooted in the local community and can mobilise local people as volunteers. By supporting the DREF and the IFRC's Emergency Appeals, DG ECHO also meets its localisation commitments and ensures a quick-reaction capacity. DG ECHO's contribution to the DREF can also be used under the IFRC's anticipatory action pillar of the DREF, triggered once a threat has become a real or imminent event.

DG ECHO will provide support to humanitarian partners to facilitate the deployment of emergency responders in order to provide an agile, proactive, accountable and reliable response in the context of unforeseen emergencies.

B) ***ReliefEU capacities***

ReliefEU capacities aim to support humanitarian partners through a set of operational tools designed to provide rapid but temporary support and to fill operational gaps in the humanitarian response identified by the humanitarian community.

The objectives of ReliefEU capacities are to:

- support humanitarian partners in giving effective, efficient and timely assistance to people in need in the aftermath of a natural or human-induced disaster, and in situations of protracted crisis where operational gaps are identified;
- improve humanitarian access by providing safe and reliable transport, logistics and supply chain solutions;
- enable more rapid, targeted and direct EU interventions launched and run by DG ECHO to improve the humanitarian response and to fill operational gaps;
- show stronger EU leadership and ensure EU visibility in delivering humanitarian assistance and setting the humanitarian agenda to support the EU's overall role in a crisis;
- promote Team Europe initiatives.

To achieve these objectives, ReliefEU capacities cover temporary gaps in the humanitarian supply chain and provide humanitarian expertise. The different services provided by ReliefEU capacities include (i) providing common logistics services for humanitarian partners in the form of international and in-country transport operations (using various modes of transport); (ii) warehousing capacities; (iii) pre-positioning and delivering emergency stockpiles and providing other supply chain/logistical support including support to coordination structures such as the global logistics cluster; and (iv) deploying expertise and capacities.

ReliefEU capacities deployments are coordinated with humanitarian and civil protection stakeholders and respect the UN's overall coordinating role.

ReliefEU capacities will be used for sudden-onset disasters and protracted crises where a peak in the needs of the affected populations or humanitarian access constraints require specific support. ReliefEU capacities might be activated concomitantly with a request for UCPM assistance. In those circumstances, DG ECHO, and in particular the ERCC, will ensure the complementarity of activities.

DG ECHO will deploy its field network, its experience and reliable primary or secondary data to assess needs and operational gaps. When a full assessment of needs and operational gaps is not possible, DG ECHO will act on a 'no regret' basis to deploy vital ReliefEU capacities' services.

Respect for humanitarian principles will be ensured when exploiting ReliefEU capacities and will remain a pivotal part of decision-making.

3.11. Complementary and thematic activities

Supporting a strategic paradigm shift in humanitarian supply chain

In 2022, DG ECHO launched its humanitarian logistics policy, which recognises that supply chain and logistics are cross-sectoral and the backbone of humanitarian action. Given the significant opportunities that harnessing the capacity of humanitarian logistics offer to make efficiency and effectiveness gains and to support other key humanitarian priorities like preparedness, digitalisation or environmental sustainability, the policy called for a paradigm shift in this area towards a more strategic approach to supply chain. Building on the logistics policy and on the outcome of the Humanitarian Leadership Group on Supply Chain initiative, DG ECHO will continue to promote initiatives to support a strategic approach to supply chain.

Policy support

Access to the right mix of policy support tools and making the best use of them are essential for having a systemic, long-lasting impact on the humanitarian system in priority areas that are important for DG ECHO and for the humanitarian system as a whole.

The development and roll out of innovative and well-informed policies also ensures that DG ECHO's operational activities meet the highest international standards in terms of quality and timeliness. Through the ERC, DG ECHO will still champion numerous international initiatives, support innovation and the strengthening of the humanitarian system, and help develop and build the capacity of its partners to deliver more efficient and effective humanitarian aid interventions.

The policy support contract will continue to support DG ECHO's internal policy development and dissemination, and help to assess (and, when relevant, further refine) its policy tools.

All these strands will continue to appear together in a **policy HIP** to create links between the different strands and ensuring flexibility to address emerging challenges and policy priorities.

Visibility, information and communication

Providing transparent and accountable information on the impact of EU humanitarian aid and disaster response and its underlying values is crucial for maintaining and mobilising continued support for relief assistance. In 2026, DG ECHO intends to sustain awareness and understanding of and support for humanitarian issues, focusing mostly on audiences in the EU and in non-EU countries where the EU is funding major humanitarian operations. Effective communication will also highlight the EU's cooperation with international, national and local partner organisations in delivering relief assistance to people affected by humanitarian crises. DG ECHO's communication approach reflects the special characteristics of humanitarian aid, aimed at preserving a distinct identity for principled, needs-based humanitarian action, in line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and the Communication on the EU's humanitarian action. DG ECHO's approach to communication in partnership provides regular visibility for content produced by a range of humanitarian partners. The monitoring of operational activities funded by DG ECHO aims to ensure their alignment with the visibility requirements of the Commission's corporate model grant agreement.

Communicating the EU's response to sudden-onset, ongoing and protracted crises remains at the core of communication planning, together with raising awareness of more strategic themes (including IHL, humanitarian principles and 'forgotten crises'). Methods of disseminating content on EU humanitarian aid will include integrated communication campaigns and use various channels such as print, web, audiovisual, social media and podcasts. Further initiatives will include media trips for journalists and other forms of media engagement.

Where appropriate, DG ECHO's communication actions will contribute to the Commission's corporate communication, led by DG COMM as domain leader, and in collaboration with the Commission's other external policy DGs and the EEAS.

4. Delivery, coordination and control of humanitarian aid

4.1. Ways and means of delivering aid

Field network

DG ECHO's field network of around 50 field offices in more than 40 countries is considered a key and distinctive feature of its humanitarian aid policy. The network is composed of around 450 international and local staff. It contributes to the identification and evaluation of humanitarian needs, improving coordination with stakeholders, including EU delegations, Member States and international aid organisations. The network is flexible and can be adapted to the evolving humanitarian situation. This way, it helps to boost the EU's response capacity in crisis situations, drawing on available synergies with civil protection activities.

The field network's role is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the EU's humanitarian action by:

- helping to identify and evaluate humanitarian needs and trends in the country/region concerned;
- monitoring EU-funded humanitarian aid actions, providing technical advice on project proposals and their implementation;

- contributing to the coherent roll out of DG ECHO operational strategies, policy guidelines and standards that guarantee a consistently high level of quality for EU-funded humanitarian aid projects;
- representing the Commission in relevant humanitarian aid clusters/forums, advocating with relevant stakeholders at local/regional/global level (within the framework established by HQ) and ensuring appropriate communication and visibility actions, while keeping office structures flexible, agile, adapted to needs and based on appropriate resource, logistics and security management arrangements separate from those of the EU delegations.

Security sector

The security sector is the operational security arm of DG ECHO and ensures the security of staff and the integrity of its premises and assets in all countries where it operates. DG ECHO's mandate is such that its supervisory missions are often in high-risk countries and areas. While humanitarian security risk management is identified as an essential component of aid delivery by all actors, the review and implementation of adequate security measures based on a robust risk assessment support the EU to lead by example as one of the world's major humanitarian aid donors.

The security sector's tasks include conducting, supervising and implementing DG ECHO's security policies, security briefings, standard operational procedures, country security plans and security trainings specifically designed for DG ECHO and its staff. It is also responsible for providing advice and manage the crisis coordination team in case of security-related incidents, crisis-response measures and/or hibernation, relocation or evacuation procedures involving DG ECHO staff, under the supervision of the Director in charge of security. Furthermore, the security sector's operational expertise is supporting DG ECHO's policy and geographical units, regarding security-related project proposals received by DG ECHO partners. This aims at improving the security of DG ECHO's own operations and duty of care, which is often embedded in a partner's security set up during missions or assignments, therefore enhancing the safety and security of aid workers worldwide. The security sector works closely with the Commission's Security Directorate to ensure effective coordination and support. In particular, the sector is building a strong relationship with the future Integrated Security Coordination Centre (ISOC), which will play a key role in coordinating security.

On the ground, the security sector is represented by the regional security coordinators (RSCs) who are currently based in Dakar, Nairobi, Panama, Amman, Bangkok and Kyiv. These RSCs are a fundamental part of DG ECHO's security work and are the main security points of contact in the field. They are tasked with establishing and maintaining a security network that links DG ECHO's staff and management in the region and promotes strong security awareness among DG ECHO's partners. The RSCs also conduct regular security risk assessments for the regions they are assigned to, working closely with the EEAS and Member State security staff and with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) and other agencies and organisations to improve the coordination and implementation of security management arrangements. They are ready to deploy in a region or globally at any time to cover security crises acting on instructions from HQ. Furthermore, as thematic experts in security, they review the projects proposed by partners related to humanitarian security risk management.

Relations with (international) partners

DG ECHO carries out its humanitarian aid mandate by funding projects proposed by partner organisations, which currently total around 200. Partner organisations are European humanitarian NGOs, international

organisations (including UN agencies) and specialised agencies in the Member States ⁽⁷⁰⁾. With some of these organisations (strategic partners, who jointly account for more than half of the annual humanitarian budget), DG ECHO organises annual high-level dialogues and strategic dialogues to discuss major issues of shared interest. It will continue to coordinate the EU's preparation for meetings of the governing bodies of the strategic UN partners for which it has the lead. This coordination includes liaising with EU Member States. DG ECHO will also continue to actively participate in the donor groups established by several major partners.

Programmatic partnerships

Programmatic partnerships address multi-annual strategic and geographic priorities of shared interest between DG ECHO and its partners and promote innovative policy approaches.

The programmatic partnerships enable the implementation of activities that benefit from a longer time frame such as capacity-building actions for local partners or a nexus programme. The expected benefits are:

- more and/or better outcomes at the end of a programme than if the partner had embarked on successive but distinct annual projects;
- efficiency gains and economies of scale that increase the number of direct beneficiaries;
- better dialogue at HQ/field level with the partners in question on specific topics of common interest;
- further testing and rolling out of more efficient and innovative approaches.

When properly designed, programmatic partnerships enable progress towards meeting key Grand Bargain commitments in a quid pro quo logic, by (i) reaching more people in need; (ii) having quicker and greater accountability to affected populations; (iii) supporting local and national actors; (iv) giving more flexible funding to aid organisations; (v) advancing the efficiency agenda; and (vi) reporting transparently.

Since 2020, DG ECHO has launched pilot programmatic partnerships with NGO partners (ACTED, Concern, the IRC and Save the Children) and with UNICEF, the FAO, the OCHA, the IFRC and the ICRC. DG ECHO started mainstreaming the programmatic partnership model into geographic HIPs in 2023 and will continue to do so in 2026. Global programmatic partnerships are also continuing with ICRC, IFRC and OCHA due to their very specific mandates and alignment with DG ECHO key priorities (IHL, localisation and humanitarian system coordination and strengthening).

4.2. Coordination and information exchange

Various mechanisms are in place to ensure coordination and the exchange of information on crisis response and humanitarian aid activities in general, including:

- exchanging information on overall operational strategies for and responses to specific crisis situations with EU Member States;
- producing crisis reports, which are shared with Member States and contribute to shared assessments and understanding of the situation on the ground, which in turn helps with the overall coordination of the EU's and Member States' humanitarian response;
- holding regular exchanges with partners at HQ and on the ground;

⁷⁰ [Humanitarian partners](#)

- using the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS), which enables information exchange, situational awareness and coordination during emergencies with the UCPM member and participating states;
- using the 24/7 ERCC operating system which enables coordinated and swift responses to disasters by supporting humanitarian aid and civil protection activities by:
 - facilitating a coherent EU response during emergencies and supporting other EU services and the Member States in crisis situations;
 - supporting the institutional crisis management process and other DGs through the ARGUS system, so that all incoming communications about an ongoing or potential crisis are directed to the ERCC;
 - acting as the 24/7 operational hub forming part of the integrated political crisis-response arrangements and of a coherent information flow for the production and dissemination of integrated situational awareness and analysis reports;
- participating in international forums and donor groups, in which DG ECHO continues to participate (e.g. the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, the ICRC Donor Support Group, the IFRC Donor Advisory Group and the OCHA Donor Support Group);
- holding regular exchanges of views in the European Parliament on the EU's response to crises (particularly in the Committee on Development, but also increasingly in the Committee on Foreign Affairs);
- holding ad hoc crisis coordination meetings of the Commission's DGs and departments (and, where appropriate, the EEAS) to exchange information (e.g. ARGUS meetings, the EEAS Crisis Platform and security-critical incident management);
- holding regular information exchange and upstream coordination with the relevant Commission departments (DG HOME, DG INTPA, DG ENEST, DG MENA, DG HERA and FPI for crisis-response interventions under the NDICI – Global Europe Regulation ⁽⁷¹⁾ and for the HPD nexus to ensure optimal deployment of DG ECHO resources and the coherence of interventions involving different EU funding instruments);
- holding regular information exchange through an inter-service group on IHL;
- providing regular information for Member States' focal points about activating ReliefEU in emergency situations;
- producing regular geographical evaluations (each with a suitable thematic/sectoral focus) covering all regions in which DG ECHO operates and all humanitarian themes and sectors every five years (with the results posted on DG ECHO's website) ⁽⁷²⁾;
- participating in thematic platforms, such as the Global Network against Food Crises.

4.3. Monitoring the use of funds

The Commission ensures the correct implementation of EU-funded operations with several layers of checks and monitoring, both internally and using external actors. This includes appropriate rules and procedures for

⁷¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009 (OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p. 1), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/947/oj>.

⁷² [DG ECHO evaluations](#)

giving non-EU parties financing (including review procedures where appropriate) and rules and procedures for ensuring compliance with EU restrictive measures ⁽⁷³⁾, taking account of the relevant IHL principles.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a key tool for refining EU policies and actions. DG ECHO's five-year evaluation programme offers comprehensive coverage of its humanitarian aid and civil protection activities for the relevant period.

The following evaluations, ongoing or planned to start soon, are planned to be completed in 2026.

- Evaluation of DG ECHO's policy of greening in humanitarian aid (2020-2024).
- Evaluation of the EU's humanitarian interventions in Afghanistan (2020-2024).
- Evaluation of education on emergencies in EU-funded humanitarian aid operations (2020-2024).
- Evaluation of DG ECHO's humanitarian interventions in Ukraine (2020-2024).

Checks carried out by DG ECHO

The main aspects of DG ECHO's checks include the following supervision and monitoring procedures:

- strict mechanisms for the selection and quality control of NGOs and international organisations as DG ECHO partners, with explicit requirements for their financial credentials;
- assessment of the needs of people affected by crises by a worldwide network of DG ECHO field experts;
- appraisal of project proposals and on-the-spot project monitoring by a worldwide network of DG ECHO field experts;
- regular field visits to project sites by geographical desk officers, technical experts, external auditors and DG ECHO managers;
- an obligation for partners to produce reports after the end of each operation to justify their expenditure, reports that DG ECHO's operational and financial desk officers thoroughly analyse to check the eligibility of expenditure;
- audits by external auditors contracted by DG ECHO: compliance checks on expenses claimed;
- checks on the soundness of financial management and control systems, and compliance with the requirements set out in the certificate ⁽⁷⁴⁾ or equivalence of the systems, rules and procedures of entities implementing EU funds under indirect management.

These checks and procedures should not be seen in isolation. Each one helps provide assurance on the compliance with relevant rules and obligations. Checks are also carried out on the Commission by the IAS, whose mission is to issue recommendations, opinions and advice on Commission's departments' and EU agencies' internal control system.

Additional checks

DG ECHO's operations and financial management are subject to external audits. The European Court of Auditors audits the EU's finances and, increasingly, the performance of its activities. Observations and

⁷³ www.sanctionsmap.eu. The sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying sanctions regimes. The sanctions are based on legal acts published in the Official Journal. In case of discrepancy between a published legal act and an update on the website, the Official Journal version prevails.

⁷⁴ [DG ECHO EU Humanitarian Partnership Certificate 2021 – 2027](#)

recommendations are published in the Court's annual and special reports, which are forwarded to the European Parliament and the Council.

Specialised committees of the European Parliament and Council oversee the financial management of Commission DGs and departments. In this context, the European Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control organises annual hearings with several Commissioners as part of the procedure for discharging the European Commission's annual accounts.