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COVER NOTE

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DEPREZ, Director

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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
EVALUATION

Comprehensive evaluation of the European Commission's humanitarian aid 2017-2022

{SWD(2026) 63 final}

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Glossary

<i>Term or acronym</i>	<i>Meaning or definition</i>
AAP	Accountability to Affected People
ACF	Action contre la Faim/ Action Against Hunger
CBPF	Country-based pooled fund
DG ECHO	Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DP	Disaster Preparedness
EDF	European Development Fund
EHRC	European Humanitarian Response Capacity
EiE	Education in Emergency
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
ERCC	Emergency Response Coordination Centre
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
EU	European Union
EUTF	EU Trust Fund
FFPA	Financial Framework Partnership Agreement
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
HAR	Humanitarian Aid Regulation
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HIP	Humanitarian Implementation Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross

IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MPCT	Multi-purpose cash transfer
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UCPM	Union Civil Protection Mechanism
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

1. INTRODUCTION

The Staff Working Document presents the results of a comprehensive evaluation assessing the European Commission's humanitarian aid actions during a 6-year period, 2017-22 (the latest comprehensive evaluation of the EU's humanitarian aid was finalised in 2018 and covered the period 2012-16).

It is compulsory under the EU Financial Regulation ⁽¹⁾ to evaluate programmes and activities which entail significant spending.

This evaluation is implemented under:

- Art. 214 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU),
- Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 on humanitarian aid ('the Regulation') and
- the policy framework of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (the Consensus) and specific humanitarian sector policies.

The evaluation takes into account other policy initiatives of the evaluation period, such as the 2021 Communication '[the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles](#)' ⁽²⁾.

The evaluation assesses both the strategic and operational levels of the EU's humanitarian aid interventions. It examines how well the Commission has exercised its role as a humanitarian donor in relation to its partners and the wider humanitarian system, and the results achieved in different crisis contexts during the period assessed. This includes an analysis of the EU's policy and implementation frameworks put in place for humanitarian aid, as well as the delivery of this aid to the end-beneficiaries.

It does not cover the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and the Emergency Support Instrument which have been evaluated separately ⁽³⁾. However, it examines the coherence and complementarity between these instruments.

The geographical scope of the evaluation is global and focused on identifying the lessons from the European Commission's response to major crises during the evaluation period.

An external study carried out between July 2023 and February 2025 ⁽⁴⁾ is the main source of evidence for this document. The external study is a meta-evaluation, which built upon the findings and the conclusions drawn in the 33 specific evaluations carried out during the evaluation period 2017-2022 (including evaluations of the Commission's responses to geographical humanitarian crises, of humanitarian thematic policies and of DG ECHO's

⁽¹⁾ Article 34(1), Regulation EU/Euratom 2018/2046, as amended in 2022

⁽²⁾ COM (2021) 110

⁽³⁾ Evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (2017-2022) SWD (2024) 213 final

⁽⁴⁾ Comprehensive evaluation of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid (2017-2022) conducted by ICF

partnerships). The external evaluation team complemented the information gathered through the meta-evaluation with several data collection activities.

The external study was based on a total of 19 evaluation questions (see Annex 3). The questions were organised around the five main evaluation criteria presented in the European Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines⁽⁵⁾ (effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance, EU added value of the European Commission's humanitarian aid actions) complemented by a criterion focusing on the sustainability of the EU humanitarian aid interventions.

Methodological approach

The methodological approach was designed to integrate multiple data sources and a variety of data collection and analytical methods. It combined quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect data from relevant sources.

To reach evidence-based conclusions, the following methods were used: document review; social media analysis; portfolio analysis of projects, 100 interviews; three online surveys (to DG ECHO; DG ECHO partners; and local implementing partners); an Open Public Consultation; thirteen workshops; five case studies and six field missions to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Pakistan, and Ukraine, as well as remote field activities covering the Middle-East (Syria, Yemen) and the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) regions.

The evaluation is based upon detailed information from documents and sources such as for example Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs), projects proposals, a sample of 300 EU-funded humanitarian projects⁽⁶⁾; humanitarian actions database ('HOPE'), existing thematic policies and guidance, and Grand Bargain annual independent reports⁽⁷⁾. For example, the analysis of the Humanitarian Implementation Plans provided detailed information about humanitarian aid needs and their evolution across different regions and sectors. It highlighted the key factors considered by DG ECHO in its programming and outlined DG ECHO's strategic priorities and objectives for each region. The evaluation assessed also the extent to which the implemented actions were aligned with the needs identified and the priorities established in the HIPs. The analysis of the thematic policy documents followed a similar approach, with a view to assess their relevance, coherence and completeness.

The evaluations completed during the 2017-2022 period were all reviewed as part of the meta-evaluation conducted under this comprehensive evaluation. The research carried out in the context of these evaluations largely consisted of – as for the current comprehensive exercise – in-depth studies of a representative sample of actions, field visits, and consultation with stakeholders.

There were limitations inherent in the methodologies and research tools applied.

Challenges encountered include the rapidly changing security environment and the difficulty to engage with the assisted population in some contexts. These issues were mitigated by extending the field phase, organising activities remotely, and broadening the scope of interviewees (e.g., including local community representatives).

⁽⁵⁾ SWD (2021) 305 final

⁽⁶⁾ including an analysis of the proposals and description of the actions submitted by partners (in the "Single Forms") and the assessment and monitoring of those projects by DG ECHO (in the "FichOps")

⁽⁷⁾ [Grand Bargain annual independent reports](#) are yearly assessments of the progress and challenges in implementing the Grand Bargain, an agreement between humanitarian donors and aid organisations to make humanitarian aid more effective and efficient

Despite improvements in the data collection and monitoring system since the previous evaluation, some gaps were observed in the availability of quantitative data in certain instances, as well as difficulties in aggregating and comparing data (e.g., across sectors or regions of interventions).

Certain limitations affect also the assessment of EU humanitarian aid outcomes. In particular, it is not always possible to distinguish with absolute accuracy the extent to which a specific outcome is attributable to EU-funded interventions, as opposed to those of other donors, including Member States acting independently.

Moreover, while consistent efforts are made to evaluate the costs and benefits of humanitarian action, such assessments are inherently complex. Factors such as the indirect nature of many benefits, the long-term impact of interventions, and the challenges in quantifying human suffering and resilience make precise cost-benefit analysis difficult.

These limitations were mitigated by the consultation activities and the qualitative data collected. In light of these mitigation approaches, it is considered that the evidence base of the external support study was sufficient to draw evaluation findings and conclusions. They are confirmed by multiple sources of information, and the mitigating measures taken to address the limitations were deemed adequate. The Commission, therefore, concurs with the external evaluator's findings.

Methodological information on how the evaluation was conducted and its limitations is further detailed in Annex II.

2. WHAT WAS THE EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE INTERVENTION?

2.1. Description of the intervention and its objectives

Background

The concept of **humanitarian aid** stems from the establishment of the Red Cross movement and the first Geneva Convention in the 1860s. It encompasses aid and action designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of human-induced crises and natural disasters. In more recent years, prevention of and preparedness for such situations have been added to the definition. The concept differs from other forms of assistance and foreign aid in that it is guided by the principles of:

- Humanity: saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found;
- Impartiality: acting solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations;
- Neutrality: acting without favouring any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out;
- Independence: the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

Legal basis

The **Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union** ⁽⁸⁾ states that the aim of humanitarian aid is to ‘provide ad hoc assistance and relief and protection for people in third countries who are victims of natural or human-induced disasters, in order to meet the humanitarian needs resulting from these different situations.’ Humanitarian aid operations must be conducted in compliance with the international law and the humanitarian principles.

EU humanitarian aid operations are funded based on the **Humanitarian Aid Regulation (HAR)** ⁽⁹⁾. Application of the Regulation does not depend on the duration of a specific multiannual financial framework (MFF) and provides an adequate and flexible basis for the continuation of EU humanitarian operations. The Humanitarian Aid Regulation sets out the objectives of EU humanitarian aid and identifies the types of activities and organisations eligible for funding. It also defines the roles of the Commission in managing the EU’s humanitarian aid, which are essentially properly executing the EU’s humanitarian aid budget, on the one hand, and promoting coordination with EU Member States, the UN system and third-country donors, on the other hand.

The Statement on the **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid** ⁽¹⁰⁾, jointly agreed in 2007 by the Parliament, the Commission, the Council and the EU Member States, defines a common vision and practical approach to guide humanitarian aid at the EU level. Through the Consensus, the EU reaffirmed its commitment to the fundamental principles of humanitarian aid – humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence – and to advocate strongly and consistently for the respect of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

The EU humanitarian objectives as set in the HAR ⁽¹¹⁾ and in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid ⁽¹²⁾ are the following:

European Consensus on the Humanitarian Aid (2008)	Regulation (EC) No 1257/96
<p>To provide a needs-based emergency response aimed at preserving life, preventing and alleviating human suffering and maintaining human dignity wherever the need arises if governments and local actors are overwhelmed, unable or unwilling to act.</p> <p>EU humanitarian aid encompasses assistance, relief and protection operations to save and preserve life in humanitarian crises or their immediate aftermath, but also actions aimed at facilitating or obtaining access to people in need and the free flow of assistance. EU humanitarian assistance is provided in response to man-made crises</p>	<p>(a) to save and preserve life during emergencies and their immediate aftermath and natural disasters that have entailed major loss of life, physical, psychological or social suffering or material damage;</p> <p>(b) to provide the necessary assistance and relief to people affected by longer-lasting crises arising, in particular, from outbreaks of fighting or wars, producing the same effects as those described in subparagraph (a), especially where their own governments prove unable to help or there is a vacuum of power;</p> <p>(c) to help finance the transport of aid and efforts to ensure that it is accessible to those for whom it is intended, by all logistical means available, and by protecting humanitarian goods and personnel, but excluding operations with defence implications;</p>

⁽⁸⁾ OJ C 326/47, 6.10.2012, Article 214

⁽⁹⁾ Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid. OJ L 163, 2.7.1996.

⁽¹⁰⁾ 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, OJ C 25, 30.1.2008.

⁽¹¹⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:31996R1257> as of 12 July 2024.

⁽¹²⁾ European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008).

European Consensus on the Humanitarian Aid (2008)	Regulation (EC) No 1257/96
<p>(including complex emergencies) and to natural disasters as needed.</p> <p>Local response to crisis and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), including disaster preparedness and recovery, are essential to save lives and enable communities to increase their resilience to emergencies. Capacity building activities to prevent and mitigate the impact of disasters and to enhance humanitarian response are also part of EU humanitarian aid</p>	<p>(d) to carry out short-term rehabilitation and reconstruction work, especially on infrastructure and equipment, in close association with local structures, with a view to facilitating the arrival of relief, preventing the impact of the crisis from worsening and starting to help those affected regain a minimum level of self-sufficiency, taking long-term development objectives into account where possible;</p>
	<p>(e) to cope with the consequences of population movements (refugees, displaced people and returnees) caused by natural and man-made disasters and carry out schemes to assist repatriation to the country of origin and resettlement there when the conditions laid down in current international agreements are in place;</p>
	<p>(f) to ensure preparedness for risks of natural disasters or comparable exceptional circumstances and use a suitable rapid early-warning and intervention system;</p>
	<p>(g) to support civil operations to protect the victims of fighting or comparable emergencies, in accordance with current international agreements.</p>

In addition, the EU civil protection legislation explicitly refers to the need for the Commission and Member States to promote synergies between civil protection assistance and humanitarian aid (13), i.e. ensure complementarity between the two types of assistance and respond efficiently to crisis that have both immediate and longer-term humanitarian consequences. An example is the EU response to the Beirut port explosion in Lebanon (August 2020), where the EU civil protection Mechanism was activated immediately, with deployment from search and rescue teams from Member States. The EU allocated also €33 million in humanitarian funding, with aid focussing on healthcare, shelter, food assistance, and psychosocial support.

Humanitarian aid is a shared competence and EU Member States can act in parallel. The Commission may take initiatives to enhance the efficiency and complementarity between actions of the EU and Member States. EU humanitarian aid operations are expected to be coordinated and consistent with those of international organisations, in particular those of the UN system.

The evaluation period was marked by the adoption in 2021 of a **Communication on ‘The EU’s humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles’** (14), a renewed strategic outlook setting out how the EU, working with partners and donors, can address increased humanitarian needs: by enabling a better environment, boosting effective delivery and expanding the resource base, showing leadership at a time when the delivery of principled aid is acutely needed, as well as putting compliance with IHL and related advocacy efforts at the heart of EU external action.

Some key objectives included:

- Ensuring that EU humanitarian aid can be delivered swiftly and efficiently to those in need,
- Promoting flexible and efficient funding mechanisms,

(13) Decision No 1313/2013/EU

(14) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the [EU’s humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles](#), COM(2021) 110 final, 10 March 2021.

- Tackling the root causes of crises by linking humanitarian, development, and peace efforts,
- Expanding the resource base for humanitarian action,
- Enhancing the EU's engagement and leadership in humanitarian effort.

Scope of action

As principled humanitarian donor, the European Commission **provides humanitarian assistance worldwide, based on needs and humanitarian principles**. The Commission intervenes not only in large-scale humanitarian crises, sudden and rapid onset disasters, but also in forgotten/neglected crises (i.e. crises receiving no or insufficient international aid, political and media attention) delivering humanitarian assistance in the core sectors of food, nutrition, health, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH), protection, education in emergencies, shelter and settlements, and other actions to assist and protect the most vulnerable populations and increase their resilience through actions in disaster preparedness.

Humanitarian assistance addresses the needs of the most vulnerable and thus contributes to the achievement of key **Sustainable Development Goals**, such as the goals on ending hunger, ensuring healthy lives, education, gender equality, climate action, water and sanitation.

The European Commission provides humanitarian aid and relief through its **partner organisations** (United Nations agencies, Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, non-governmental organisations and Member States' Specialised Agencies).

The Commission plays also a leading role in **humanitarian advocacy** in many crises, including on promoting the respect for IHL and humanitarian access, in steering and developing thematic policies, in supporting multilateral actions, and in coordinating approaches with EU Member States.

The Commission (DG ECHO) has a permanent worldwide humanitarian network of 450 **field staff** spread over almost 40 countries. The presence of field humanitarian experts across the world enables the Commission to have, through first-hand information, an up-to-date overview of humanitarian needs in each country or region, facilitating the development of intervention strategies and policies. Field offices are consulted for the design of the HIPs, the selection of the projects to be funded, the implementation of policies, and the monitoring of projects and reporting. The field offices provide technical support to EU-funded operations and facilitate donor's coordination at field level.

Implementation framework

Based on the Humanitarian Regulation and the Financial Regulation, the Commission adopts financing decisions which provide the legal basis for funding individual actions carried out by 200 EU Humanitarian partners. EU-funded actions can be implemented by three types of partners: Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), International Organisations (including UN agencies and other international organisations, such as ICRC and IFRC) and Member States' Specialised Agencies (MSSAs). The main financing decision is the Worldwide decision (WWD), adopted annually, which covers all main humanitarian crises.

The Decision indicates the **objectives** of humanitarian actions, the **amounts** of the Union contribution, the **methods** of implementation and the flexibility clause. The Flexibility clause allows for the possibility to reallocate part of the funds among the different

objectives of the decision, and to allocate additional budget (up to 20% of the amount) without a new decision, enabling to response to emerging needs.

The European Commission committed to devote 15% of its initial humanitarian budget to forgotten crises and, as of 2019, to dedicate 10% of its humanitarian assistance to Education in Emergencies.

In the context of the Worldwide Decision, the European Commission (DG ECHO) prepares and publishes '**Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs)**', which provide more detailed information on the operational priorities identified within each country/region of operation. They are a reference for humanitarian actions covered by the WWD and contain an overview of humanitarian needs to be addressed in a specific country at a particular time. Humanitarian Implementation Plans serve as reference documents for DG ECHO staff and partners to take decisions on the actions to be funded. Consultations with partners are organised ahead of the HIP drafting to exchange on the needs and priorities.

The Humanitarian Implementation Plans are composed of five sections: (1) context and results of the needs assessment (2) humanitarian needs (3) humanitarian response (4) humanitarian-development peace nexus (5) envisaged DG ECHO response, defining DG ECHO's expected response and results of the humanitarian operations to be financed.

Details on the priorities to be funded and the assessment criteria are included in a technical annex to the HIP. In addition, the thematic policy annex, also attached to the HIP, recalls the general principles, policy framework, assistance modalities and guidelines that need to be considered by DG ECHO partners in the design of humanitarian interventions.

The Humanitarian Implementation Plans are published on DG ECHO's website⁽¹⁵⁾. Partners can then submit project proposals aligned with the HIPs priorities. HIPs are regularly updated to reflect evolving humanitarian needs, funding availability and operational contexts⁽¹⁶⁾.

In addition, the European Commission (DG ECHO) has developed a series of thematic policies to guide its humanitarian aid programming. These policies (for example, Protection, cash assistance, disaster preparedness) provide strategic direction and operational guidance for partners implementing EU-funded humanitarian actions⁽¹⁷⁾. Thematic policies ensure that assistance is efficient and addresses the specific needs of vulnerable populations in a consistent manner.

Needs assessment

Every year, DG ECHO assesses the humanitarian needs around the globe to take informed decisions and allocates humanitarian funding subsequently.

Needs assessment methodology

Before 2021, DG ECHO used an in-house methodology and tool named Integrated Analysis Framework (IAF): The Integrated Analysis Framework (IAF) methodology provided a comprehensive structure for analysing crises in a country, through a dedicated template.

(15) [Financing decisions \(HIPs\) - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations](#)

(16) [DG Echo partners Website](#)

(17) [Policy guidelines - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations](#)

Sections within the IAF template addressed different aspects, such as crisis specifics, food and nutrition assessments, and potential disaster risk reduction strategies. Information came from global quantitative indices and in-depth qualitative assessments conducted by humanitarian experts as well as data from implementing partners.

DG ECHO improved in 2021 its methodology for conducting the annual assessment of humanitarian needs. This methodology has been integrated into a specialized IT tool, the Funding Information Tool (FIT). FIT is used to assess humanitarian needs and, based on this assessment, to calculate an initial proposed budget for each country according to the available EU humanitarian aid budget.

The methodology aims to promote a more objective and evidence-based approach in the funding allocation process.

Quantitative information: Quantitative data is sourced from well-known and established indexes, such as the INFORM Risk Index ⁽¹⁸⁾ and the INFORM Severity Index ⁽¹⁹⁾. The INFORM Risk Index identifies countries at risk from humanitarian crises and disasters that could overwhelm national response capacity, while the INFORM Severity Index measures the severity of humanitarian crises on a global scale. These indexes integrate numerous evidence-based indicators and data regarding crisis or country risk and severity, thereby enhancing decision-making processes. Both indexes are grounded in a solid scientific foundation ⁽²⁰⁾.

Qualitative information: To further analyse the complex aspects of dynamic crisis situations, DG ECHO field staff (Technical Assistants based in country offices and Thematic Experts based in regional offices) provide qualitative assessments, based on their proximity to local communities and humanitarian partners working on the ground, and on their professional expertise. The information provided from DG ECHO Field is complemented by DG ECHO headquarters staff based on regular exchanges with partners and information provided to the humanitarian community by UN agencies, ICRC, IFRC and International NGOs.

Monitoring framework

DG ECHO Partners are required to submit a comprehensive logical framework together with their proposals, with SMART ⁽²¹⁾ indicators (including where feasible standard Key Result Indicators (KRI) established by DG ECHO), targets (e.g. number of targeted beneficiaries) as well as an analysis of risks and mitigating measures. During implementation, partners collect data, analyse progress compared to the original planning, and report on the implementation of the action at the end of the project and through interim reports for projects of a longer duration

The Commission's field staff is carrying out joined monitoring visits on the ground with partners, which includes meeting the beneficiaries. At least one such visit is taking place per funded action. Findings are shared with the partners and any issue detected followed up.

⁽¹⁸⁾ <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk>

⁽¹⁹⁾ <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Severity>

⁽²⁰⁾ See Annex 2, INFORM Risk and INFORM Severity indexes

⁽²¹⁾ specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound

Theory of change

Based on the objectives of the evaluation, a comprehensive overview of the theory of change of the humanitarian aid interventions developed in the context of the external evaluation is displayed in Annex VI.

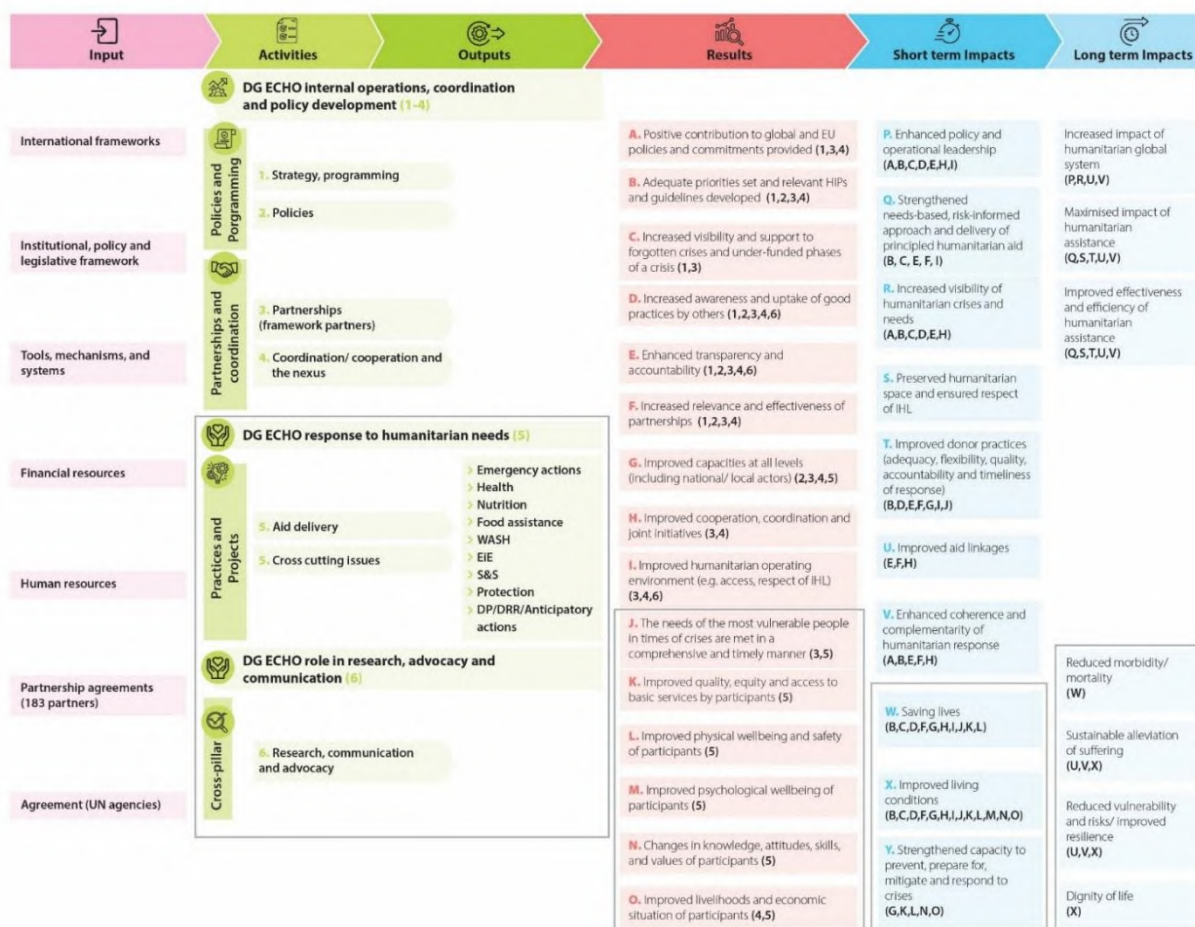
The theory of change comprises three clusters, outlining the main functions of the European Commission in humanitarian aid.

The first cluster (DG ECHO's internal operations, coordination, and policy development) outlines DG ECHO's enabling activities to influence and shape the humanitarian system, and to increase the overall effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian aid. DG ECHO aims to deliver more effective assistance to those in need, while also building resilience and promoting long-term solutions in crisis affected areas.

The second cluster (DG ECHO's response to humanitarian needs) refers to the core mission of delivering humanitarian aid through sectoral and cross-cutting interventions and programmes.

The third cluster (DG ECHO's role in research, advocacy, and communication) focuses on activities and outputs to enhance the effectiveness and reach of these humanitarian efforts. It includes activities designed to inform decision-making, influence policy through advocacy activities, generate public support through increasing visibility and public awareness of humanitarian aid and foster accountability and improvement through data collection and analysis activities.

Figure 1- Overview of the Theory of change for the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid (2017-2022)



Source: External support study

In annex, specific graphs map the underlying rationale for intervention, objectives and commitments, inputs, activities, outputs, results and impacts (in the short and long term) (figure 2, 3, 4, annex 6). In addition, assumptions underpinning the achievements of short-term results and long-term impacts that have been tested during the evaluation process are further detailed (figure 5, annex 6).

Building on the Theory of change, the evaluation explored the extent to which the EU has contributed to humanitarian crisis response through its actions

- at global level – through its funding and advocacy efforts,
- at crisis level – through its programming and operational response to specific crises,
- at internal level – through the implementation of funded actions, partnerships, tools and internal mechanisms.

2.2. Point of comparison

The previous comprehensive humanitarian evaluation, published in 2018 ⁽²²⁾, provided evidence of the EU’s performance during 2012-2016 and serves as the baseline for the evaluation of the EU’s humanitarian aid interventions during 2017-2022. This enabled to understand the changes to the overall context in which the European Commission operates since 2016, the extent to which challenges identified persist, and assess the progress and results achieved during the evaluation period.

Relevance:

- The EU was considered a principled, needs-based donor with some unique features, such as its approach to partnerships, its field network and its role in shaping the humanitarian system.
- The EU humanitarian aid objectives were considered as very relevant to address the continuing global humanitarian needs.
- Funding was concentrated in sectors with the most pressing humanitarian needs, such as food security, health and protection.

Identified challenges

- Some areas for improvement and adjustments were noted. For example, the evaluation noted that in some cases a longer-term funding approach would have been useful. The evaluation suggested that there was a scope to involve local partners more in EU-funded actions. The evaluation considered that more could be done to boost the link between humanitarian aid and more medium and long-term development action, in particular to reflect contextual relevant developments (funding gap, protracted crises, etc.) which were affecting humanitarian aid delivery.
- Budget allocations were relevant to the needs of the targeted populations and were based on comprehensive and robust needs assessments. As resources were limited compared to the overall humanitarian needs, the EU was obliged to make strategic choices during the period evaluated.

⁽²²⁾ European Commission (2018) Comprehensive evaluation of the European Union humanitarian aid 2016-2020

- The evaluation pointed out that there was further scope to involve local partners to a greater extent in implementing EU-funded measures, in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Coherence:

- The evaluation highlighted that the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence were consistently reflected in the Commission's humanitarian policies and strategies and in most EU-funded actions.
- Keeping EU humanitarian aid separate from other external policy instruments safeguarded its independence.
- Externally, the European Commission strengthened cooperation with other donors and actively promoted complementarity and coherence

Identified challenges

- More regular coordination with emerging donors and at field level was recommended.

Effectiveness:

- There was ample qualitative evidence that EU-funded actions were effective and helped save lives, reduce morbidity and suffering, and supported the human dignity and protection of populations affected by disasters.
- The scale of funding for humanitarian aid actions enabled the Commission to have a real impact on the ground, addressing the needs of a significant number of beneficiaries in many different areas.
- The European Commission played a leading role in key initiatives and policies at global level such as the Grand Bargain ⁽²³⁾.

Identified challenges

- The European Commission's advocacy efforts were found to have been largely effective, but a more strategic approach with clear priorities and actions would have been beneficial.

Efficiency:

- Qualitative indicators and stakeholder views suggested that the Commission's humanitarian actions were cost-effective overall.
- The European Commission (DG ECHO) adopted and promoted innovations and best practices supporting cost effectiveness of humanitarian aid, such as cash transfers.

Identified challenges

- The evaluation noted that DG ECHO monitoring systems could be adapted to make them better able to analyse the efficiency and value for money of its humanitarian interventions.

⁽²³⁾ The Grand Bargain is an agreement aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian aid, launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016

Sustainability:

- The European Commission placed greater emphasis on promoting nexus approaches and on defining exit strategies.

Identified challenges

- Measures to further increase sustainability included promoting coordination between humanitarian relief and development, including beneficiaries in the design and delivery of aid and providing multi annual funding.

EU added value:

- The EU's added value was evident in its global field network, focus on forgotten crises, and principled approach.
- The European Commission (DG ECHO) performed well in coordinating and sharing information with Member States.
- The EU played a strong role in enhancing the quality of aid through the promotion of best practices, innovation, and international initiatives.

3. HOW HAS THE SITUATION EVOLVED OVER THE EVALUATION PERIOD?

Since the last evaluation (2012-2016), **global humanitarian needs have continued to dramatically increase**. The humanitarian situation has deteriorated in many parts of the world due to persistent conflict and insecurity, the impact of climate change, failed governance, epidemiological outbreaks, food insecurity, as well as the impact of major new or deteriorating crises. In addition, in a context of general inflation, costs of humanitarian operations were on the rise, making it even more difficult for donors and aid organisations to fulfil the demands for humanitarian assistance.

The evaluation period was characterised by numerous humanitarian crises, some of which are still ongoing or have evolved into protracted crises ⁽²⁴⁾.

The **crisis in Syria** began before the start of the evaluation period and remains one of the world's largest refugee crises, due to its severity and duration. The **Rohingya refugee crisis** intensified significantly in 2017 and led to a mass exodus of people from Myanmar to Bangladesh. The military coup in Myanmar in February 2021 marked the beginning of what is today one of the top 5 humanitarian crises worldwide. **Afghanistan** has experienced poverty, food insecurity, and conflict since before 2017, significantly worsening following the Taliban's takeover in 2021. **Yemen** is grappling with one of the worst crises throughout the evaluation period, enduring eight years of armed conflict, resulting in a protracted situation with escalating humanitarian needs. **Ethiopia** is confronting multiple concurrent humanitarian crises, exacerbated by an escalating drought and outbreaks of conflict and violence. In the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, decades of clashes between armed groups, widespread violations of human rights, and gender-based violence have caused unprecedented levels of protection needs, vulnerabilities and risks, and displacement.

New crises also emerged during the evaluation period. The growing political and economic crisis in **Venezuela** worsened living conditions, prompting millions to seek

⁽²⁴⁾ UN OCHA. 2020-2023. Global Humanitarian Overview (2020 to 2023). A protracted crisis is a long-lasting humanitarian emergency where large segments of the population face chronic vulnerability due to conflict, natural disasters and weak governance.

refuge in neighbouring countries. Haiti's social and political instability culminated in an acute security crisis characterized by failing governance with dire humanitarian consequences. Increasing levels of armed violence in **Central America** also prompted large-scale displacement, resulting in one of the largest refugee crises in the region and requiring a significant increase in humanitarian aid between 2019 and 2020. In **Pakistan**, a series of shocks in 2020 and climate-induced disasters in 2022 led to a heightened need for humanitarian assistance. **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine** since February 2022 forced millions of people out of their homes, generating alarming humanitarian needs among the Ukrainian population and causing severe spillover effects globally, in particular on food security driving needs to unprecedented levels.

In some cases, humanitarian conditions improved during the evaluation period. In **Libya**, humanitarian needs peaked in the initial half of the evaluation period due to conflict, violence and political and economic instability. However, the ceasefire agreement in 2020 marked a turning point, leading to improved conditions. Similarly, in **Iraq**, the conclusion of large-scale military operations against the so-called Islamic State led to a progressive shift from humanitarian to development-focused planning.

Overall, as a result, humanitarian crises – and thus the nature of humanitarian needs – continuously increased in number, complexity, and severity. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance increased from **136 million** in 2018 to **324 million** in 2022 ⁽²⁵⁾.

In the context of growing humanitarian needs, the humanitarian system scaled up its response between 2017 and 2022, with estimated total international humanitarian assistance growing by 89.9%, from USD 21.8 billion in 2017 to USD 41.4 billion in 2022 ⁽²⁶⁾. A particularly stark increase (38%) in humanitarian funding was recorded between 2021 and 2022 rising from USD 30 billion to USD 41.4 billion. This contrasted with the slower growing trend that characterised the humanitarian system during the evaluation period. This increase responded to record appeals, with coordinated plan requirements standing at USD 51.6 billion. This was largely driven by appeals for Ukraine, as well as other appeals, such as for Haiti and Ethiopia.

Although international humanitarian assistance funding grew throughout the evaluation period, needs and funding requirements increased at a far higher pace. As a result, the humanitarian funding gap increased. In 2017, the volume of unmet requirements amounted to USD 9.9 billion. By 2022, unmet needs increased to USD 21.3 billion ⁽²⁷⁾.

EU Humanitarian aid funding 2017-2022

Between 2017 and 2022, the European Commission **continued to be one of the world's leading humanitarian aid donors**, although with a decreasing share (EU humanitarian aid funding ranged from 9.7% of global total humanitarian funding in 2017 to 6.3% in 2022). During the evaluation period, according to UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) FTS data ⁽²⁸⁾, the European Commission was the third largest individual donor after the US and Germany. The European Union's humanitarian aid budget remained relatively stable during the evaluation period, with

⁽²⁵⁾ Global Humanitarian Overview (UN OCHA)

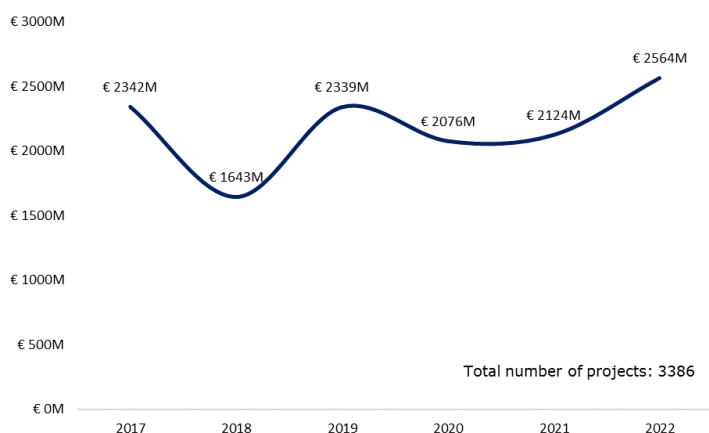
⁽²⁶⁾ [UN OCHA. OCHA Financial Tracking Service.](#), data extracted on 30.01.2024, and UN OCHA (2023) Global Humanitarian Overview.

⁽²⁷⁾ Figures extracted from the Global Humanitarian Overview (UN OCHA)

⁽²⁸⁾ UN OCHA, Financial Tracking Service

fewer fluctuations compared to other donors. Over the evaluation period, the EU provided funding to support the implementation of **3,386 actions**, with a total value of **EUR 13,086 million** ⁽²⁹⁾.

Figure 2- EU humanitarian aid funding (contracted amounts) per year

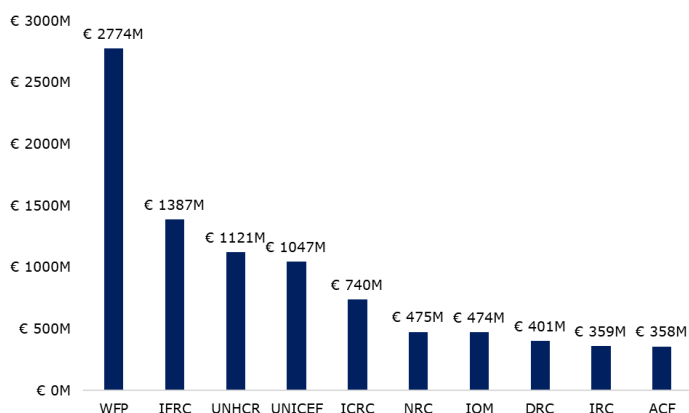


Source: ICF analysis based on EVA data, extracted 26 February 2024

Between 2017 and 2022, the initial available humanitarian aid funding amounted to EUR 8 billion. This budget was increased through the reception of substantial reinforcements of EUR 5.1 billion, representing 39% of the total available budget (EUR 13.1 billion). These reinforcements were crucial for the EU to remain a principled humanitarian actor providing a credible level of humanitarian funding in a drastically deteriorating humanitarian landscape. The reinforcements have been predominantly sourced from the EU’s reserves ⁽³⁰⁾, redeployments from within the MFF and amending budgets. Additional funding also came from the European Development Fund and external assigned revenue from Member States.

The top 10 partners funded during the evaluation period included UN agencies (World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), UNICEF, International Organization for Migration (IOM)), International Organisations (IFRC, ICRC), and international NGOs (Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Action Against Hunger/ Action contre la Faim (ACF)).

Figure 3 - Top 10 funded partners



⁽²⁹⁾ ICF analysis based on EVA (ECHO Visual Analytics) data, extracted February 26, 2024

⁽³⁰⁾ Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve (SEAR), Emergency Aid Reserve (EAR)

Source: ICF analysis based on EVA data, extracted 26 February 2024.

As a global donor, the European Union supported humanitarian aid and disaster relief efforts worldwide, in five regions – Africa (the region receiving most funding), Europe, Middle East and Northern Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Excluding the modality of multi-purpose cash transfer (MPCT) ⁽³¹⁾, the top three funded sectors across the evaluation period were food security and livelihoods (EUR 2,275 million, 17%), health (EUR 1,689 million, 13%) and protection (EUR 1,501 million, 11%) ⁽³²⁾. These sectors were consistently the top three funded sectors per year. Food security and livelihoods was the most funded sector, except in 2020 and 2021, where health was the most funded due to the COVID pandemic.

Main developments during the 2017-2022 period

As mentioned above, the main policy developments in the area of humanitarian aid during the evaluation period were embedded in the European Commission’s Communication of March 2021 ⁽³³⁾. By the end of the evaluation period, key actions across all priority areas of the 2021 Communication had progressed ⁽³⁴⁾, addressing also conclusions of the latest comprehensive evaluation. In some areas, the Commission had already delivered on specific commitments set out in the Communication or presented a clear roadmap and timeframe for delivery (such as the European Humanitarian Response Capacity, or the organisation of the first European Humanitarian Forum). In others, it had engaged in a longer-term strategic effort with Member States and key partners (such as on the promotion of IHL compliance, or work on expanding the donor base). Specifically, significant progress was made on the implementation of commitments taken under the “**Grand Bargain**”, - greater transparency, reduced management costs, needs assessments, multi-year arrangements, accountability to affected populations - with the ultimate goal of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian response.

The first set of changes aimed to improve **DG ECHO’s relations and arrangements** with its partners, with a focus on simplification and efficiency.

- Since 2021, the **EU Humanitarian Partnership Certificate 2021-2027 has replaced the previous Framework Partnership Agreements that used to govern the relations with partner NGOs**. The new partnership certificate was developed to ensure that partner NGOs applying and potentially receiving EU funding and implementing humanitarian projects met specific administrative and compliance standards (in line with the provisions of the 2018 Financial Regulation). Under the new process, partner NGOs must undergo an ex-ante assessment. If conditions are met, they are awarded a Partnership Certificate, which remains valid for 7 years. In addition to strengthened accountability, the prolongation of the duration of the partnership to 7 years (aligned to the duration of the Multi-annual Financial Framework) has brought significant simplification: under the previous Framework Partnership Agreement, DG ECHO and partner NGOs had to renew their partnership agreements every 4 years.

⁽³¹⁾ In 2016, DG ECHO introduced a specific category, MPCT. The overall funding dedicated to this modality was EUR 3,208 million, representing 24% of overall DG ECHO assistance and cover

⁽³²⁾ ICF analysis based on EVA data, extracted on 26 February 2024.

⁽³³⁾ See Appendix of the Communication: overview of key actions COM (2021)110 final

⁽³⁴⁾ Commission Staff Working Document on the follow-up of the Communication on the EU’s Humanitarian Aid Action: new challenges, same principles. SWD (2022)52 final

- The **framework agreements** regulating DG ECHO's partnerships with international organisations – namely the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies (IFRC)) were adapted in 2022. The framework agreements enshrine the partnership between DG ECHO and the IOs by setting out the contractual terms of a stable and long-term cooperation. These agreements facilitate and simplify the cooperation on individual proposals to deliver humanitarian aid. The new Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA) replaced the former Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) to keep the framework up to date with EU legislative framework.
- In addition, in 2020, DG ECHO began to explore new ways of working with its partners, particularly through **pilot Programmatic Partnerships (PPs)** ⁽³⁵⁾. The aim of the PPs was to promote a strategic multiannual approach, by supporting initiatives of shared interest between DG ECHO and its partners, while also providing more predictable funding. The pilot Programmatic Partnerships covered a three-years period, while in principle, humanitarian actions are funded on a yearly basis. This approach responded to concerns raised by stakeholders and highlighted in the 2018 evaluation.

DG ECHO first signed four **pilot Programmatic Partnerships** with NGO partners - ACTED, Concern, International Rescue Committee, and Save the Children-. In 2021, three additional Programmatic Partnerships were signed with UN agencies and International Organisations: the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). In 2022, the third – and last – pilot phase was launched with ICRC and OCHA. An internal lessons learnt exercise was conducted in 2021 and allowed to adjust the mechanism taking account of the experience gained during the first wave of implementation and of the feedback of both DG ECHO and the partners. As of 2023, DG ECHO decided to roll out the PPs by incorporating the model in geographic Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs) ⁽³⁶⁾.

In line with the Grand Bargain and the 2021 Communication, and as outlined in the 2018 evaluation, the European Commission continued to support the **localisation agenda**, to promote the inclusion of local implementing partners in the projects it supports. The adoption in 2023 of a guidance note on the promotion of equitable partnerships with local responders reflected the outcome of consultations and development of the approach over the evaluation period ⁽³⁷⁾.

During the evaluation period, DG ECHO continued to develop a number of **policies and guidance** that outline the Commission's position on key issues and provide concrete

⁽³⁵⁾ European Commission, DG ECHO Programmatic Partnerships aim to develop a multi-annual partnership over a period of at least 24 months, or longer when relevant. They are meant to support strategic and geographic priorities/initiatives of shared interest between DG ECHO and the partner (or consortium of partners), while addressing humanitarian emergency needs in a more effective and efficient manner.

⁽³⁶⁾ Each year, the European Commission adopts a 'worldwide decision' covering all the humanitarian aid actions the Commission expects to fund during a given period. In the context of this decision, the Commission prepares and publishes humanitarian implementation plans (HIPs) which provide more detailed information on the operational priorities identified

⁽³⁷⁾ European Commission, DG ECHO (2023). [Promoting Equitable Partnerships with Local Responders in Humanitarian Settings](#).

recommendations to its implementing partners. The overall objective was to ensure quality, coherence, and accountability of EU funded humanitarian operations. DG ECHO published policies on disability inclusion⁽³⁸⁾, education in emergencies⁽³⁹⁾, and logistics⁽⁴⁰⁾, addressing some gaps identified by the previous evaluation. In 2021, DG ECHO published the disaster preparedness guidance note⁽⁴¹⁾. In 2022, DG ECHO published minimum environmental requirements⁽⁴²⁾, which became mandatory in 2023, and published associated guidance on their implementation in 2022⁽⁴³⁾. In addition, during the evaluation period, DG ECHO started to undertake a review of its guidance on two of the main core sectors, food security and health, with the adoption foreseen for the first quarter of 2025. An evaluation on the WASH sector was started to assess whether the policy needs updating. Similar reflections started to review the policies relating to Nutrition and Gender.

The European Commission also developed new tools and modalities during the evaluation period, in order to enhance its flexibility and better respond to crises. The **European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC)**, launched in March 2022, enabled the Commission to directly intervene and ensure the rapid delivery of humanitarian assistance by mobilising operational tools (e.g., stockpile of relief items, aviation services, warehousing, experts) and putting them at disposal of humanitarian partners, EU Member States and emergency operators. The capacity drew on the experience gained during the COVID 19 pandemic, including the use of repatriation flights to transport humanitarian cargo and the establishment of the “EU Humanitarian Air Bridge”⁽⁴⁴⁾ to support the delivery of essential humanitarian aid to third countries. The Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) is managing the EHRC, thus ensuring close coordination and complementarity with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).

In the field of coordination and advocacy, some areas for improvements were identified in the 2018 evaluation. On the basis of the idea put forward in the 2021 Communication, the European Commission organised, jointly with the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the **first European Humanitarian Forum** on 21-23 March 2022, which became an annual platform for a strategic exchange between the EU’s political decision-makers and the wider international humanitarian community on key humanitarian challenges. Further editions were organised in 2023 and 2024, in cooperation with the respective EU Presidencies.

Progress on the monitoring framework

Since the previous evaluation period, DG ECHO has adapted its evaluation and monitoring methods to align with evolving policy priorities. In particular, DG ECHO agreed on a set

⁽³⁸⁾ European Commission, DG ECHO (2019) The inclusion of persons with disabilities in EU-funded humanitarian aid operations

⁽³⁹⁾ European Commission, DG ECHO (2019) Education in Emergencies in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations

⁽⁴⁰⁾ European Commission, DG ECHO (2022) Humanitarian Logistics Policy

⁽⁴¹⁾ European Commission, DG ECHO (2021) Disaster Preparedness

⁽⁴²⁾ European Commission, DG ECHO (2022) DG ECHO’s minimum environmental requirements and recommendations

⁽⁴³⁾ Guidance on the operationalisation of the minimum environmental requirements and recommendations for EU-funded humanitarian aid operations.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ EU Humanitarian Air Bridge - European Commission

of standard Key Result Indicators better adapted to report on the humanitarian aid projects performance ⁽⁴⁵⁾.

However standard KRIs were not consistently used by partners across sectors (who preferred using their own “custom” indicators), and where such indicators were used, their reporting was not done systematically and consistently by all partners. In addition to the monitoring and reporting done by its partners, the Commission’s field staff continued to conduct regular field visits, including meeting with beneficiaries (each EU-funded action is visited at least once per year, with the purpose of verifying the progress of the action, detect issues to be addressed, and identify needs for adjustment of actions. For example, 92,4% of projects completed in 2022 were “monitored on site”).

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS (ANALYTICAL PART)

4.1. To what extent was the intervention successful and why?

[effectiveness, efficiency, coherence]

Effectiveness

The European Union provides humanitarian relief throughout the world in a principled and needs based manner. The available humanitarian funding is used to assist as many people in need in the greatest number of countries as possible, through a swift, efficient, and comprehensive response.

In 2022, in response and in line with its principled mandate, EU humanitarian aid provided emergency assistance globally, supporting 95% of the countries targeted by the UN appeals ⁽⁴⁶⁾. Some 106.4 million direct beneficiaries were estimated to have been reached in 2022 ⁽⁴⁷⁾. The EU supports humanitarian action in more than 110 countries, most of them on the upper end of the OECD fragility index, and with very limited coping capacities.

Effectiveness of EU-funded actions

80% (80/100) of partners consulted during the external evaluation agreed that EU-funded interventions generated the expected results and achieved their objectives. Partners also indicated that EU-funded interventions played an important role in improving living

⁽⁴⁵⁾ See for example section 6 of the [Humanitarian protection thematic policy document](#) “monitoring, evaluation, and indicators”

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Humanitarian Aid, Programme performance statement 2023

⁽⁴⁷⁾ DG ECHO Annual Activity Report, 2023, data collected from partners, estimation methodology described in the “efficiency” section

conditions of affected people ⁽⁴⁸⁾, reducing mortality ⁽⁴⁹⁾, alleviating suffering ⁽⁵⁰⁾, reducing vulnerability and improving resilience ⁽⁵¹⁾, and preserving the dignity of life ⁽⁵²⁾.

DG ECHO's HIPs (Humanitarian Implementation Plans) ⁽⁵³⁾, detailing operational priorities per regions or sectors, were informed by thorough needs assessments ⁽⁵⁴⁾ allowing DG ECHO and its partners to identify the most pressing needs within the HIPs and comprehensively addressed all acute needs. The consultation mechanisms underpinning the needs assessments of DG ECHO's HIPs were crucial to ensuring their relevance to the humanitarian contexts, at regional or country level.

EU humanitarian aid interventions were systematically guided by the HIPs, ensuring that funding was directed to the most urgent and under addressed humanitarian needs. For example, in 2022, the EU provided humanitarian assistance in over 80 countries, across a wide range of sectors, ensuring coverage of all areas with critical humanitarian needs, including both sudden-onset disasters and protracted crises ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

These findings were echoed across the consultation activities. DG ECHO's needs assessment was well-regarded by the majority of stakeholders consulted for this evaluation ⁽⁵⁶⁾, who noted that it effectively identified the most pressing needs, ensuring that humanitarian efforts were aligned with most urgent priorities.

The EU's sectoral funding closely aligned with the needs and share of total funding allocated: despite minor differences in sector categorisation, all the main sectors for which funding was required as per FTS data were covered.

For example, the evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian interventions in the food assistance and nutrition sectors ⁽⁵⁷⁾ found that they made a strong contribution to improving food security and nutritional status among beneficiaries and contributed to achieving the main desired impact of saving and preserving life. EU-funded actions improved food consumption and the nutritional status of beneficiaries, alleviating suffering and saving lives ⁽⁵⁸⁾.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Survey with partners=75% (75/100).

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Survey with partners=69% (69/100).

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Survey with partners=64% (64/100).

⁽⁵¹⁾ Survey with partners=61% (61/100).

⁽⁵²⁾ Survey with partners=73% (73/100).

⁽⁵³⁾ See also section 2.1 describing the HIP process

⁽⁵⁴⁾ DG ECHO undertook comprehensive needs assessments to ensure needs-based strategies by combining quantitative indicators from global indexes (top-down approach) and qualitative information from field staff and experts (bottom-up approach). Throughout the evaluation period, DG ECHO relied on INFORM Risk data, and in 2021, it revised its methodology to place more emphasis on quantitative data, incorporating INFORM Severity data and People in Need (PIN) values.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ [DG ECHO Annual Activity Report 2022](#)

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Public consultation, interviews with stakeholders

⁽⁵⁷⁾ [Combined evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian interventions in the Sahel and in the food assistance and nutrition sectors 2016-2020 - Publications Office of the EU](#)

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Meta evaluation

In Yemen, the European Commission supported humanitarian responses contributing to averting famine, which was consistently outlined as the largest risk by the international community, as well as bringing under control the largest-ever recorded cholera outbreak. Effectiveness was also noted in food security, reaching 6-13.5 million beneficiaries through in-kind food, cash or voucher support, and improved food consumption scores (FCS) ⁽⁵⁹⁾.

The feedback from consultations confirmed that EU-funded actions were effective overall and generated both non-quantifiable and quantifiable results and impacts on the life of assisted populations ⁽⁶⁰⁾. This was substantiated by the beneficiaries ⁽⁶¹⁾, at project level, who indicated that the assistance received addressed their needs. For instance, all beneficiaries consulted in Ethiopia and Ukraine ⁽⁶²⁾ indicated that the support received helped their household to address some of their basic needs. Illustrative examples of results and impacts include the improvement of beneficiaries' well-being and living conditions, enhanced food security, healthcare, safety, and nutritional status, increased awareness of disaster preparedness issues, and improved ability to cope with immediate after-effects of disasters.

Examples of results and impacts achieved on the livelihoods and well-being of assisted populations - where consultation with the assisted population was a component of the thematic or geographical evaluation – are shown in the box below.

Findings from the meta-evaluation

Türkiye. The evaluation of the ESSN-2 ⁽⁶³⁾ (Emergency Social Safety Net 2), funded and implemented within the framework of the Facility for Refugees in Türkiye, found that DG ECHO's assistance had positive impacts on beneficiaries' ability to access health, education, and protection services. Refugee households were also more likely to send their children to school.

Iraq, Syria, Yemen. Beneficiaries consulted in previous evaluations covering these countries were satisfied with the services provided as part of DG ECHO's response. They underlined how the support received had been crucial to improving their ability to manage the crisis and increase their resilience.

Afghanistan. Health-related programmes funded by the EU were valued. Beneficiaries from two settlements in Herat reported that the EU-funded psychosocial intervention

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Meta-evaluation, [Evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian interventions in Yemen and in humanitarian access, 2015-2020 - Publications Office of the EU](#)

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Meta evaluation. The majority of partners and local implementing partners agreed that DG ECHO played an important (or crucial) role in improving the living conditions of affected people, reducing morbidity/mortality and preserving the dignity of life.

⁽⁶¹⁾ To note that – as explained in the external study - data collected from assisted populations are limited and fragmented. While the feedback from assisted population was collected during monitoring missions of DG ECHO staff, this was not analysed and reported in a standardised manner in project documents. The direct consultation of assisted population may also prove challenging in some difficult contexts with limited or no access and for safety and security reasons, including for the evaluation teams.

⁽⁶²⁾ as part of the external evaluation study, the evaluation team carried out field visits and organised focus groups with assisted people

⁽⁶³⁾ [Evaluation of the Emergency Social Safety Net Programme, January 2018-March 2020](#)

significantly reduced violence levels, including domestic violence. Children from a school in Herat affirmed that awareness-raising sessions on land mines and remnants of weapons improved their knowledge about safety. WASH interventions enhanced general awareness and knowledge of the basics of personal and communal hygiene in settlements among beneficiaries.

Disaster Preparedness. The evaluation of DG ECHO's interventions in Disaster Preparedness ⁽⁶⁴⁾ found that DG ECHO support to Disaster Preparedness made tangible contributions at national and local levels. The DG ECHO community Disaster Preparedness projects examined have been found to build the capacity of beneficiary communities, government agencies, and implementing partners to cope with the next disaster, including applying knowledge and lessons to engage in more timely and effective humanitarian response operations (i.e. contingency plans). Assisted population consulted felt more prepared following Disaster Preparedness efforts funded by the EU. Effective community-level examples include functioning early-warning systems, contingency planning, logistics and stockpiling.

Venezuela. Assisted populations consulted in the evaluation of DG ECHO's humanitarian interventions in the Venezuelan regional crisis ⁽⁶⁵⁾ reported that DG ECHO's health interventions strengthened their health conditions. This was achieved by enhancing good health habits, improving the conditions of the communities.

Effectiveness of the humanitarian thematic policies

The external supporting study assessed that EU-funded actions addressed the needs of different vulnerable groups; infants and children under five, persons with disabilities and pregnant women features among the most targeted groups ⁽⁶⁶⁾. Overall, this finding resonates with those of the previous evaluation, which investigated the extent to which EU-funded actions targeted the most vulnerable groups.

For instance, concerning the Education in Emergencies policy, data reported in DG ECHO annual activity reports showed a **considerable increase in the number of children reached during the evaluation period** (from 1.86 million in 2019 to 6.0 million in 2022). On gender, analysis ⁽⁶⁷⁾ of the Gender-Age Marker ⁽⁶⁸⁾ shows an overall improvement in the integration of gender and age considerations into humanitarian responses supported by the European Commission over the evaluation period (between 86% (2019) and 95% (2022) of actions integrated gender and age considerations). The Disability inclusion guidance helped steer clear progress in terms of the attention paid to persons with disabilities.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Evaluation of the EU's interventions in disaster preparedness, 2015-2020

⁽⁶⁵⁾ DG ECHO's response to the Venezuelan regional crisis, 2017-2021 (combined with UNHCR)

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Meta evaluation, project review of DG-ECHO funded actions in the 2017-2022 period, page 142 of the external evaluation,

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Gender-Age Marker assessment report (DG ECHO, 2021) [gender-age_marker_2018-2021_web.pdf](#)

⁽⁶⁸⁾ The gender-age marker is a tool designed to ensure that humanitarian aid projects address the specific needs and capacities of different genders and age groups. It is compulsory for partners to fill in the marker, an indicator of the categories of people targeted and reached by EU funded actions

In line with the guidance note on disaster preparedness, DG ECHO continued to encourage its partners to include preparedness and risk considerations into all humanitarian actions they supported. DG ECHO continued to systematically include resilience strengthening objectives in the Humanitarian Implementation Plans. The analysis ⁽⁶⁹⁾ of the resilience marker ⁽⁷⁰⁾ shows that the great majority of funded interventions integrated resilience considerations. The analysis suggests that most funded actions (86% on average) included measures to strengthen local preparedness capacity to respond or adapt to identified risks.

The assessment of thematic evaluations suggests that DG ECHO's sectoral/thematic policies contributed to enhancing the quality of DG ECHO's responses, although the impact varied across sectors. DG ECHO's partners and local implementing partners considered the thematic policies helpful in improving the design of their funded action (by providing guidelines on action design or enhancing the mainstreaming of certain aspects such as disability and protection). This was particularly the case for the protection, disaster preparedness, gender, and cash transfer policies. The WASH and nutrition policies, on the other hand, were perceived by some DG ECHO partners to have had less impact on the design of the funded interventions ⁽⁷¹⁾.

This finding is in line with the previous evaluation where most of DG ECHO partners and local implementing partners believed that the thematic policies facilitated the effective delivery of actions.

Similarly, the thematic policies in general contributed to the prioritisation of actions to fund. Most thematic policies include specific criteria to be considered by DG ECHO Staff when evaluating proposals and allocating funding. Evidence collected during the evaluation shows that in most sectors, EU humanitarian interventions were generally aligned with the thematic policies.

Based on consultations and documents review, the external supporting study provided some examples of ways in which thematic policies contributed to enhancing the quality of implementation of humanitarian responses. These included: promoting broader acceptance of certain standards; enhancing the importance of certain sectors (e.g. EiE, disability inclusion, logistics, environment); and ensuring that actions were aligned with humanitarian standards and best practices.

The cash-first principle in the cash transfer policy, for example, was considered as a key factor enhancing the quality and effectiveness of EU- funded interventions. As explained in the policy, updated in 2022, preference for cash assistance is grounded in evidence that cash programming is more efficient, faster, and more people centred (cash is people's preferred modality of assistance in most cases). During the evaluation period, the share of cash in DG ECHO's programming consistently increased - in 2022 it represented 22%.

Over the evaluation period, DG ECHO has been actively building internal capacity on cash (through trainings), working with partners and supporting them in improving their cash programming, and advocating towards other donors and agencies.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ External evaluation, Review of DG ECHO annual activity reports and HIPs 2027-2022

⁽⁷⁰⁾ The resilience marker developed by DG ECHO is a tool designed to assess how well humanitarian actions funded by DG ECHO integrate resilience considerations.

⁽⁷¹⁾ External evaluation, survey with DG ECHO partners

The thematic policies also served as guiding principles for monitoring the implementation of funded actions by DG ECHO staff.

Partners were generally familiar with DG ECHO's policies and guidelines ⁽⁷²⁾, while local implementing partners generally had a good level of knowledge of most DG ECHO's thematic policies ⁽⁷³⁾. The policies on protection, gender and cash transfer appeared best known by DG ECHO partners while the health, nutrition, supply chain and logistics, and Shelter and Settlement policies were less known. Knowledge of policies among local implementing partners varied considerably between sectors. The protection, gender and cash transfer policies were best known, while the health, nutrition, supply chain and logistics, and S&S policies were not known by about half of the respondents interviewed in the context of the external support study.

However, the extent to which (and how) DG ECHO's partners and implementing partners used the policies differed considerably across thematic areas. The previous evaluation similarly found that most DG ECHO partners used policies to design and implement actions, but that their use and level of awareness varied across sectors and geographies.

During the evaluation period, DG ECHO made efforts to enhance its partners' understanding of the thematic policies and facilitate their implementation. These included: strategic and high-level dialogues with key Partners, information and training (e.g. training sessions, e-learnings, workshops, webinars and discussions on the implementation); providing feedback to partners on the implementation and how to ensure alignment, as part of the appraisal of proposals and monitoring visits to funded actions; adding a thematic policy annex to the HIPs. The annex outlines the general principles, policy framework, assistance modalities, cross-cutting issues (e.g. risk-informed approach, protection mainstreaming, accountability to affected populations, gender-age mainstreaming) and thematic guidelines that need to be taken into account by DG ECHO's partners in designing humanitarian interventions supported by the European Commission.

In addition to the impact on the quality of the European Commission responses, the external evaluation provided evidence on the positive contribution of DG ECHO's thematic policies at a broader strategic/policy level. Through the thematic policies, DG ECHO played a leading role in putting some topics at the forefront in humanitarian responses, such as the use of cash, the importance of disability inclusion, disaster preparedness, and environmental considerations. Some of DG ECHO's thematic policies were also considered to have influenced other donors' (e.g. Member States) and partners' approaches to humanitarian aid. For example, one DG ECHO partner mentioned using DG ECHO's thematic policy on disability in developing their own organisational policy.

This finding is in line with the previous evaluation, where most DG ECHO partners and local implementing partners believed that the thematic policies facilitated the effective

⁽⁷²⁾ External support Study –Interviews with DG ECHO partners (11 out of 24); Survey with DG ECHO partners (Did not know the policy: food assistance: 24%, 24 out of 100; WASH :19%, 19 out of 100; cash transfers: 14%, 14 out of 100; nutrition: 25%, 25 out of 100; DRR/DP: 15%, 15 out of 100; gender: 13%, 13 out of 100; health: 20%, 20 out of 100; protection: 11%, 11 out of 100; S&S: 28%, 28 out of 100; EiE: 26%, 26 out of 100; supply chain and logistics: 26%, 26 out of 100).

⁽⁷³⁾ External support Study –Interviews with local implementing partners (3 out of 11); Survey with local implementing partners (did not know the policy: food assistance: 38%, 24 out of 63; WASH: 38%, 24 out of 63; cash transfers: 37%, 23 out of 63; nutrition 49%, 31 out of 63; DRR/DP: 44%, 28 out of 63; gender: 30%, 19 out of 63; health: 51%, 32 out of 63; protection: 24%, 15 out of 63; S&S: 49%, 31 out of 63; EiE: 43%, 27 out of 63; supply chain and logistics: 49%, 31 out of 63).

delivery of actions. However, some factors might have presented challenges to the effectiveness of the thematic policies. For example, some partners consulted during the external evaluation mentioned as a challenge the growing number of thematic policies requirements⁽⁷⁴⁾, in some cases their insufficient capacity and resources to implement all policy requirements; and contextual challenges (for example government restrictions and logistical challenges). However, these identified challenges did not affect implementation of thematic policies on the ground and DG ECHO made efforts to financially support partners on implementation of policies (through funding allocated under the ERC HIP⁽⁷⁵⁾ and since 2023, the strategic humanitarian supply chain and logistics HIP).

Effectiveness of partnerships

The different types of partnership models and the new partnership initiatives launched and implemented by DG ECHO during the evaluation period, facilitated strategic engagement with its partners and the achievement of common objectives, leveraging the strengths and particularities offered by both DG ECHO and its partners.

For example, the evaluation of DG ECHO's partnership with ICRC⁽⁷⁶⁾ found that the partnership was mutually beneficial and brought added value to DG ECHO and ICRC's responses to humanitarian needs. Under this partnership, DG ECHO benefitted from ICRC's access to hard-to-reach areas, ICRC's role in promoting IHL and their expertise and reliability in delivering humanitarian aid. The evaluation of DG ECHO's partnership with UNHCR⁽⁷⁷⁾ also found that they were well aligned in their strategic priorities and objectives, approaches to needs assessments, vulnerability, and risk analysis.

Some stakeholders consulted as part of the evaluation process outlined that the newly introduced pilot PPs provided predictability, enabling partners to focus on longer-term priorities and adapt their capacities accordingly. They also facilitated stronger relationships between DG ECHO and its partners and allowed them to explore innovative ways to enhance crisis response (e.g. on issues such as localisation or anticipatory actions)⁽⁷⁸⁾.

Some stakeholders consulted as part of the evaluation process reported success of multiannual strategies in achieving humanitarian objectives. The extended timeframe and predictable funding allowed DG ECHO partners to strengthen community trust, enhance local actor capabilities, and foster ownership by national and local governments. Feedback from the assisted population during the field visits conducted as part of the evaluation process indicated high satisfaction with the services provided through DG ECHO pilot PP funding. For example, in Ethiopia, targeted training and the establishment of health posts in remote areas led to improved vaccination coverage, hygiene practices, nutrition, and maternal and child health⁽⁷⁹⁾.

Some partners reported concerns with regards to some elements of their partnership with DG ECHO, including among others, increased administrative burden (which may be

⁽⁷⁴⁾ External support study, interview with ECHO partners (10 out of 24).

⁽⁷⁵⁾ Enhanced Response Capacity HIP,

⁽⁷⁶⁾ [Combined evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian interventions in the Horn of Africa 2016-2020, and DG ECHO's partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross](#)

⁽⁷⁷⁾ [Combined evaluation of DG ECHO's response to the Venezuelan Regional Crisis and of DG ECHO's partnership with UNHCR, 2017-2021](#)

⁽⁷⁸⁾ External support study, thematic workshop on programmatic partnerships

⁽⁷⁹⁾ External support study, case study on pilot programmatic partnerships

related to the new policy developments deemed to enhance the quality of humanitarian action) and scrutiny (which is necessary for transparency and accountability reasons). The administrative and reporting requirements in the framework of pilot PPs were also mentioned. The level of administrative and reporting requirements for pilot PPs was the same as for non-PPs. However, given the scale of these pilot PP (multi-country; important allocations), the volume of reporting was consequently substantial. Close reporting, but not beyond usual requirements, was justified by the objective to improve the quality of interventions under this modality and to meet the transparency and accountability standards.

This is to be balanced with the fact that since the introduction of the Humanitarian Partnership Certificate 2021-2027, certified NGO Partners can apply directly for funding for specific humanitarian actions without undergoing a capacity assessment for each EU funding application. This Certificate enhances accountability and transparency in the use of EU funds while also reducing the administrative burden for both DG ECHO and its Partners.

Effectiveness at strategic level

At strategic level, the external study noted that the European Commission's efforts contributed towards achieving the objectives stated in the HAR and other global frameworks.

This was accomplished through the European Commission's efforts and role in:

- Advocating for needs-based delivery of principled humanitarian aid.
- Increasing visibility of humanitarian crises and needs. In the LAC region, for example, the EU, among the first donors to fund interventions in Venezuela⁽⁸⁰⁾, was vocal about the growing humanitarian needs resulting from the crisis, playing a substantive role in leading donor's groups.
- Improving donor practices. The European Commission was at the forefront of promoting cash-based interventions. In particular, the Commission played an active role in donors' coordination through the donor cash forum and the Commission's cash policy (revised in 2022). The Commission is furthermore one of the rare donors committed to reach 35% of its humanitarian assistance in the form of cash.
- Enhancing humanitarian policy and operational leadership. For example, DG ECHO's support to logistics enabled the effective delivery of humanitarian and civil protection assistance. The logistics support filled critical gaps in global supply chain, particularly when commercial transport was disrupted. Specifically, evidence indicates that the Humanitarian Air Bridge provided effective logistical support to the COVID-19 response, enabling the delivery of medical supplies and vaccines⁽⁸¹⁾.
- Enhancing coherence and complementarity of humanitarian response. -The European Commission provided consistent support to international humanitarian

⁽⁸⁰⁾ Case study 5, external support study

⁽⁸¹⁾ Meta evaluation. [Evaluation of Humanitarian Logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations 2018-2020.](#)

coordination mechanisms (e.g. OCHA), participated in humanitarian coordination mechanisms (e.g. clusters, HCTs ⁽⁸²⁾), and encouraged its partners to participate.

- Preserving the humanitarian space and advocating for respect for IHL

In addition, during the 2017-2022 period, the EU met its financial commitments on education in emergencies and forgotten crises. As of 2019, the EU allocated 10% of the humanitarian aid budget to Education in Emergencies, in line with its commitment to this sector. This target has helped to significantly scale up the number of Education in emergencies projects between 2015 and 2019, with over 300 projects funded globally ⁽⁸³⁾. Similarly, providing rapid and flexible assistance both in major crises and in the so-called forgotten crises has become a hallmark of the EU's profile as a donor. The initial funding allocation to crises was over 15%, as per the EU financial commitment. This target was for example met in 2021, with more than 30 % of the initial budget spent on forgotten crises, in areas facing chronic humanitarian needs but lacking sufficient donor presence ⁽⁸⁴⁾.

The evaluation report notes that the European Commission also made important steps to advance its Grand Bargain commitments, following the endorsement of the Grand Bargain in 2016. The European Commission was a key member of the Grand Bargain Facilitation Group, providing continued momentum to the Grand Bargain process via annual meetings as well as coordination and information sharing. However, margins of improvement exist in several workstreams ⁽⁸⁵⁾.

Progress towards the achievement of Grand Bargain commitments

Cash-based programming. DG ECHO prioritised cash-based modalities where feasible and appropriate, in line with its target of 35% of aid delivery through cash transfers. The EU/DG ECHO funded large-scale cash programmes through multi-year programming and continued to advocate with its partners and through cash working groups for increased and coherent use of cash. Many regions witnessed a shift towards the systematic adoption of cash-based modalities, in part influenced by DG ECHO's role in promoting cash as a default modality in response.

Localisation. A majority of stakeholders was positive about the European Commission (DG ECHO)'s increased efforts on the localisation agenda during the evaluation period but underlined some scope to enhance support to local and national actors. Best practices are included in the 2023 guidance on promoting equitable partnerships with local responders. Throughout the evaluation period, DG ECHO also invested in Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs), a key mechanism to support local responders ⁽⁸⁶⁾.

⁽⁸²⁾ HCT (Humanitarian Country Team) is a key decision-making forum at the country level, composed of various humanitarian organisations, working together to coordinate and implement humanitarian responses.

⁽⁸³⁾ Education in emergencies project mapping report

⁽⁸⁴⁾ DG ECHO Annual Activity Report 2021

⁽⁸⁵⁾ A workstream is a thematic area of reform under the Grand Bargain agreement, where signatories cooperate to implement specific commitments

⁽⁸⁶⁾ country-based pooled funds are humanitarian financing mechanisms, managed by UN-OCHA, to respond to emergencies or crises by pooling contributions from various donors into a single unearmarked fund.

Enhanced quality funding. In 2022, the EU/DG ECHO committed to increasing the share of its multi-year ⁽⁸⁷⁾ portfolio by at least 30% by the end of 2023 (compared to 2021). Further to this commitment, the EU/ DG ECHO reached and even surpassed the 30% increase. Contributions to CBPFs and pilot PPs were important steps to deliver on these commitments.

Humanitarian needs assessments. The European Commission allocates humanitarian funding based on thorough needs assessments to ensure aid reaches those who need it most. As explained in section 2, continuous improvements in methodologies and tools enhance the accuracy and reliability of these assessments. During the evaluation period, methods and tools were enhanced to provide accurate information about people in need and those who have received aid. To respond to the priority to coordinate needs assessments between humanitarian agencies, the European Commission (DG ECHO) continued to support the development of the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Group’s (JIAF) methodology, tools and process, led by UN OCHA, setting international standards for analysing and estimating humanitarian needs, across different sectors. The purpose of the JIAF is to introduce reliable, people-centred, intersectoral needs assessments to support evidence-based decision-making. However, evidence indicates that more efforts are needed to better rely on inter-agency, intersectoral analysis, including that available through the Humanitarian Needs Overviews ⁽⁸⁸⁾.

Harmonised reporting. The 8+3 reporting template – a standardised humanitarian reporting format that includes 8 core questions (common to all donors who signed up to the Grand Bargain) and up to 3 optional ones – used by a growing number of donors and aid agencies ⁽⁸⁹⁾ was incorporated into the reporting tool of DG ECHO and launched with pilot PPs. However, some stakeholders noted that reporting was an area for improvement, such as further efforts to standardise reporting frameworks across different donors (indicators and benchmarks).

Participation revolution. Accountability to Affected People (AAP) was reflected in DG ECHO’s policies and programmes, which emphasised participatory approaches and active participation of beneficiaries in the entire project cycle. Partners were requested to provide details on the involvement of beneficiaries in the design and implementation of the proposed action. Data collected show that all project documents from the sample of 300 analysed by the external evaluation provided details on involvement of beneficiaries in the design or implementation of the action.

Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus (HDP nexus). DG ECHO took steps to promote the HDP nexus approach to better connect urgent relief and longer-term solutions in the 2017-2022 period. Additional efforts to advance its operationalisation remain necessary (see section on sustainability).

In addition to the specific elements assessed above, the following **factors contributed to the effectiveness of EU humanitarian aid action:**

⁽⁸⁷⁾ In the Grand-Bargain, multi-year funding is defined as funding with a duration of 24 months or more

⁽⁸⁸⁾ Metcalfe-Hough, V., Fenton, W. and Manji, F. (2023) The Grand Bargain in 2022: an independent review. HPG commissioned report. London: ODI

⁽⁸⁹⁾ The purpose of the harmonised reporting template, also called ‘8+3 template’, is to standardize, simplify and harmonize the reporting of humanitarian projects and programs. The template is designed to cover the full range of humanitarian activities, from short-term projects to multi-annual programs

- **DG ECHO’s speed of response to emerging crises** ⁽⁹⁰⁾.
- **DG ECHO’s flexibility** ⁽⁹¹⁾ (e.g. to adapt funding and actions in light of changing contexts),
- **DG ECHO’s strong field presence and humanitarian expertise** and DG ECHO field staff’s regular monitoring visits to funded actions ⁽⁹²⁾,
- **DG ECHO’s use of different tools and instruments.** (e.g. Emergency Toolbox ⁽⁹³⁾, EHRC, ERC ⁽⁹⁴⁾ HIPs),
- **DG ECHO’s support to operations and increasing (proactive) role in logistics.** (e.g. development of the Humanitarian Logistics Policy, launched by the European Commission at the end of January 2012, setting up of EU Humanitarian Air Bridge and EHRC) ⁽⁹⁵⁾,
- **Good working relationships with its network of partners** enhanced the effectiveness of EU-funded actions (at field level) and, more broadly, strategic coordination (HQ and field level),
- **European Commission’s support to coordination efforts.** (e.g. support to UN-led coordination mechanisms and active engagement in regional coordination mechanisms ⁽⁹⁶⁾),
- **European Commission’s advocacy efforts** ⁽⁹⁷⁾.

The following factors were identified as the main barriers to the effectiveness of EU humanitarian action: the humanitarian funding gap, security issues, IHL violations, logistical and access constraints and the increasing complexity and severity of crises, as well as the limited engagement of national and local actors.

As an illustration of the effectiveness and benefits of EU-funded humanitarian actions two examples of success stories from the angle of assisted populations are presented in the boxes below ⁽⁹⁸⁾.

⁽⁹⁰⁾ External support study Survey with DG ECHO staff, DG ECHO partners, and DG ECHO local implementing partners

⁽⁹¹⁾ External support study

⁽⁹²⁾ For example, 92.4% of projects that finished in 2022 were “monitored on site” (DG ECHO Annual Activity Report 2022) The rate was similar in previous years

⁽⁹³⁾ The Emergency Toolbox is one of the instruments the European Commission uses to assist in unforeseen, sudden-onset crises outside the EU. The Emergency Response Coordination Centre manages the various funding tools within this toolbox (Acute Large Emergency Response Tool, Small-scale Tool, Epidemics Tool, Disaster Response Emergency Fund)

⁽⁹⁴⁾ With the Enhanced Response Capacity (ERC), DG ECHO dedicates part of its budget to support initiatives that seek to increase the capacity of the humanitarian community to respond to crises in the most effective and efficient manner

⁽⁹⁵⁾ The evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission’s CP and humanitarian operations found that DG ECHO’s support to logistics enabled the effective delivery of humanitarian aid interventions.

⁽⁹⁶⁾ The evaluation found that DG ECHO played a significant role in mobilising and coordinating humanitarian donors and actors in the MENA and LAC regions, for example through pledging events and active engagement in regional coordination mechanisms.

⁽⁹⁷⁾ The evaluation case studies found that DG ECHO’s advocacy efforts for improved access at different forums and levels helped to enhance access in both DRC and Ukraine.

⁽⁹⁸⁾ These examples were shared by implementing partners as part of the consultation activities carried out in the framework of the external evaluation. Results and impacts concern ‘better preparedness and response to disasters’ (Bangladesh) and ‘learning opportunities from regained access to education’ (Uganda).

Strengthening forecast-based early actions in cyclone-prone coastal regions in Bangladesh (STEP)

Purpose and context of the action: In Bangladesh, several coastal regions are vulnerable to cyclones, which can have devastating effects on people's livelihoods. The EU-funded project, 'Strengthening forecast-based early actions in cyclone-prone coastal regions in Bangladesh' (STEP) was designed to strengthen the resilience of the communities living in those regions. In Mariala Village, Sreeula Union, Assasuni, and Satkhira, the STEP project assisted fish cultivators to develop an anticipatory action plan to be prepared against frequent cyclone-induced tidal surges. It also supported the reactivation of the Ward Disasters Management Committee (WDMC) and development of an early action plan in preparation for cyclone landfalls.

Results: The project enhanced community resilience against the negative impacts of cyclones. As a result, when the Sitrang cyclone hit in 2022, both communities managed to protect themselves from potential devastating consequences. Following the early action plan, fish cultivators netted resistant ghers (in fish enclosures) that prevented the fish from being washed away by the cyclone. In line with the early action plan, the local population regularly monitored the condition of the embankment protecting their village and was able to take immediate action to repair it when it was damaged by the Sitrang cyclone. This prevented the water from flooding the village.

Story from an assisted person: 'This year, I have prepared an early action plan with the help of the STEP project to get prepared in case of a cyclone. When I got the forecast regarding Sitrang, I have taken the initiative to follow-up the early action plan developed to save my assets (...) When the cyclone Sitrang has been forecasted, some fish in my gher could not be sold as they were too small yet. According to the early action plan, I had netted my pond. I [...] have been able to save my fish from being washed away for the first time' (fish cultivator from Mariala village).

Story from an assisted person: 'The STEP project assisted us in preparing an inclusive plan to implement early action before the landfall of a cyclone. According to the plan, other members of the WDMC and I regularly kept an eye on the condition of the embankment. We also formed a small team of local people to be deployed at a moment's notice to repair the breach of the embankment. Required materials were also arranged. On 22 November 2022, two days before Sitrang landfall, we came to know that a point near Babulaler Ghat village was about to be breached. We took immediate action, mobilised all the resources instantly, and started to repair the embankment. We were finally able to stop water from flooding our community. We only spent BDT 50,000 on this action, which saved the fish, crops, and infrastructure worth around BDT 5,000,000' (representative of the WDMC).

Source: Survey with DG ECHO partners; STEP project.

Uganda: Equitable access to quality and transformational education for refugee and host communities (EQUATE)

Purpose and context of the action: In Uganda, thousands of children from refugee and host communities do not have access to education. Funded by the EU, the Equitable Access to Quality and Transformational Education for Refugee and Host Communities (EQUATE) project aimed to improve conflict affected children's access to inclusive and equitable education in Rhino Camp, Imvepi and Palabek refugee settlements in the West Nile Sub-Region of Uganda.

Results achieved: The EQUATE project addressed the barriers faced by most vulnerable out-of-school children in enrolling in primary and secondary education programmes. It conducted Accelerated Education Programmes (AEP), helping beneficiaries to return to school, such as young mothers who were forced to drop out of school because of a lack of resources and family barriers. Activities included providing school materials, financial support, infrastructure building and renovation (including breastfeeding sheds).

Story from an assisted person: ‘I got the information about free access to education through EQUATE project from a friend at our centre Paluda in Palabek Refugee Settlement. He told me about the opportunity for young mothers like me to go back to school. That is how I managed to join Paluda Secondary School which is supporting over a hundred young people who dropped out of school but are willing to rejoin with no limitations or restrictions. (...) I am getting a lot of knowledge. The project has supported me with some money to help me and my child at home. They are paying for my school fees, and I am very happy about that (...). I am now into learning and working towards achieving my dream. I am currently in school and getting new knowledge. I also encourage my friends to return back to school’ (a young mother living in the Palabek refugee settlement).

Story from an assisted person: ‘The project has helped me stay in school. I also get support and guidance from my teachers and fellow learners. WIU (Windle International Uganda) also encourages us to perform better, and this gives us hope of becoming of becoming better people in future...’ (South Sudanese person residing in the Palabek refugee settlement who had dropped out of school for financial reasons).

Source: Survey with local implementing partners; World Vision and Windle International Uganda – EQUATE.

Efficiency

EU humanitarian aid actions, generate a range of costs and benefits.

Costs typically include financial expenditures on logistics, personnel, supplies, and coordination with partners, as well as costs related to prioritising certain crises over others.

On the benefit side, the expected outcomes include saving lives, reducing human suffering, improving health and nutrition, restoring dignity, and enhancing resilience in affected communities. There are also broader benefits such as stabilizing fragile regions, reducing forced displacement, and supporting international solidarity and EU visibility.

Evaluating these impacts often involves both quantitative methods (e.g. cost per beneficiary, mortality reduction) and qualitative assessments (e.g. improved well-being or access to services).

The assessment of cost effectiveness (i.e. cost per person reached) of EU humanitarian action, and more broadly in the humanitarian sector, remains challenging for several reasons. First, isolating the impact of a specific intervention is difficult as EU humanitarian actions often overlap with those of other donors and actors, creating attribution issues. In addition, cost in different contexts or situations are not always comparable. Third, many humanitarian benefits such as restored dignity, reduced suffering, or improved resilience are inherently difficult to quantify.

Over the period covered by this evaluation, the European Commission continued its efforts to improve the assessment of cost-effectiveness (and efficiency) of the humanitarian aid interventions

The improvements during the evaluation period mostly concerned the standardisation of data to evaluate the results and impact of interventions, including the adoption of standard KOIs and KRIs, revising the methodology to aggregate quantitative data by partners, and strengthening reporting requirements for partners. For example, since 2019, DG ECHO field and desk officers are asked to estimate the number of people reached by their interventions. A new methodology was then developed and implemented, since 2021, to better estimate the number of people reached by the EU humanitarian interventions, through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis as part of DG ECHO efforts to improve the accuracy of its key indicators.

Estimation of number of people reached

In 2021 DG ECHO developed a methodology to estimate the number of people reached through humanitarian aid actions. The methodology provides guidance on managing estimates in (co-)funded actions and avoiding double-counting. Data from partners is collected via the “Single Form” IT tool and internal DG ECHO database, focusing on individuals directly benefiting from aid.

While indirect beneficiaries are noted, the annual exercise focuses on those directly reached, and a key aspect is then differentiating between direct and indirect beneficiaries. Actions such as emergency assistance and medical consultations directly impact individuals, whereas infrastructure improvements might affect a broader community indirectly.

The methodology tackles double counting by ensuring individuals are counted only once across different sectors and areas. For ongoing actions, adjustments consider whether aid is one-off or continuous.

For co-financed actions, people reached are estimated according to the proportion of EU funding.

An Excel tool supports users in estimating figures and eliminating double counting. DG ECHO desks input data through sequential steps, adjusting for overlapping actions and funding ratios, and make final judgment calls to refine figures.

This "people reached estimation" exercise is conducted annually between May and June for the previous year. The results are published in an internal tool called the CID (Country Information Dashboard).

Through this method, the European Commission endeavours to improve transparency and accuracy in reporting the reach of its humanitarian efforts.

The assessment of efficiency (e.g. by region or type of partner) is without prejudice to the needs-based allocation of humanitarian aid to the most appropriate areas or modalities of intervention.

Efficiency of budget allocation

The external evaluation found that efficiency and cost-effectiveness were often considered when making strategic choices about funding allocation, although in most cases they were not a determining factor.

Consistently with findings from the previous evaluation, EU humanitarian aid budget allocations were based on needs⁽⁹⁹⁾ and considered the concurrent actions of other donors (in contexts of comparable needs and insufficient resources, they also considered wider policy priorities when allocating funding as noted in the previous evaluation). In addition, the trends in funds allocated generally reflected changes in the severity of the crisis (e.g. evolution of the funding for Afghanistan, or Ukraine).

The EU's flexibility to amend and top up budgets in response to evolving crises was highlighted⁽¹⁰⁰⁾. Recent or emerging needs and contextual changes were appropriately reflected in policy documents and funding decisions. For example, the EU's ability to adapt to the evolving humanitarian needs in Sudan and South Sudan in 2022 was an example of flexibility and timeliness in funding decisions, even in acute crises. Another example was in the LAC region, where the EU was among the first donors to fund the response to the Venezuela regional crisis and played a leading role in advocacy with other donors, contributing to improve partners' compliance with international standards for humanitarian assistance.

EU humanitarian aid funding was aligned with and complementary to wider global trends: For example, the EU's share of global funding remained stable (between 12% and 13%) between 2018 and 2021⁽¹⁰¹⁾.

Along with a detailed description of the most acute humanitarian needs, most HIPs reflected existing operational and administrative constraints, DG ECHO's response capacity and other donors' availability to address existing needs.

Efficiency and cost-effectiveness of EU-funded actions

The European Commission (DG ECHO) made efforts to promote the use of **cost-effective analysis** in the design of its interventions.

For example, for the sake of comparing proposals addressing similar needs in similar contexts, new cost efficiency requirements were included in documents submitted by partners to support DG ECHO's assessment of projects' cost benefit based on standardised information (e.g. Percentage of operational support costs).

Based on the sample of projects analysed⁽¹⁰²⁾, the external evaluation concluded that:

- the overall efficiency of EU-funded actions remained relatively stable throughout the evaluation period. For example, the weight of support costs over direct costs fluctuated only slightly between 2017 and 2022.

⁽⁹⁹⁾ DG ECHO's financing decisions are based on comprehensive needs assessments using quantitative data from the INFORM Risk and Severity Indexes and qualitative data from field reports. The changes to the methodology introduced in 2021 increased the weight of quantitative data to 80%, marking an improvement in the needs-based approach.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Meta evaluation. Evaluation of the EU humanitarian aid intervention in the African Great Lakes region, 2013-2017, evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian interventions in Afghanistan, 2014-2018, evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian assistance in the Central Africa Region, 2014-2018.

⁽¹⁰¹⁾ external support study p.183 Humanitarian action database (HOPE, data extracted on 26 February 2024) and OCHA FTS data extracted on 11 August 2023

⁽¹⁰²⁾ External study, annex 8

- the efficiency of EU-funded actions was similar across regions. Factors driving differences included high price volatility, the high costs of operating in certain countries, conflict, political instability, and security and logistical challenges that affected the ability of humanitarian actors to plan their interventions.
- it was difficult to compare efficiency across sectors, because of the different modalities of intervention and types of activities in different sectors. Actions in sectors with a high transfer component (the value of the output that arrives to the end-beneficiary), such as Multi-purpose Cash Transfer- when applicable - and Food Security and Livelihood were among the sectors with the highest efficiency of transfer. These results are in line with previous evaluations, which provided generally positive evidence on the cost-effectiveness of cash transfers when appropriate.
- DG ECHO monitored efficiency and cost-effectiveness throughout the project cycle. DG ECHO staff (both at HQ and field experts) have to take efficiency into account when analysing the financial aspects of the actions during the selection and implementation of the projects: adequacy of means and costs, ratio between costs of results (goods and services delivered) and other costs (support costs).

The box below provides findings from some geographic evaluations (carried out during the evaluation period) with regards to cost effectiveness.

Findings from the meta-evaluation

The evaluation of the EU's humanitarian response to the **Rohingya refugee crisis** in Myanmar and Bangladesh found that the majority of DG ECHO's efforts to improve cost-effectiveness was at the selection stage of interventions, with the aim to avoid duplicating efforts, encouraging synergies and coordination.

In **Yemen**, the geographical evaluation found that DG ECHO's careful programming contributed to the overall cost-effectiveness of its humanitarian response, notably by avoiding gaps and overlaps and adapting to the evolution of needs. Illustrations were found in the fact that preferred delivery modalities contributed to cost-effectiveness: using the RRM as an entry point for multi-purpose cash assistance was cost effective as it avoided duplication of efforts and because it was relevant to meet beneficiaries needs. Similarly, in the **Horn of Africa**, DG ECHO took steps to ensure cost-effectiveness throughout the project cycle. The relevant HIPs also set out priorities with regards to transfer modalities, such as the use of cash to improve cost-effectiveness.

In the **Sahel**, EU-funded actions appeared to be cost-effective, based on the analysis of the cost per beneficiary, alpha ratio, and the initial versus final costs. However, the available data did not allow a full assessment of efficiency.

Examples of strategic choices and approaches that the European Commission applied to improve the efficiency and cost effectiveness of its humanitarian responses included:

- Supporting coordination mechanisms and humanitarian enablers⁽¹⁰³⁾ in some regions. For example, in Venezuela, the European Commission supported coordination at national and local level to improve partners' compliance with international standards for humanitarian assistance.
- Using multi-partner grants to promote joint actions
- Contributing to Country Pooled Funds
- Use of Emergency Rapid Response Mechanisms and crisis modifier⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ to increase the timeliness of the response. e.g. the *Mecanismo intersectorial de respuesta de emergencia (MIRE)* in Colombia, which focused on rapid response through a consortium of INGOs.

The main suggestions from some stakeholders on measures to improve the efficiency and/or cost effectiveness of EU-funded actions included:

- simplification and streamlining of processes: for example, some partners indicated that DG ECHO's administrative and reporting requirements, particularly the detailed yearly reporting for the Single Form could be challenging. On the timing and requirements of HIPs, some stakeholders called for longer deadlines and better communication of changes⁽¹⁰⁵⁾.
- flexibility and predictability of funding (more unearmarked or soft-earmarked funding; multiannual funding).

These suggestions were notably addressed with the piloting of programmatic partnerships in 2020, 2021 and 2022, providing longer term predictability to partners, simplified reporting⁽¹⁰⁶⁾, joint monitoring and enhanced dialogue with partners at both field and headquarters level.

For example, the **8+3 reporting template**, which focuses on narrative reporting only, was incorporated into the reporting tool of DG ECHO and launched as a pilot with four pilot programmatic partnerships. The 8+3 format was also enabled for the launch of new programmatic partnerships with international organisations and non-governmental organisations for projects as of 2023⁽¹⁰⁷⁾. The 8+3 Template covers narrative questions and consists of 8 core questions and up to 3 additional questions. The 8+3 Template does not concern quantitative questions.

The set of changes conducted during the evaluation period aiming to improve **DG ECHO's relations and arrangements** with its partners, with a focus on simplification and efficiency is further described in section 3.

Internal and external factors affecting cost-effectiveness

⁽¹⁰³⁾ In the humanitarian sector, a humanitarian enabler refers to a service, system or actor that facilitates the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance

⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ The main goal of the Crisis Modifier is to allow for a rapid and effective response to emerging crises within the context of an ongoing humanitarian action

⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ External survey, interview with DG ECHO staff and local implementing partners

⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ including in the proposals and description of the actions submitted by partners ("Single Forms") and the assessment and monitoring of those projects by DG ECHO, at field and headquarters level (internal "FichOps")

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ DG ECHO (2023) Grand Bargain. Self-reporting exercise.

According to the external study, due to the specificity of humanitarian assistance, some internal factors had affected in some cases the cost-effectiveness of EU-funded actions.

A minority of the stakeholders consulted during the evaluation mentioned:

- the complex administrative processes and requirements on partners, despite being deemed necessary for accountability and transparency,
- the short funding cycles and annual contracting delays, impeding in some cases long-term cost-effective planning. Indeed, the average duration of an EU humanitarian aid funded action in the 2012-2016 period was 12 months, with none of the actions lasting more than 24 months. This assessment was nuanced by the results of the framework partner survey as part of the external survey which revealed that close to 70% of the respondents considered that humanitarian aid funding cycle facilitated the delivery of EU funded actions. This showed that, in most situations, humanitarian aid short funding cycle was adapted to the emergency response provided by the framework partners,
- the fragmentation of activities across multiple actions and multiple layers of partners. This issue is addressed through initiatives like programmatic partnerships, which aim to consolidate actions under broader strategic frameworks,
- in some cases, inconsistent coordination efforts, and limited investment by DG ECHO partners in local and national responders resulted in fragmented activity and higher management costs.

In addition, external factors affected the cost-effectiveness of EU humanitarian actions, including: access constraints/restrictions and insecurity (leading to delays and increased operational costs); restrictive government policies, high operating costs (e.g. hard-to-reach areas; inflation and market fluctuations); and external shocks (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, disrupted operations and increased costs). For example, high-inflation significantly limited cost-effectiveness during the responses to the regional crisis in Venezuela and Yemen.

The European Commission demonstrated high flexibility and helped to deal with the consequences of the hampering external factors. For instance, where external shocks or constraints hindered the cost-effectiveness of the humanitarian aid intervention, the European Commission used budget modifications, reallocations of resources from partners or other donors, and operational adjustments to ensure satisfactory financial performance. In addition, its efforts to mitigate some of the internal factors, such as enhanced coordination through cluster mechanisms, investment in preparedness, and promotion of localisation were appreciated by some stakeholders.

Efficiency and cost-effectiveness of thematic policies

According to stakeholders consulted during the external evaluation, thematic policies generally improved the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the European Commission's interventions (e.g. policies on cash, logistics, food assistance and nutrition; disaster preparedness).

Thematic policies were suitable for guiding the planning and use of available resources. For example, stakeholders recognised the thematic policy on cash as conducive to cost-effectiveness. It referred to the TCTR (Total Cost Transfer Ratio, the value of output that arrives to the end beneficiary, compared to the value of the input) as a standard way to measure efficiency. Additionally, the disaster preparedness policy mentioned several risk reduction measures to increase cost effectiveness.

A minority of DG ECHO partners expressed concerns about the high number of policies and the associated administrative costs and burden. Nevertheless, comprehensive and disaggregated data on the specific financial burden of thematic policy compliance are not systematically collected or reported across stakeholders.

Coherence

Internal coherence

The EU continued being recognised as a principled donor, adhering strongly to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

As in the previous evaluation period, humanitarian principles continued to be enshrined in the design and implementation of the EU's humanitarian interventions. The EU's advocacy also played a crucial role in upholding these principles.

For example, the European Union's advocacy with government and local actors on the ground, as well as with partners, was successful in promoting humanitarian principles. Successes included DG ECHO's prioritisation of humanitarian principles in its dialogue with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which aimed to ensure that the organisation's members would willingly adopt and respect these principles.

Externally, DG ECHO partners conducted capacity-building initiatives to uphold humanitarian principles, fostering adherence of funded actions to these principles. For instance, two organisations had internal codes of conduct on humanitarian principles, while others provided annual training to their staff ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾.

The previous comprehensive evaluation did not assess the coherence between DG ECHO's thematic policies and the EU's humanitarian objectives. For this evaluation period, a new analytical framework developed in the context of the evaluation ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ shows that **DG ECHO's thematic policies were aligned with the EU's humanitarian objectives**: all policies referred to humanitarian principles, the Humanitarian Aid Regulation, and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

Thematic policies were internally coherent. This was ensured through cross-referencing, mainstreaming approaches, and consultations with key partners and stakeholders when adopting or updating policies. The evidence did not highlight any specific example of trade-offs or contradictions among thematic policies. However, the evaluation noted that the increasing number of policies and mainstreaming requirements created a challenge for some DG ECHO partners during the evaluation period. To contribute to the implementation of policies, the EU financially supported partners through funding allocated under the Enhanced Response Capacity HIP ⁽¹¹⁰⁾, and since 2023, the strategic supply chain and logistics HIP ⁽¹¹¹⁾.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ External study report pages 102-104

⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ Analytical framework developed in the context of the external study report

⁽¹¹⁰⁾ The Enhanced Response Capacity HIP funds initiatives aimed at strengthening the global humanitarian system. For example, the ERC HIP can finance disaster preparedness projects, addressing priorities outlined in the guidance note on disaster preparedness

⁽¹¹¹⁾ The supply chain and logistics HIP funds initiatives aiming at improving humanitarian logistics, as set out in the Humanitarian Logistics Policy.

The EU’s humanitarian aid interventions were internally coherent at both strategic and operational level. This is in line with the previous evaluation which found that the coherence between EU-funded actions was ensured through the appraisal process and DG ECHO’s multisectoral approach.

The European Commission had several tools and funding mechanisms serving different purposes and used in different contexts during the evaluation period, complementing one another. These included the EHRC, the UCPM, the Emergency Toolbox, the ERC HIP ⁽¹¹²⁾, and geographical HIPs. Some were already in place before 2017 (e.g. UCPM, Emergency Toolbox), while others were developed during the evaluation period (e.g. EHRC, ERC HIP).

New instruments developed during the evaluation period addressed gaps and challenges without overlapping with other DG ECHO tools or funding streams. For instance, the ERC HIP focused on initiatives that might not have been covered by geographical funding envelopes due to the emerging or cross-cutting nature of the issues to be addressed through policy support and innovation.

The EU’s humanitarian aid interventions were coherent and complementary with the UCPM, given the different objectives of each instrument.

Indeed, the legislative and policy frameworks for civil protection (UCPM Decision No 1313/2013/EU) and humanitarian aid (Humanitarian Aid Regulation, European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid) acknowledge and recognise the potential benefits of synergies between civil protection operations and humanitarian actions, while clearly delineating the respective mandates and scope of both instruments.

The Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), ERCC Liaison Officers, and Rapid Response Coordinators ensure that when the UCPM is activated, DG ECHO can successfully coordinate its internal operations, including between civil protection and humanitarian aid staff.

Examples of synergies included humanitarian and civil protection coordination during UCPM activations in Madagascar (in response to the tropical cyclone Batsirai in February 2022) and Pakistan (in response to the summer floods in August 2022).

The deployment of DG ECHO humanitarian experts and ERCC Liaison Officers with humanitarian aid expertise was considered good practice to strengthen synergies between humanitarian action and civil protection. The potential of the **Humanitarian Aid Bridge** for UCPM deployment was also highlighted. For example, during the UCPM activation in response to the 2021 earthquake in Haiti, the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge not only delivered assistance from humanitarian partners but also pooled and delivered Slovenia’s assistance under the UCPM.

Internal factors that contributed to the internal coherence of the EU’s humanitarian aid interventions included coordination efforts within DG ECHO, between DG ECHO partners, and between DG ECHO, its partners, and local implementing partners.

A minority of stakeholders indicated that more could be done to enhance synergies between the EU’s humanitarian aid interventions and the UCPM. This is in line with the

⁽¹¹²⁾ Enhanced Response Capacity

evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism ⁽¹¹³⁾ which found an ongoing need to ensure a better mutual understanding between humanitarian aid actors, and UCPM team members of their respective operations, requirements, and ways of working.

External coherence

During the 2017-2022 period, evidence provided by the external support study indicates that DG ECHO and its partners sought to coordinate their humanitarian activities with those of other donors, at both strategic and operational level.

Coherence with EU Member States

At strategic level, the European Commission coordinated its humanitarian interventions with those of Member States, primarily as part of the COHAFA ⁽¹¹⁴⁾ meetings, as a forum to discuss EU humanitarian strategies and policies, as well as the EU's response to humanitarian crises. During COHAFA meetings between 2017 and 2022, the European Commission (DG ECHO) and its partners provided Member States with regular updates on operational and thematic priorities, relations with Strategic Partners, ongoing crises, challenges in humanitarian aid delivery, progress towards objectives of the Grand Bargain, and other topics. Additionally, Member States adopted common messages on specific humanitarian crises (e.g. Yemen, Afghanistan), presenting a united and coherent stance which was also reflected in DG ECHO's operational strategies.

One example of strategic coordination with Member States occurred in 2022, during the French Presidency of the Council of the EU. During this period, the EU, EU Member States and Norway signed the non-binding humanitarian aid donors' declaration on climate and the environment ⁽¹¹⁵⁾, followed later by Switzerland and Canada. The EU and Member States are also coordinating their positions on humanitarian work within the UN in New York or Geneva and are preparing joint statements to be delivered at the Executive Boards of different UN organisations like WFP or UNHCR.

Beyond the regular coordination in COHAFA, DG ECHO was also convening regular meetings of Directors/Director-Generals to provide for further coordination and strategic guidance on humanitarian topics. Member States' representatives highlighted the usefulness and added value of ad hoc coordination meetings on specific crises, such as those relating to events in Afghanistan and Ukraine.

The European Humanitarian Forum, which was first held in 2022, was also regarded as a useful setting where the European Commission (DG ECHO) could enhance its strategic dialogue with Member States. For example, through the Forum, DG ECHO put an increased focus on addressing the humanitarian funding gap.

Evidence collected during the external evaluation ⁽¹¹⁶⁾ indicated that more could be done to leverage European Commission (DG ECHO) and Member States' humanitarian coordination. Examples included leveraging COHAFA as a platform to facilitate activities beyond information-sharing ones. The evaluation identified areas where Member States

⁽¹¹³⁾ Evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, SWD(2024)213 final

⁽¹¹⁴⁾ Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid

⁽¹¹⁵⁾ European Commission – humanitarian aid donors' declaration on climate and environment

⁽¹¹⁶⁾ External survey, page 114 (interviews, thematic workshop)

could better coordinate with the European Commission, including strategic programming and planning joint visits in assisted countries for advocacy or communication purposes.

At operational level, the European Commission actively sought to coordinate its humanitarian aid interventions with Member States present in the field, as part of the overall coordination efforts in a given theatre of operations. For instance, the evaluation of the EU's humanitarian response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh found that the European Commission often took an informal lead coordination role with EU Member States for humanitarian issues ⁽¹¹⁷⁾.

Coherence with other donors

The EU's humanitarian aid interventions were coherent and complementary with those of other donors. DG ECHO's efforts in donor coordination (e.g. joint advocacy efforts; participation in clusters; specific initiatives or forums) were central to such coherence. For example, the European Commission was involved in different working groups and forums, including the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, the International Committee of the Red Cross Donor Support Group, the Stockholm Group ⁽¹¹⁸⁾, and the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG).

Other initiatives and events led or co-led by the European Commission (DG ECHO) included the European Humanitarian Aid Forum, and a number of ad hoc conferences and events bringing together a wide variety of donors, such as the annual Brussels conference on Syria ⁽¹¹⁹⁾. The Commission also engaged bilaterally with like-minded donors (e.g. the US, Canada, Australia) and with emerging donor countries to expand the humanitarian donor base and foster greater coordination and collaboration (e.g. Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates). Engagement and cooperation efforts also targeted non-traditional donors (e.g. private sector, financial institutions).

This resonates with findings of the previous evaluation, which found that the European Commission maintained close relationships with other donors on a bilateral basis and played an active role in coordination mechanisms to promote coherence among humanitarian donors.

The European Commission participated and/or encouraged its partners to participate in existing coordination mechanisms (e.g. clusters, HCTs) to avoid overlaps, duplications of efforts and sharing first-hand information on the needs. These efforts enhanced the coherence of the humanitarian assistance delivered.

For instance, in the Sahel region, the European Commission (DG ECHO) played a leading role in humanitarian coordination and was seen by a great majority of stakeholders interviewed as a key promoter and proponent of a coordinated response ⁽¹²⁰⁾. In the Dominican Republic, DG ECHO and the US Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs (BHA) conducted regular information-sharing activities and co-funded several partners in the field

⁽¹¹⁷⁾ [Evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh, 2017-2019](#)

⁽¹¹⁸⁾ The Stockholm Group includes USA, Germany, the EU, Sweden and the United Kingdom

⁽¹¹⁹⁾ As part of the 2024 European Humanitarian Forum, a high-level panel discussion took place on expanding the resource base, gathering representatives from a variety of donor governments, the UN and private sector actors

⁽¹²⁰⁾ Meta evaluation, evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian interventions in Sahel 2016-2020

of disaster preparedness⁽¹²¹⁾. In the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Region, information-sharing and joint advocacy with other donors (e.g. FCDO⁽¹²²⁾) took place regularly, fostering a more coherent response to regional humanitarian challenges.

Coherence with the EU's external financing instruments

Humanitarian aid addresses immediate needs during crises, while development initiatives contribute to build long-term resilience and infrastructure.

The EU's external financing instruments include the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), the IcSP⁽¹²³⁾, the European Development Fund (EDF), and EU Trust Funds (EUTFs).

By design, these instruments focus on development, peace, resilience, neighbourhood, and enlargement policies and complement, rather than overlap with, EU humanitarian aid funding through the HIPs. In 2021, the NDICI (Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument) entered into force as the main funding instrument for EU external action.

The EU's humanitarian interventions were coherent with other EU external financing instruments, as each instrument pursued different objectives. Where possible, synergies were exploited. For instance, different EU external financing instruments were used in a complementary manner with DG ECHO's humanitarian aid interventions (e.g. IcSP⁽¹²⁴⁾, IPA⁽¹²⁵⁾). Efforts allowed for interservice cooperation in programming, such as the contribution of DG INTPA to the preparation of Humanitarian Implementation Plans, and involvement of DG ECHO in the programming of the NDICI⁽¹²⁶⁾ and the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).

While evidence showed overall coherence between the EU's humanitarian interventions and the different EU external financing instruments, the external evaluation noted that, as for the previous evaluation period, there could be stronger cooperation between DG ECHO and other EU actors responsible or involved in the management of external financing instruments.

Internal factors that contributed to enhanced coherence included DG ECHO's acknowledgement of the importance of humanitarian coordination through existing structures and its efforts to work with other EU services and bodies at headquarters and field level. Regular Strategic dialogues with key partners brought together various EU services together with partners around priority areas, further ensuring this internal coherence. Additionally, the European Commission's joint advocacy efforts with other

⁽¹²¹⁾ Meta evaluation, evaluation of the EU's interventions in disaster preparedness, 2015-2020

⁽¹²²⁾ The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is a Ministerial Department of the government of the United Kingdom

⁽¹²³⁾ Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)

⁽¹²⁴⁾ Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, the main instrument supporting security initiatives and peace-building activities in partner countries

⁽¹²⁵⁾ Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance

⁽¹²⁶⁾ In 2021, the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument entered into force as the main funding instrument for EU external action.

actors also strengthened coherence and enhanced complementarity with other humanitarian interventions.

Sustainability

Compared to the previous evaluation period, sustainability elements were more consistently incorporated in DG ECHO's HIPs and thematic policies, as well as in DG ECHO partners' proposals and throughout the implementation of humanitarian actions.

These included, among others, participatory approaches, an increased focus on disaster preparedness – with the adoption of the disaster preparedness policy in 2021- and other capacity building activities embedded in EU-funded actions.

Throughout the evaluation period, DG ECHO prioritised actions that integrated strategies linking projects to longer-term goals developed with national and local authorities to ensure local ownership and sustainability beyond the humanitarian programme cycle.

The external study indicates a notable increase in EU-funded actions showcasing continuity of results or sustainable effects, rising from 30% in the previous evaluation period to over 58% over the evaluation period (¹²⁷), reflecting the European Commission's efforts to ensure the sustainability of funded actions. To identify actions presenting impact continuity or sustainability measures, the project review considered the following types of sustainable activity: stockpiling of material for future crises, sustainable cash programmes, integration of activities in formal structures (national or local), building of structures (e.g. schools, health services), capacity building of local partners (local humanitarian actors), capacity building of national actors, and actions focusing on empowering the local population and target community.

The analysis of DG ECHO's thematic policies and guidelines shows that sustainability elements were consistently incorporated in policy documents although to different degrees of detail, encouraging DG ECHO partners to enhance sustainability considerations in their proposals and project implementation.

For example, the policy on cash transfers and the guidance note on disaster preparedness emphasise the reduction of environmental impacts, albeit through different methods. The cash transfers policy focuses on leveraging technology, market assessment and other tools to reduce the physical and carbon footprint of aid distribution, while the disaster preparedness guidance note integrates sustainability by embedding environmental considerations into broader community resilience and risk reduction strategies.

Through the resilience marker, DG ECHO assessed the extent to which funded actions integrated resilience considerations. The marker, completed first by partners when submitting proposals, is based on four key criteria, each framed by a question addressing risk and vulnerability analysis, do not harm and conflict sensibility approach, strengthening local preparedness and long-term strategy to reduce humanitarian needs. The final mark is determined by DG ECHO as part of the final report, based on the overall resilience performance of the project (¹²⁸).

(¹²⁷) European Commission (2017) Comprehensive evaluation of the European Union humanitarian aid 2012-2016, Project review (302 actions).

(¹²⁸) [Resilience marker general guidelines \(2022\)](#)

An analysis of the resilience markers suggests that the great majority of funded interventions integrated resilience considerations ⁽¹²⁹⁾

Persistent challenges highlighted by previous evaluations of the period included planning of exit strategies and ensuring sustainability in more complex or less stable contexts.

Stakeholders and documentation highlighted some aspects which DG ECHO could adopt to further enhance sustainability:

- **Durable solutions:** DG ECHO's guidance on the operationalisation of the minimum environmental requirements, published in 2022, provides requirements and recommendations for delivering a more environmentally sustainable emergency response in all funded sectors. Some experts consulted highlighted that focusing on environmental solutions, particularly in the WASH and shelter and settlements sectors, could improve sustainability;
- **Increased multiannual funding:** Some stakeholders indicated that standardising and increasing multi-year actions and pilot PPs funding and continuing disaster preparedness funding could help to enhance sustainability;
- **Wider economic activities:** sharing and circular economies systems have the potential to make the humanitarian sector more efficient and sustainable, especially in logistics, shelter, and transport sectors ⁽¹³⁰⁾;
- **Focus on localisation:** localisation of humanitarian action is a means of increasing sustainability and strengthening resilience ⁽¹³¹⁾. The 2022 consultation with humanitarian actors to inform the localisation guidance indicated that increasing (direct) financial support to local and national actors and supporting their capacity is a key element of project sustainability ⁽¹³²⁾;
- **Focus on the HDP nexus:** closer collaboration with development actors is essential to bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and development and enhance the sustainability of EU-funded actions. This aligns with previous evaluation findings, which emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation between DG ECHO and development partners.

Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus approach

The European Commission took steps to operationalise the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus approach. Efforts to promote dialogue and cooperation between humanitarian, development, and peace actors were evident at both headquarters and field levels, with the establishment of HDP nexus coordination groups and task forces.

This was in line with the 2021 Communication on humanitarian action, advocating for systematic EU joint analysis of risks, needs, vulnerabilities and structural crisis drivers, alongside coordinated programming and planning of EU policies.

⁽¹²⁹⁾ External evaluation, portfolio analysis

⁽¹³⁰⁾ Foresight analysis conducted in the context of the external evaluation

⁽¹³¹⁾ European Commission, DG ECHO (2021). Disaster Preparedness guidance note.

⁽¹³²⁾ Groupe UR (2022). The Promotion of Equal Partnerships between DG ECHO and Local and National responders. Presentation and analysis of the results of the first consultation.

Some stakeholders reported that the HIPs were updated to match evolving needs and priorities, reflecting a flexible approach to integrating HDP nexus principles into humanitarian planning.

The integration of a dedicated chapter in the HIPs was seen as a positive step towards achieving long-term resilience and sustainable development outcomes. The HDP nexus chapter in the HIPs outlines opportunities for partners to engage in HDP nexus processes at respective country level. This may mean a description of ongoing nexus processes at the EU or UN level, as well as identification of specific sectors or population groups for engagement (for example support to self-reliance of refugees in Uganda or joint support to education sector with development actors in Somalia).

DG ECHO's active promotion of the HDP nexus approach through multi-year and quality funding, DP, resilience, and early recovery projects was also positively regarded. In addition, the HDP nexus approach was integrated into EU instruments, such as the NDICI Global Europe programming to support countries most in need and contribute to international commitments such as the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

Despite coordination challenges, there were success stories in the operationalisation of the HDP nexus, demonstrating effective integration of humanitarian, development, and peace activities. Across different regions, DG ECHO and EU services successfully operationalised the HDP nexus approach through coordinated efforts and integration of disaster preparedness and development initiatives. Success stories in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean, Upper Nile Basin, and West and Central Africa regions highlighted the importance of strategic collaboration, innovative funding mechanisms, and alignment with local and international partners to address complex humanitarian and development challenges. Examples included disaster preparedness and social protection initiatives in Chad, Uganda, and Mozambique. These highlighted the importance of collaborative frameworks and partnerships with local and international stakeholders to address complex crises and promote long-term resilience.

The external evaluation highlighted the need for additional efforts to operationalise the HDP nexus: flexibility, coordination, and funding predictability could be further strengthened with a view to facilitating complementarity between humanitarian, peace and development actions and improved clarity on governance structures. Some stakeholders suggested strengthening coordination between DG ECHO and development actors (within and outside the Commission) to address the root causes of crises.

The evaluation noted that effective HDP nexus might be also hindered by external factors, including rapidly evolving situation in some contexts disrupting long-term planning. Additionally, limited engagement by development and political actors, in particular in politically estranged contexts, can further constrain progress. National strategies that would constitute a basis for HDP nexus collaboration might also be lacking in some contexts.

4.2. How did the EU intervention make a difference and to whom? (EU added value)

Consistently with findings from the previous evaluation, the humanitarian aid interventions funded by the EU generated a clear added value compared to what individual Member States could have achieved.

The European Commission's wider global and local presence compared to other donors, including the capacity to draw on a network of EU delegations and DG ECHO field offices

spread in 40 countries, was recognised as unique, as other donors often lack such a global presence. DG ECHO's thematic and technical expertise resulted in a good understanding of needs and contexts in the field, as well as shortened communication lines with implementing partners. Information gathered in the field and analysed by DG ECHO was crucial in enhancing the capacity of DG ECHO partners and other actors to respond to the identified needs in the most appropriate way.

DG ECHO's thematic policies were seen as an important way to contribute to policy mainstreaming and technical capacity building, despite the challenge identified by some partners to implement all policy requirements. DG ECHO's programming was sensitive to filling gaps left by other donors, including the forgotten crises or sectors less covered. DG ECHO identified gaps in humanitarian response through needs assessment, as well as through partner consultations. In response, DG ECHO strategically allocated funding to neglected contexts and less-covered areas such as Education in Emergencies and protection. This targeted approach ensured that ECHO's programming complemented broader humanitarian efforts and addressed critical unmet needs.

Additionally, DG ECHO's global stance as a strongly principled donor, particularly its neutrality and impartiality compared to other donors, was highlighted by the evaluation⁽¹³³⁾. DG ECHO's operational independence from the foreign policy, political, and security agendas of individual governments proved to be a significant asset. This autonomy facilitated access and dialogue with a broad range of actors, including those who might otherwise be inaccessible due to political constraints.

In delivering humanitarian aid, DG ECHO leveraged the resources, expertise and capacities of its wide and extensive partnership network comprising UN agencies, IOs and NGOs. These partnerships approaches were seen as generating added value.

The European Commission's key advocacy role was acknowledged as generating added value, including in promoting IHL, humanitarian principles, humanitarian access, and the need to invest in disaster preparedness and capacity-building of local actors to strengthen local resilience.

As outlined by the evaluation support study⁽¹³⁴⁾, the European Commission (DG ECHO) was valued for its advocacy role in key humanitarian issues, such as its commitment to maintaining specific crises (e.g. the Syrian refugee crisis, Venezuelan crisis) and issues (e.g. the use of cash, localisation efforts, DRR and DP initiatives) on the international humanitarian agenda⁽¹³⁵⁾.

The 2021 Commission Communication "*the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles*" also highlighted the importance of increasing the advocacy for a substantially enhanced humanitarian financing effort and a better sharing of responsibility among donors⁽¹³⁶⁾.

⁽¹³³⁾ External evaluation – interviews, meta evaluation and surveys

⁽¹³⁴⁾ External evaluation, Case study 5, DG ECHO as a global actor

⁽¹³⁵⁾ Case study 5, DG ECHO as a global actor, interviews of DG ECHO partners and other donors

⁽¹³⁶⁾ European Commission (2021) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles. [EUR-Lex - 52021DC0110 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

The EU is a reference donor across the globe and its funding was crucial to achieving sufficient levels of funding. DG ECHO could respond quickly to humanitarian crises, providing flexibility to adapt its support to the specific requirements of each crisis, and facilitating a unified approach by enhancing coordination and coherence of the overall response.

The use of different preparedness and rapid response instruments in response to crises was also seen as generating added value.

Findings from the meta-evaluation

The evaluation of the EU's humanitarian assistance in the **Central Africa region** ⁽¹³⁷⁾ found that EU Member States perceived the European Commission (DG ECHO) added value in strengthening coordination and playing a key role in convening other donors. DG ECHO offered a sustained presence and a strong and principled advocacy within each humanitarian response.

The evaluation of the EU's humanitarian response to the **Rohingya refugee crisis** in Myanmar and Bangladesh ⁽¹³⁸⁾ found that DG ECHO's comparative advantage with respect to individual Member States drew from its technical expertise, in-depth understanding of humanitarian needs and the operating context, and its principled approach.

The evaluation of the EU's humanitarian interventions in **Yemen** ⁽¹³⁹⁾ found that DG ECHO's added value primarily stemmed from its field presence and expertise, the high-level commitment of DG ECHO's team on coordination and advocacy efforts, as well as its principled approach.

The evaluation of the EU's humanitarian interventions in the **Horn of Africa** ⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ also highlighted DG ECHO's field presence technical expertise, sectoral coverage, and extensive partnership network as amongst the main elements showcasing its added value.

DG ECHO's response to the **Venezuelan regional crisis** ⁽¹⁴¹⁾ was perceived as having generated significant added value, both for budgetary reasons (namely the amount, timing, and nature of the funding), and as a result of DG ECHO's comparative advantage vis-à-vis other donors. These mostly related to DG ECHO's field and technical expertise and principled humanitarian approach.

⁽¹³⁷⁾ [Evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian assistance in the Central Africa Region, including humanitarian coordination, 2014-2018](#)

⁽¹³⁸⁾ [Evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh, 2017-2019](#)

⁽¹³⁹⁾ [Evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian interventions in Yemen, 2015-2020](#)

⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ [Evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian interventions in the Horn of Africa 2016-2020 and DG ECHO's partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross](#)

⁽¹⁴¹⁾ [Evaluation of DG ECHO's response to the Venezuelan regional crisis and of DG ECHO partnership with UNHCR \(2017-2021\)](#)

Interrupting EU humanitarian aid interventions and funding would have severe negative consequences. This would create a substantial financial gap of about EUR 2,181 million per year, corresponding to 6.5% of all global funding in humanitarian aid ⁽¹⁴²⁾. In addition to the significant impact on beneficiaries, other effects would include reduced coordination, increased fragmentation, reduced adherence to humanitarian aid principles, decreased compliance to International Humanitarian Law (and the corresponding increase of humanitarian needs). In many contexts (e.g. Yemen, Syria, Myanmar), DG ECHO was one of the main EU actors providing support and ensuring a presence on the ground giving a high visibility to the EU, even in contexts where the EU could not engage at a political level.

Actions with the potential to maximise EU added value include: enhancing the European Commission (DG ECHO)'s role in coordination; strengthening advocacy activities; continuing efforts towards localisation and capacity-building of local actors; supporting and strengthening the field network; facilitating the implementation of thematic policies through capacity building and engagement including within DG ECHO; enhancing sustainability and HDP nexus considerations; and simplifying administrative procedures and enhancing multi-year funding.

DG ECHO's role in shaping the humanitarian agenda and ensuring visibility of certain crises ⁽¹⁴³⁾

DG ECHO played a substantive role in shaping the humanitarian agenda by raising the visibility of certain crises. In the MENA region, DG ECHO was instrumental in raising and maintaining awareness of the needs related to the Syria crisis, such as Syrian refugees' needs in different countries of the region (e.g. the Brussels Conferences on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region gathered a number of donors). Stakeholders consulted referred to DG ECHO's positive impact and donors' mobilisation role for the Yemen crisis.

In the LAC region, DG ECHO was among the first donors to fund interventions in Venezuela and to be vocal about the growing humanitarian needs resulting from the crisis. Its advocacy efforts helped to raise the profile of other less visible areas or populations in need in the region, notably Ecuador and indigenous populations.

In both the MENA and LAC regions, DG ECHO was not the largest donor but was among the main donors for size and number of funded interventions, adopting a strategic approach focused on complementing other donors' efforts.

4.3. Is the intervention still relevant?

The EU's overarching humanitarian aid objectives enshrined in the Humanitarian Aid Regulation (HAR) remained relevant in the face of a rapidly changing humanitarian landscape, increasing humanitarian needs and shrinking resources.

⁽¹⁴²⁾ Estimated as the average of annual figures over the evaluation period. This percentage does not consider the recent budget cuts from major donors such as the US which in comparison positions the EU as a much bigger and reliable donor

⁽¹⁴³⁾ External study - Case study 5 on DG ECHO as a global actor.

The most relevant objective focused on saving and preserving life, alleviating human suffering, and maintaining human dignity.

Climate change emerged as a more significant driver of humanitarian needs compared to the previous evaluation period, leading to an increased focus on disaster preparedness. Throughout the evaluation period, DG ECHO consistently met or exceeded targets for its result indicator on humanitarian aid operations that incorporated disaster preparedness. For example, some stakeholders noted a shift towards disaster preparedness in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region due to the increasing frequency and severity of disasters, making disaster preparedness a key pillar in the region's HIPs ⁽¹⁴⁴⁾.

In line with the findings from the previous evaluation, the EU's commitments towards forgotten crises (devote 15% of its initial humanitarian budget to forgotten crises) and Education in Emergencies – (commitment to aim to dedicate 10% of the humanitarian assistance as of 2019) - were relevant to addressing significant underfunding and increasing needs, advance humanitarian policy discussions and highlight issues otherwise overlooked in the humanitarian system. The majority of stakeholders emphasised that these commitments are especially relevant as advocacy tools, highlighting critical humanitarian challenges and ensuring that Member States and other donors continue to fund forgotten crises and Education in Emergencies.

DG ECHO's overall strategy was relevant for maximising efforts in line with Grand Bargain commitments. The European Commission made significant progress compared to the previous evaluation period in aligning its approach with and implementing several Grand Bargain commitments, including quality funding, cash programming, and localisation. For example, notable developments during the evaluation period included the European Commission (DG ECHO)'s doubling of its contributions to country-based pooled funds in 2022, from EUR 4 million to EUR 8 million across South Sudan, Ukraine, Venezuela and Afghanistan, providing EU humanitarian funding to local and national partners ⁽¹⁴⁵⁾, bringing the share of funding to local organisations above the 25% target. Some stakeholders emphasised the importance for DG ECHO to continue exploring ways to increase opportunities for multi-year and more flexible financing to better support partners on the ground.

DG ECHO's strategies, as outlined in the Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs), were well aligned with the EU's overarching objectives, policies and commitments. DG ECHO employed analytical tools to align its funding allocations with EU objectives and commitments. These tools included FIT ⁽¹⁴⁶⁾, INFORM (e.g. INFORM risk and INFORM severity index), and to a lesser extent the Global Humanitarian Overview.

HIPs served as relevant reference points and their preparation was informed by thorough needs assessments. DG ECHO continuously updated its methodology to enhance HIPs relevance, by combining quantitative information from global and qualitative information from field staff and experts.

⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ External study – Geographical workshops (Southern Africa and Indian Ocean)

⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ In 2023, DG ECHO expanded its contributions to CBPFs, making its highest support per year so far (EUR 10 million in total). DG ECHO. [Grand Bargain Self Reporting 2024](#).

⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ The Funding Information Tool

HIPs were effectively tailored to specific contexts and on-the-ground needs, largely striking an appropriate balance between tailored regional and country-specific approaches. Some regional evaluations highlighted that adopting a regional approach effectively identified priority needs while customising responses to specific in-country circumstances. Consultations with key stakeholders confirmed these findings, with stakeholders considering DG ECHO to have effectively tailored HIPs to particular contexts and vulnerable target populations⁽¹⁴⁷⁾. Illustrative examples from the meta-evaluation are provided in the box below:

Findings from the meta-evaluation

The evaluation of the EU's humanitarian interventions in **Sahel**⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ found that, from 2017 onwards, DG ECHO adopted a more country-focused strategy in the Sahel, while considering regional commonalities, such as identifying three common response pillars, funding multi-country projects, and initiatives like the nutrition transition strategy and the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR).

The evaluation of DG ECHO's response to the **Venezuelan regional crisis**⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ found that DG ECHO's strategy demonstrated a degree of flexibility in adapting to the evolving situation and changing needs.

The evaluation of the EU's humanitarian assistance in the **Central Africa region**⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ found that DG ECHO's strategies were developed through iterative processes at the country level, involving DG ECHO experts and partners and allowing flexibility to tailor strategies to needs. Simultaneously, HIPs were tailored to the specific situations of each country.

The consultation mechanisms underpinning the needs assessments of DG ECHO's HIPs were crucial to ensuring their relevance to the humanitarian context, although the consultations varied by country and context. While HIPs were comprehensive, challenges identified by some stakeholders included ensuring an adequate and proportionate level of detail for both new and ongoing crises and achieving an appropriate level of detail for the HIPS and respective annexes.

Most HIPs demonstrated the flexibility needed to adapt to changing conditions. HIPs were regularly reviewed and adapted in line with the evolution of the situation on the ground and to provide additional funding to DG ECHO partners where needed. For example, DG ECHO adapted its strategy in Afghanistan twice due to the escalating conflict in 2021. The introduction of specific measures, such as Emergency Response Mechanisms and crisis modifiers, enhanced the flexibility of DG ECHO's approach compared to the previous evaluation period, making it more adaptable to an increasingly dynamic and evolving humanitarian context.

⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ External evaluation, geographical workshops (Southern Africa and Indian Ocean workshops, Upper Nile Basin workshop)

⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ Evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian interventions in Sahel, 2016-2020

⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ DG ECHO response to the Venezuelan crisis 2017-2021

⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ Evaluation of the European Union's assistance in the Central Africa Region 2014-2018

However, a limited number of stakeholders emphasised that the extended HIP process, while essential for consultations, meant that in some cases HIPs did not fully reflect the rapidly changing needs on the ground. They considered that the lengthy process of gathering information for HIPs, which involves anticipation and forecasting, often leads to misalignment with the evolving context, as significant changes can occur between their ratification in Brussels and the actual implementation of funding.

However, the HIP is sufficiently general to cater for possible changing needs which could intervene between the publication of the HIP and the deadline for submission of the proposals. What is more, the HIP is updated whenever relevant and in particular when additional funding is made available. There is therefore little risk of misalignment.

Relevance of DG ECHO thematic policies

DG ECHO's thematic policies provided essential frameworks for guiding and prioritising funded actions.

For example, evaluations of DG ECHO humanitarian interventions highlighted positive examples of the usefulness of its policies in Afghanistan and Iraq (incorporation of protection risk analyses and targeted approaches), as well as in the context of the Rohingya crisis (provided a framework for operational implementation and coordination).

The external evaluation concluded that the content of individual thematic policies remained relevant overall. Thematic policies were valuable tools for highlighting emerging issues and served as reference points for various organisations and Member States. For example, the policy on disability inclusion not only inspired the IASC (Inter Agency Standing Committee)⁽¹⁵¹⁾ guidelines that were being developed, but one local implementing partner also used it to develop their own guidelines. Alignment of projects proposals to DG ECHO thematic policies was one of the selection criteria applied by DG ECHO when assessing the projects, which facilitated a strong uptake of policies.

Thematic policies were generally comprehensive and up-to-date, although this varied by policy. For example, the protection thematic policy was widely used as a framework to guide and prioritise actions. Although no thematic policy was deemed outdated by a majority of stakeholders, a minority of stakeholders suggested that the gender, food assistance and livelihood, WASH and nutrition thematic policies could be updated, in particular to continuously align them with the most recent international standards. DG ECHO updated its food assistance and livelihood and health policy guidelines in 2025; DG ECHO is also currently working on the revision of the WASH policy guidelines. Consultation with relevant stakeholders were key to shaping and adequately informing the preparation, update and review of thematic policies.

The use of cash-based modalities increased throughout the evaluation period, influenced by DG ECHO's advocacy. Cash-based assistance has become the preferred modality in humanitarian aid due to its effectiveness, efficiency and flexibility, empowering assisted population with the freedom to purchase what they need most. DG ECHO and its partners conducted thorough assessments to determine the most appropriate delivery modality. Where cash-based modalities were not chosen, reasons typically

⁽¹⁵¹⁾ The IASC is a humanitarian coordination forum established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1991. It brings together the executive heads of 19 organizations to formulate policy, set strategic priorities, and mobilize resources in response to humanitarian crises.

included lack of relevance to the action, logistical challenges, and national government restrictions.

For example, in Ukraine, where many beneficiaries are proficient in using information and communications technologies (ICT), the use of cash transfer modalities and digitalised beneficiary registration processes allowed for faster aid delivery in territories of Ukraine (temporarily) occupied by Russia with restricted humanitarian access ⁽¹⁵²⁾.

Partnerships

Data collected in the context of the external evaluation confirmed the feedback provided by DG ECHO partners after the implementation of the pilot programmatic partnerships. There was general satisfaction with DG ECHO's partnership approaches, particularly because of the enhanced funding flexibility and predictability of multiannual strategies. The range of partnership approaches adopted by DG ECHO, including the Humanitarian Partnership 2021-2027, enabled appropriate responses to various crises. DG ECHO's flexibility and smooth operational processes were highlighted as strengths by some stakeholders. Continuous dialogue with partners facilitated successful projects implementation. This was in line with the results from the previous evaluation, which noted that DG ECHO selected appropriate partners to work with.

Despite engaging with Member States Specialised Agencies (MSSAs), only a small part of the overall budget was allocated to these partners ⁽¹⁵³⁾. There is potential to further explore these partnerships, particularly in protracted crises, to develop the HDP nexus and exit strategies.

Strategic dialogue meetings with partners enabled strategic discussions and leveraging partners' capabilities. These sessions offered a platform to discuss shared interests and concerns, exchange perspectives on strategic priorities, evaluate challenges and opportunities, and explore methods to strengthen collaboration. For example, strategic dialogue meetings were conducted with UN partner organisations (e.g. UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF), IOs (e.g. ICRC), and Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE) ⁽¹⁵⁴⁾. During the evaluation period, high-level dialogues were also held with the WHO and IOM.

Stakeholders valued innovative and long-term strategies such as **Programmatic Partnerships and multi-year funding**, which were seen as beneficial for effective humanitarian responses and better aligned with Grand Bargain commitments. DG ECHO's partnership modalities were praised for their relevance and responsiveness to on-the-ground needs, allowing flexibility and adaptability in dynamic humanitarian situations and enabling timely and efficient crisis responses.

This facilitated better programming, procurement, and quick responses to emerging crises. Pilot PPs provided increased funding predictability, enabling partners to adopt a more strategic perspective, with pre-committed funding for three years.

⁽¹⁵²⁾ External evaluation study, case study 1 on humanitarian access

⁽¹⁵³⁾ Partnerships with MSSAs were not covered under previous evaluations, preventing any comparison over time

⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ European Commission, DG ECHO (n.d.). Strategic dialogues with partners, available at https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/partnerships/relations/strategic-dialogues_en

The piloting of a new modality may have contributed at times to an increased workload for selected organisations and for DG ECHO, especially at the inception of these ambitious projects. Indeed, setting up these new multi-annual and multi-country programmes requested a period of intensive exchanges and finetuning inherent to a pilot phase.

Despite demanding preparations to launch the pilot PP, the administrative workload is expected to be nonetheless overall reduced. Indeed, the multi-annual and multi-country nature of the grants provided many advantages to the partners: predictability which allowed economies of scale and staff retention; no need to put forward new proposals each year for the countries covered by pilots, and less reporting. Should these projects have been funded through yearly grant, the administrative burden would have been much higher, as individual yearly country proposals would have had to be assessed. For example, for OCHA and IFRC, this would have represented each year around 25 proposals. This would have also implied an equal number of final reports and hence a heavier burden on partners and more resources mobilized on ECHO's end.

In addition, the enhanced dialogue helped to discuss further how to further exploit the potential of the programmes to reach better outcomes. Lessons learned and feedback from partners showed that this was a valued feature of the funding modality.

5. WHAT ARE THE CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED?

5.1. Conclusions

The evaluation sought to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance, added value, and sustainability of the Commission's humanitarian aid actions.

The EU's overarching humanitarian aid objectives enshrined in the Humanitarian Aid Regulation (HAR) remained relevant in the face of a rapidly changing humanitarian landscape and increasing humanitarian needs.

The evaluation underlined the **key features of the European Commission in delivering principled humanitarian aid and disaster relief** including:

- a strong emergency response capacity built on several humanitarian aid tools, complementary to support provided under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and the Emergency Support Instrument.
- its flexibility to adapt humanitarian funding and actions in light of changing contexts,
- a wide range of partners, allowing to cover a variety of needs in different parts of the world,
- its humanitarian thematic policies and policy expertise, contributing to enhance the quality of humanitarian response,
- the power of presence in the field (thanks to 50 humanitarian field offices in 40 non-EU countries) which gives granularity to the context analysis, supports and co-shapes the humanitarian response, even in politically complex contexts,
- its advocacy role, including the ability to speak and negotiate in different United Nations (UN) fora,

- its leadership on humanitarian policy framed by a well-established support to humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law

The performance of the EU humanitarian assistance is linked to its dedicated flexible instrument. It guarantees a life-saving needs-based response and the respect of the humanitarian principles, which all partners must adhere to in order to receive funding for humanitarian aid actions.

EU's humanitarian interventions were effective overall and addressed the most pressing needs, although effectiveness varied across countries, regions and sectors. EU humanitarian aid funding is considered essential by its partners across different regions, including more geographically remote ones where its presence is more limited.

Over the period covered by this evaluation, the European Commission continued its efforts to improve the assessment of cost-effectiveness (and efficiency) of the humanitarian aid interventions. The evaluation underlined the importance of further promoting efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action in all sectors, including by strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, promoting quality funding, locally led responses, and cash assistance where relevant and possible.

5.2. Lessons learnt

The EU cannot afford to **leave the challenge of chronic humanitarian underfunding unaddressed**, as this would lead to severe consequences, impacting particularly the most vulnerable groups in need. The EU supports humanitarian action in more than 110 countries, most of them on the upper end of the OECD fragility index, and with very limited coping capacities. Non-action would literally mean loss of human life and increased human suffering: as demonstrated by the evaluation, even small amounts of aid can make a significant difference in saving lives and alleviating suffering in remote areas.

Humanitarian assistance is a vital public good in the rules-based international system and is an investment in community resilience. A qualitative, accountable, principled humanitarian action by the EU is a strong confirmation of the EU's commitment to global solidarity and human rights, enhancing its reputation and influence on the world stage. Investment in humanitarian assistance contributes also to global stability, preventing crises from spiralling into security threats, economic downturns and the prospect of failed states.

The European Commission is confirmed as a key humanitarian player and should continue strengthening its engagement and leadership in global humanitarian affairs.

The Commission's global stance and focus on forgotten crises, and its needs-based approach were highly relevant. The Commission's efforts to promote compliance with IHL and principled humanitarian action, and to shape the humanitarian agenda through strategic influence and efforts to mobilise like-minded and emerging donors were widely recognised.

At strategic level, the Commission increased its advocacy and outreach with EU Member States and other donors to align priorities and amplify collective influence on global humanitarian issues such as outreach for a substantially enhanced humanitarian financing effort. However, evidence indicates that more could be done to better leverage European Commission and Member States' humanitarian coordination, particularly at strategic and programming levels, beyond information sharing, for example to establish joint responses towards specific crises.

The importance of thematic policies is confirmed and efforts should be maintained to foster their visibility and uptake.

- The Commission is ensuring that its thematic policies are fit for purpose and has updated or developed new policies, when and where needed, in order to address the main challenges in humanitarian assistance. For example, in 2022, DG ECHO adopted minimum environmental requirements for humanitarian aid, which became mandatory in 2023. An evaluation on the WASH sector was started in view of assessing the necessity for an update of the policy. The Commission will continue to invest in capacity-building to foster socialisation and uptake of thematic policies among DG ECHO and partners' staff.
- The Commission is a strong supporter of IHL, as demonstrated by its firm positions on the international scene and the adoption of guidelines on promoting compliance with IHL.

In a global context where the humanitarian system is underfunded and the overall gap between available resources and humanitarian needs is expected to grow, the need to further enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of EU humanitarian aid interventions is also confirmed.

In that respect and since 2022, the Commission made important further progress, piloting nexus programmes, promoting quality funding and multipurpose cash transfers where feasible, publishing guidelines on localisation and initiating a reflection on strategic supply chain. It also includes requirements on partners to ensure compliance with DG ECHO policies to strengthen quality of EU humanitarian operations and efforts to track humanitarian policy implementation. These efforts were undertaken following constant assessment and evaluation of past programmes.

In addition, more predictable funding (through multi-year funding), the systematic provision of crisis modifiers, flexibilities embedded in regional programmes, softly earmarked support to main partners programmes addressing main EU priorities have the potential to generate economies of scale, reduce the administrative burden identified by some stakeholders and bring more efficiency gains allowing partners to reach out to more beneficiaries

- The European Commission has made consistent outreach to like-minded and emerging donors in order to address the funding gap, including through the organisation of pledging conferences and high-level events, in particular the European Humanitarian Forum.

- In 2023, DG ECHO rolled out the Programmatic Partnership model supporting longer-term projects focusing on shared strategic priorities. 12 new Programmatic Partnerships were launched that year. This model notably brought more predictability to partners through multi-annual grants. At the same time, the evaluation recognised that there were margins to reduce the administrative burden lined to the implementation and monitoring of programmatic partnerships. In line with the Grand Bargain’s commitment to quality funding, The European Commission also promoted more flexible funding and when feasible multi-year funding, applied more specifically to projects on disaster preparedness, and education in emergencies.
- Since 2019, the European Commission has been contributing to Country Based Pooled Funds along with other funding instruments that provided flexible funding, including to local partners.
- In 2023, the European Commission (DG ECHO) published its guidance “promoting equitable partnerships with local responders in humanitarian settings” and has actively rolled it out, making significant progress towards reaching the expected target 25% of funding channelled to local actors as directly as possible.
- The European Commission is continuing to strengthen the operationalisation of the HDP nexus, in collaboration with relevant development and peace actors, filling gaps identified at operational level. The European Commission is developing, in collaboration with other services, an integrated approach to fragility, ensuring that humanitarian, development, peace and other policies work together to better link urgent relief and longer-term solutions in a Team Europe approach.
- The Commission continues to uphold its advocacy to improve the delivery of assistance, though enhanced partnerships and dialogues with donors and aid organisations.
- Considering that supply chain is a crucial element of the humanitarian aid response, the Commission plans to promote joint approaches in logistics by pooling resources, encouraging humanitarian partners to organise and self-manage common logistics and supply chain services in areas such a transport, warehousing, fleet sharing. This has the potential to generate important cost savings.
- The Commission is steadily increasing the disaster preparedness budget line and the mainstreaming of preparedness within humanitarian projects. In 2023, the Commission approved a roadmap to progressively scale up anticipatory action.

The European Commission’s humanitarian aid unique features (field network, network of partners, internal tools and instruments) have proven to add value to the humanitarian system. The Commission is adapting them to respond timely to evolving needs.

- The European Commission has developed tool and operational modalities allowing to respond quickly to new and unforeseen events: crisis modifier, rapid response mechanisms, emergency toolbox, and European Humanitarian Response Capacity.

- The European Commission (DG ECHO) is strengthening the expertise of its field network, playing a crucial role in needs assessment, response coordination, monitoring of funded action, and coordination with stakeholders
- The European Commission is using regular strategic dialogues with its main partners to enhance strategic and operational coordination and advance its policy priorities.

DG ECHO is adapting its evaluation and monitoring systems to make them more suitable to analysing the effectiveness and efficiency of its actions.

- To address the gaps on the availability of quantitative data in certain instances, as well as difficulties in aggregating and comparing data (e.g., across sectors or regions of interventions), DG ECHO is continuously updating its monitoring and reporting frameworks, taking also into account the Grand Bargain commitments. This endeavour goes beyond DG ECHO and should be addressed jointly with other stakeholders, considering the general challenges of the collection of data and measurement of impact in the humanitarian system.
- DG ECHO is continuing to streamline the indicators used for humanitarian aid projects and improving the analysis and use of data. For example, DG ECHO is currently working to improve and harmonise the use of standard (non-custom) Key Result Indicators with a view to improve data collection monitoring and coherence. For the sake of simplification, the development and use of common standard indicators for the whole humanitarian system should be encouraged.
- DG ECHO is enhancing the assessment of transparency and cost efficiency/effectiveness elements of the proposals it receives, both at selection stage (of EU funded actions) and at contracting stage (after negotiation with the pre-selected partner). These changes will apply to any new contract or modification funded on 2025 HIPs.

ANNEX I. PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

A. Lead DG: European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

B. Reference in Decide: PLAN/2022/1683

C. Organisation and timing:

- The external support study was supervised by an Inter-service Steering Group (ISG), composed of representatives of the EEAS and the following European Commission (EC) DGs: CLIMA, ECHO, ENV, FPI, HERA, INTPA, JRC, NEAR, SANTE and SG.
- The first ISG meeting was held on 5 December 2022 and discussed the Call for Evidence and the Terms of Reference of the evaluation.
- The European Commission contracted an external company to carry out a supporting study. The contract for the external support study was signed on 30 June 2023 for 16 months initially, from July 2023 to October 2024 and was extended until 14 February 2025.
- Four meetings with the evaluation team (external company) and the ISG were held:
 - 10 July 2023: Kick off meeting
 - 19 October 2023: Inception report meeting
 - 15 January 2024: Desk report meeting
 - 9 September 2024: Field report and Draft final report meeting
- The last meeting with the ISG was held on 5 March 2025 and discussed the Commission's Staff Working Document

D. Consultation of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board: 30 April 2025.

The Regulatory Scrutiny Board provided a negative opinion. The shortcomings have been addressed in the Staff Working Document. The main points addressed are the following:

- (1) **The report is not clear about the evidence, data sources and methods of its collection and analysis.** The report should be explicit about the type of data that is available on humanitarian aid interventions, what is being monitored, collected and how the available data are used in the evaluation. There should be systematic references throughout the report to the sources of evidence to support statements and findings, indicating and taking into account their limitations. The points of comparison based on the findings of the previous evaluation should be formulated in a way that allows the reader to understand developments over time and whether there has been any progress on the identified shortcomings.

Addressed by: The report describes in more detail the existing data used to assess humanitarian aid actions - including the requirements to assess the proposals

submitted by partners as well as the monitoring system in place. References have been added on the sources of evidence. The points of comparison based on the findings of the previous evaluation have been added under each evaluation criteria.

- (2) **The report does not adequately analyse the implementation modalities and tools and how they ensure an effective and efficient implementation of the humanitarian aid provided.** The report should substantiate its findings on effectiveness, efficiency and relevance, following the standard analytical tools provided in the BR toolbox. It should explain how funding is allocated, provide analysis of key implementation modalities and tools such as the Humanitarian Implementation Plans, certification of partners, cash transfers, localisation of aid, thematic policies, harmonised reporting, including analysis of all related costs. The report should better distinguish various types of situations (e.g. emergencies vs. protracted crises). It should analyse how the needs assessment is carried out and evaluate whether and to what extent funding goes where it is most needed and how potential overlaps are prevented.

Addressed by: Several clarifications have been included in the report on the key implementation modalities and their lessons learnt – with the report describing in more detail how the funding is allocated (e.g. Humanitarian Implementation Plans, certification of partners, reporting). The report is analysing in more detail how the needs assessment is carried out.

- (3) **The efficiency, costs and benefits are neither sufficiently identified nor assessed.** The report should identify and describe the costs and benefits. It should better analyse the efficiency of interventions taking into account all costs to stakeholders and difficulties in measuring and attributing the benefits. The report should provide analysis on the issues flagged by stakeholders regarding administrative burden and the room for simplification

Addressed by: The section on efficiency in the report has been revised. The methodology used by the external evaluator, including the challenge of measuring the impact of humanitarian aid is presented more prominently. The report provides more analysis on certain issues flagged by stakeholders (e.g. administrative burden).

- (4) **The report's conclusions regarding the positive assessment of effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance are not underpinned by the available evidence.** The evaluation conclusions should be aligned with the available evidence and analysis better explaining the varied results across sectors and different situations. Identified shortcomings should be clearly spelled out. The lessons learned from the assessment need to be better highlighted to understand what works and what does not, and what are the reasons and consequences. Operational conclusions and lessons should be drawn regarding the evidence gaps (both in terms of data and methods) and potential for monitoring and reporting simplification

Addressed by: The points of comparison based on the findings of the previous evaluation have been added under each evaluation criteria to allow the reader to

understand developments over time and whether there has been any progress on the identified shortcomings. Conclusions are better aligned with the evidence and analysis of the document. The sections clarifying how DG ECHO is adapting its evaluation and monitoring systems to make them more suitable to analysing the effectiveness and efficiency of its actions are further developed in the report.

- E. Evidence: Several information sources were used to reach triangulated conclusions, i.e. document review; portfolio analysis of the EC's projects database ('HOPE'); in-depth review of a sample of more than 100 projects; 90 key informant interviews; three online surveys (to DG ECHO; DG ECHO partners; and local implementing partners); an Open Public Consultation; thirteen workshops; and five case studies.
- F. External expertise: The evaluation support study was carried out by ICF SA, who were selected through a reopening under DG ECHO's framework contract. The current Staff Working Document aims at fully reflecting the results of the external exercise.

ANNEX II. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL MODELS USED

DG ECHO commissioned an external support study to inform the Evaluation by the conduction of quantitative and qualitative data analysis from relevant sources and to help mitigate, to the extent possible, the impact of data limitations on the results of the evaluation.

The evaluation began in July 2023 and comprised of five phases: inception; desk research; consultation; analysis and synthesis; dissemination and learning.

The previous comprehensive evaluation of the EU's humanitarian aid (2012-2016) served as a baseline for this evaluation.

As a meta-evaluation, this evaluation builds upon the findings and the conclusions drawn in the 33 specific evaluations carried out during the evaluation period 2017-2022, including evaluations of the Commission's responses to geographical humanitarian crises, of humanitarian thematic policies and of DG ECHO's partnerships.

In addition, to inform the evaluation questions, the evaluation team carried out the following data collection activities:

- A review of documentation, based on the mapping and rapid review of 238 sources and documents, followed by an in-depth desk review of qualitative and quantitative data. The desk research included an analysis of the whole portfolio of EU-funded actions (3386 actions) during the evaluation period, and an in-depth review of a sample of 300 projects funded by DG ECHO and implemented by its partners; For this sample of projects, the evaluation team analysed the SingleForms (standardised document used by partners of DG ECHO to submit action proposals for EU funding) and FichOps (documents reviewing the details of humanitarian projects funded by DG ECHO) to extract key information (quantitative and qualitative) relevant to each evaluation question. The sample of 300 projects has been selected to be representative of DG ECHO portfolio, to the extent possible, while also covering the specific focus and thematic areas selected for case studies. 75% of projects were randomly selected. The remaining 25% of projects were selected on the basis of the focus and thematic areas chosen for the case studies and gaps identified.
- A social media analysis;
- 2 inception workshops (on the theory of change and the meta-evaluation), 10 geographic and thematic workshops with DG ECHO staff (from headquarters and field offices) and partners, and one foresight workshop (with humanitarian experts, networks, academia, etc.);
- 14 scoping interviews and 86 key informant interviews
- An Open Public Consultation;
- 3 online surveys, targeting DG ECHO staff, DG ECHO certified partners, and local implementing partners. In addition, a Delphi survey enabled to collect qualitative and quantitative insights about the key challenges and opportunities in the foreseeable future.
- 5 case studies, including 4 in-country (DRC, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Ukraine) and 2 remote field missions (in the MENA and LAC regions). In addition to the project site visits, the case studies comprised a tailored review of relevant documentation, in-depth review of projects, additional interviews with key stakeholders (including

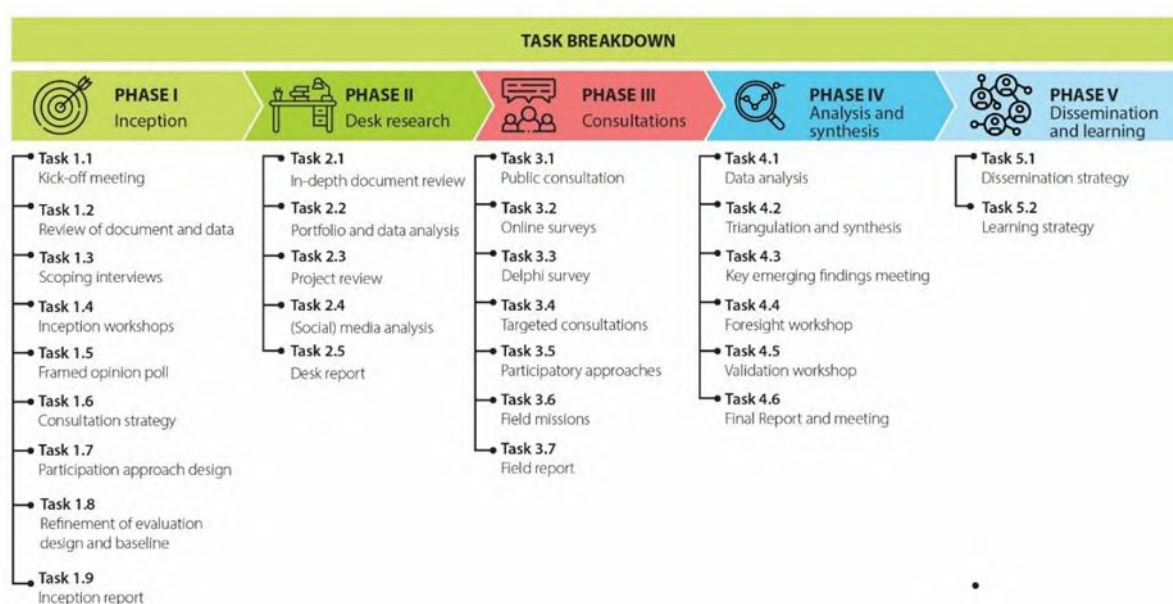
from local authorities, civil society organisations, local implementers of projects etc.), as well as focus groups with, inter alia, assisted population.

- A children drawing projects which aimed to gather feedback from 227 children targeted by the EU’s humanitarian interventions.

The consultation activities gathered stakeholders’ perspectives on the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, EU added value and sustainability of the EU’s humanitarian action, provided significant findings about the main achievements and the gaps and limitations across the evaluation period, and allowed to draw some lessons learnt, and to put forward some ideas for potential improvements going forward. This evaluation also includes a foresight component, including a presentation of the drivers of humanitarian crises and their possible impact on the evolution of the humanitarian landscape in the short to medium-run and an analysis of DG ECHO’s analysis to adapt its response.

The external study therefore combined quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect data from relevant sources and mitigate the impact of data limitations to the extent possible. In line with the Better Regulation Guidelines, the external support study provided a triangulation and verification of data collected from different sources to answer the evaluation questions, draw conclusions, highlight lessons learnt and produce recommendations.

The figure below gives an overview of the different phases of the external support study.



During the conduction of the external support study as well as in the overall preparation of this Evaluation, several limitations and impediments were encountered and, where possible, mitigated.

First, due to the nature of the work of DG ECHO, and the very rapidly changing political and security environment in the geographical areas of humanitarian interventions -in the scope of this evaluation, the organisation and conduct of the field missions for the case studies happened to be challenging and some of the activities were interrupted or had to be re-scheduled or carried out remotely which resulted in the expansion of the field phase (over the planned schedule) and delayed the evaluation process.

In relation to the above, it proved challenging to conduct some site visits and to engage directly with assisted population in some instances. Some tasks of the envisioned participatory approach (e.g. mobile surveys) could not be implemented. The depth and quality of the data collected through the “children’s drawing projects” was limited. This was partially compensated by additional consultations and interviews (e.g. with local community representatives, focus groups).

Second, the stakeholder consultation activities (e.g. surveys, targeted interviews, workshops, field visits etc.) occurred in a period marked by multiple (including sudden onset) crises and need for urgent humanitarian and emergency responses, which hampered the availability of some stakeholders. Furthermore, the high turnover among field staff of stakeholder organisations made it difficult to get information and insights from the first years of the evaluation in some contexts. It was mitigated by the extension of the consultation phase and broadening of the scope of the interviewees.

Third, the low response rate to the Open Public Consultation (despite wide-ranging communication and promotion on the website, through social media etc.) can be explained by the launch in parallel of targeted surveys to specific audiences, including key stakeholders, which provided satisfactory response rates.

Fourth, despite the improvements in the data collection and monitoring system since the previous evaluation, some gaps were observed, as well as the difficulty to aggregate and compare data (e.g. across sectors of interventions). For instance, the analysis based on the Key Results Indicators (KRIs) and Key Outcome Indicators (KOIs) data should be considered with caution. Standard KRIs are not consistently used nor systematically reported by all partners across sectors. Although the results based on these indicators should be considered in light of these inherent data limitations, the external study considered these indicators provided a helpful quantitative indication and assessment of the overall effectiveness of DG ECHO’s intervention across sectors and areas of intervention. DG ECHO is currently working to improve the use of standard KRIs (besides custom KRIs) and make it compulsory, with the aim of harmonising their use and thus improving quantitative monitoring of its actions.

In addition, this evaluation shed light on the challenge to accurately measure the number of beneficiaries and the broader impact of EU humanitarian actions (because of the risk of double counting -same people get support through different actions/ sectors (e.g. food, health etc.) and from different organisations). As of 2021, DG ECHO developed a methodology for estimating the number of persons reached through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis. However, as such data was not available for the whole evaluation period, it could not be used.

In this evaluation process, the limitations quoted above were mitigated by the ample consultation activities carried out and the wealth of the qualitative data collected (including about EU humanitarian projects monitoring etc.).

Despite these limitations, and in light of mitigation approaches adopted to address them, the evidence base was sufficient to draw solid evaluation findings. The conclusions of the external support study are considered reliable enough and provide a comprehensive understanding of the results.

Assessment of the contractor:

Overall, DG ECHO agrees with the assessment and evaluation process executed by the external contractor. The number and wide range of activities undertaken underscores the detailed analysis. Furthermore, the external contractor proactively provided suggestions to mitigate the existing limitations and showed flexibility to adjust the tasks and activities, e.g. re-planning some field missions, broadening the scope and increasing the number of interviews, etc.

Needs assessment methodology - INFORM RISK and INFORM SEVERITY indexes

INFORM is a partnership that started a decade ago as a collaboration of UN agencies, the European Commission, donors, and experts. Its purpose is to address the emerging needs for common evidence-based coordinated allocation of humanitarian aid and to meet the requirement of EU and global humanitarian systems. INFORM has become a suite of shared quantitative, analytical products to support decision-making at different phases of the crisis management cycle. The Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission is the scientific and technical lead for all INFORM products. Among the INFORM products, the INFORM Risk Index and INFORM Severity Index are integrated into DG ECHO's Humanitarian funding allocation tool to support the needs assessment process.

INFORM Risk

The INFORM Risk index ⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ identifies countries at risk from humanitarian crises and disasters that could overwhelm national response capacity.

INFORM Risk ⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ has three dimensions. Each dimension encompasses different categories, which are user-driven concepts related to the needs of humanitarian and resilience actors.

1. The hazard and exposure dimension reflects the probability of physical exposure associated with specific hazards.
2. The vulnerability dimension represents economic, political and social characteristics of the community that can be destabilised in case of a hazard event.
3. The lack of coping capacity dimension considers factors that measure the ability of a country to cope with disasters in terms of formal, organized activities and the effort of the country's government as well as the existing infrastructure which contribute to the reduction of disaster risk.

⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ Marin Ferrer M, Vernaccini L and Poljansek K. INFORM Index for Risk Management: Concept and Methodology, Version 2017, EUR 28655 EN. Luxembourg (Luxembourg): Publications Office of the European Union; 2017. JRC106949

⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ The JRC is responsible for the methodology and data collection for [INFORM Risk Index](#).

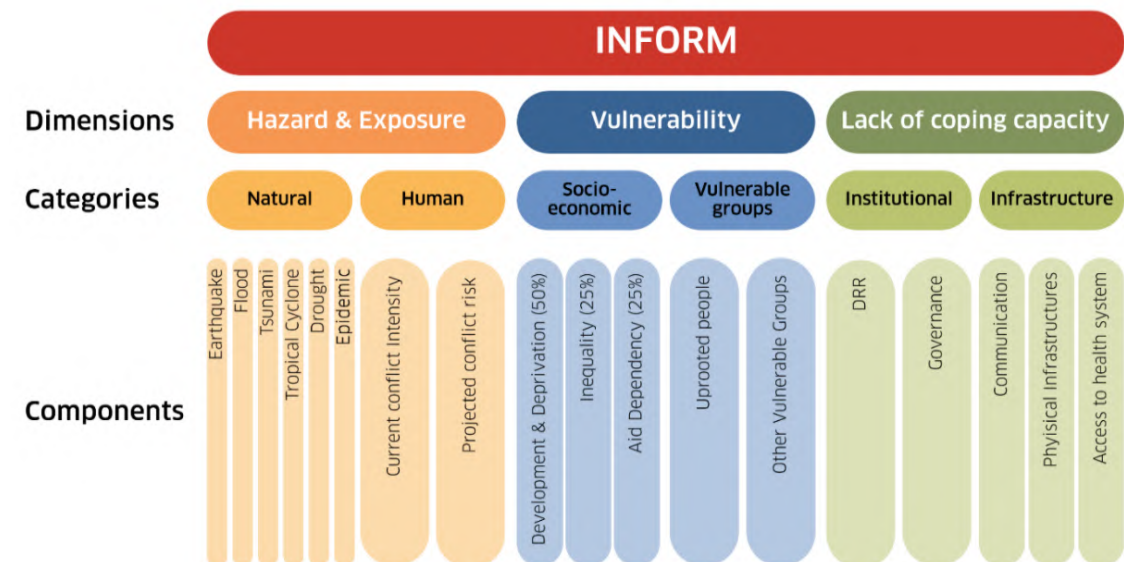


Figure: INFORM Risk Index component

The INFORM Risk index is a multiplicative equation in which all three dimensions have the weight of a one third. Results are provided on a ten-level categorisation (scale of 0.0–10.0), where ten represents the highest risk. The risk equals zero if one of the three dimensions is zero.

$$Risk = Hazard\&Exposure^{1/3} \times Vulnerability^{1/3} \times Lack\ of\ coping\ capacity^{1/3}$$

The JRC is responsible for the methodology and data collection for INFORM Risk Index. More information on the INFORM Risk index methodology and its results and data is available under the following link:

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

INFORM Severity

The INFORM Severity index ⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ is a composite indicator that measures the severity of humanitarian crises against a common scale at the global level. Its model aims to assist decision-makers and contribute to improved effectiveness and coordination in humanitarian action. Existing methods of measuring crisis severity at global level are not widely or consistently adopted and face a number of technical challenges. The primary advantage of the INFORM Severity index is that it allows measurement of severity against an objective, common scale, which can be applied to all crises.

While the JRC is responsible for the methodology of the INFORM Severity index, data for Severity is gathered by [ACAPS](#), an independent (non-profit & non-governmental) information provider that is free from the bias or vested interests of any specific enterprise,

⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ Poljansek, K., Disperati, P., Vernaccini, L., Nika, A., Marzi, S. and Essenfelder, A.H., 2020. INFORM Severity Index, EUR 30400 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, ISBN 978-92-76-23014-4 (online), 978-92-76-23015-1 (print), doi:10.2760/94802 (online), 10.2760/613430 (print), JRC122162

sector, or region. ACAPS' team consists of about 60 professionals located around the world in addition to headquarters in Geneva.

INFORM Severity has three dimensions that describe:

1. The impact of the crisis, in terms of the scope of its geographical, human and physical effects;
2. The conditions of people affected, including information about the distribution of severity (i.e. the number of people in each category of severity within a crisis);
3. The complexity of the crisis, in terms of factors that affect its mitigation or resolution.

Severity score	INFORM SEVERITY INDEX											
Dimensions	Impact of the crisis				Conditions of people affected			Complexity of the crisis				
Categories	Geographical		Human		People in need	Concentration of conditions		Society and safety		Operating environment		
Components	Affected area	People in the affected area	People affected	People affected by categories	Extreme			Social cohesion	Rule of law	Safety and security	Diversity of groups affected	Humanitarian access
					Severe							
					Moderate							
					Stressed							
					None/minimal							

Figure: INFORM Severity Index components

The impact of an event generates different conditions for affected people, in a context that can make it more or less complex to provide assistance to them. This is represented by the formula:

$$Severity = Impact \times Conditions \text{ of Affected People} + Complexity$$

A weighting is applied at the dimension level as follows. The overall severity is therefore most sensitive to the conditions of affected people.

Severity score	INFORM SEVERITY INDEX									
	SUM 70/30									
Aggregation	70%						30%			
	GEOMETRIC AVERAGE 33/66									
	33%			66%						
Dimensions	Impact of the crisis				Conditions of people affected			Complexity of the crisis		

Figure: Inform Severity model

The three dimensions are in mutually consequential relationship. The impact of an event generates different conditions for affected people, in a context that can make it more or less complex to provide assistance to them. The INFORM Severity index is therefore a sum of 70% impact (1/3) and conditions of people affected (2/3) and 30% complexity of the crisis. Results are provided on a five-level categorisation (scale of 1.0–5.0), where five represents the highest severity.

Criteria for inclusion of crises in the Severity Index:

A crisis is included in the INFORM Severity Index when BOTH of the following criteria - which apply to all types of crises - are met:



Some crises may be included in the results but the final Severity value is not calculated due to lack of data for parts of the Index. The Severity value is only calculated when all three dimensions are present. A crisis phases out of the Index when no updates have been made to the monitored sources for 3 months.

The Severity index aggregates information from a range of credible, publicly available sources, such as UN agencies, governments and other multilateral organisations. Indicators are updated as soon as more up-to-date or more reliable information is available. Due to the dynamic and chaotic nature of humanitarian emergencies and the lack of a globally systematic approach to data collection, the information in the INFORM Severity index will never be completely perfect, so expert judgement is needed in deciding what data to include.

More information on the INFORM Severity index methodology and its results and data is available under the following link:

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

ANNEX III. EVALUATION MATRIX AND, WHERE RELEVANT, DETAILS ON ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS (BY CRITERION)

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
EQ1. To what extent was the EU overall approach to humanitarian aid, including its objectives and commitments relevant and equipped to address needs and challenges (i.e. they do provide a framework for both global humanitarian needs while fulfilling other requirements (e.g. financial management and accountability) and to what extent does it remain relevant and appropriate to respond to future humanitarian crises?	JC1.1 The overarching objectives of EU humanitarian aid remain relevant and appropriate to meeting ongoing and future humanitarian needs and challenges (i.e. they do provide a framework for both immediate/early/short-term response to emergencies and medium and longer-term, anticipatory, preparedness and response actions, and the latter mostly for protracted and recurrent crises)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mapping of EU objectives * Mapping of humanitarian needs, trends and direction over time * Mapping of humanitarian aid volumes, trends and direction over time * Extent to which EU objectives were in line with humanitarian needs, trends and direction over time * Identification and mapping of future trends and challenges * Evidence of recent/ emerging humanitarian issues and challenges being reflected in EU policy documents (e.g. 2021 communication) and statements * Evidence of EU objectives preventing or constraining DG ECHO's ability to respond to humanitarian needs and challenges * Stakeholder feedback on the current and future relevance of EU humanitarian objectives * Evidence of EU objectives' adequacy vis-a-vis identified future needs and requirements of the humanitarian system
	JC1.2 The EU's commitments (e.g. allocating 15% funding to forgotten crises; 10% to education) are justified and necessary and are expected to remain relevant in the coming years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mapping of the EU's commitments and evidence of how these enable DG ECHO to provide a better response to humanitarian needs and challenges * Progress made on the various EU commitments * Stakeholders feedback on the necessity and relevance of existing EU commitments * Evidence that EU commitments are and expect to remain relevant * Evidence that EU's commitments are justified and necessary vis-a-vis identified future needs and requirements of the humanitarian system
	JC1.3 The EU's overall approach to humanitarian aid strikes an appropriate balance between its commitments (i.e. in the context of Grand Bargain) and constraints (e.g. requirements relating to financial management and accountability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of dilemmas, trade-offs, limitations and constraints associated with applying EU's commitments in (practice)

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
EQ2. To what extent were the EU strategies, policies, and types of modalities appropriate and relevant to respond to the humanitarian crises during the evaluation period? To what extent did the EU consider evolving needs and EU objectives when designing its responses?	JC2.1 Strategies (as reflected in HIPs) are aligned with the EU's overarching objectives and commitments with respect to humanitarian aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Extent to which strategies (HIPs) were aligned with EU objectives and commitments (likert scale based qualitative assessment – fully aligned, partially aligned) * Share of HIPs demonstrating understanding of system wide needs assessments, programme specific needs assessments and Accountability to Affected Populations * Stakeholder feedback on the alignment between EU strategies and EU objectives and commitments'
	JC2.2 Strategies in place for addressing humanitarian needs are appropriate, comprehensive and context-adapted, include entry and exit criteria, and address specific challenges of forgotten crises and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of comprehensive needs assessments informing priority setting in annual strategies (HIPs) * Evidence of HIPs being tailored to specific contexts and flexible to respond to evolving/ emerging needs taking into account specific challenges * Evidence of appropriate entry and exit criteria being included in annual strategies * Share of DG ECHO funding going to forgotten and/or under-the-radar crises and critically under-funded crises * DG ECHO funding to forgotten and/or under-the-radar crises relative to needs * Share of HIPs that consider access challenges and include context specific strategies to enhance access
	JC2.3 DG ECHO's thematic policies provide a relevant and useful framework to guide and prioritise partners' actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Extent to which references to DG ECHO's thematic policies can be found in funding proposals * Evidence of alignment between actions and thematic policies * Stakeholder feedback on the relevance and usefulness of DG ECHO's thematic policies for prioritising actions
	JC2.4 Individual thematic policies are up-to-date (i.e. remain relevant to current and emerging humanitarian needs and challenges and there are no gaps in coverage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Assessment of the extent to which DG ECHO's thematic policies reflect new/ emerging needs, challenges as well as opportunities * Evidence of gaps in coverage of DG ECHO's thematic policies and prioritisation of these gaps * Assessment of the extent to which individual thematic policies collectively align and address future needs and requirements of the humanitarian system
	JC2.5 The types of modalities of humanitarian aid are appropriately prioritised considering the context and needs identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * EU humanitarian funding by type of modalities * Evidence of comprehensive assessment of modalities in HIPs and funded actions * Stakeholder feedback on the appropriateness of modalities in different contexts

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
EQ3. To what extent were the different modalities of association with partners (Certificate, FPA, FFPAs, FAFA), as well as new initiatives (e.g. pilot Programmatic Partnerships), appropriate and relevant to respond to humanitarian crises?	JC3.1 The range of partnership approaches (Certificate, FPA, FFPAs, FAFA) allows the European Commission and its partners to respond appropriately to different crises and contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Share of funding channelled through different types of partners * Partners' feedback on different approaches to partnership * Type and share of partners involved in strategic partnerships and programmatic partnerships * Evidence that DG ECHO chooses appropriate partners given the humanitarian needs, partners' expertise and capacity, pool of available partners to work with and local context * Role and extent of involvement of local organisations in design and delivery of DG ECHO funded actions – analysis by partner, partnership type, geography and crisis context
	JC3.2 The range of partnership approaches available provides mutually beneficial forms of partnership with different types of actors (e.g. INGOs, international organisations, local actors, MS agencies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence that partnerships are mutually beneficial * Strengths and weaknesses of different partnership approaches
	JC3.3 New partnership approaches (e.g., pilot PPs) allow the EU to provide more multi-annual, flexible, predictable funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Share of EU funding to multi-annual projects * Share of EU funding to pilot (PP) * Stakeholders feedback on multi-annual funding and (pilot) PP and the extent to which they provide more flexible and predictable funding
	JC3.4 The current range of modalities of associations with partners remains relevant and appropriate considering new and emerging trends and challenges affecting the humanitarian aid landscape in the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of emerging trends and challenges and their potential impact on partnerships * Stakeholders feedback on the relevance of the partnerships in the future * Extent to which current range of association modalities and stakeholders engaged through them are adequate vis-a-vis expected future partnership, adaptation, and innovation needs to be addressed by DG ECHO
EQ4. To what extent were the EU's humanitarian aid interventions consistent with the four humanitarian principles in their design and implementation, particularly considering the challenges posed by restricted humanitarian access in conflict-related crises?	JC4.1 The humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence (grounded in IHL) are overall consistently reflected in the design and implementation of EU interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of DG ECHO policies and strategies reflecting and reinforcing the four humanitarian principles * References to / coverage of the fundamental humanitarian principles in the action design (Single Forms) and the documentation of DG ECHO's selection procedures (FichOps), DG ECHO's mission, audit, and monitoring reports * Stakeholders feedback on the consideration of the humanitarian principles in EU interventions
	JC4.2 In complex contexts with restricted humanitarian access, the tension between humanitarian principles and practicalities of delivering humanitarian assistance are successfully resolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of different approaches and positions taken in applying the humanitarian principles in specific situations/interventions * Share of partners reporting challenges to ensuring compliance with humanitarian principles

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
		* Mapping of the types of challenges encountered (frequencies, contexts) and how these were addressed
	JC4.3 Internal/external factors which contributed and/or hindered the alignment between EU interventions and humanitarian principles are identified	* Evidence of factors that contributed/ hindered the alignment with humanitarian principles
EQ5. To what extent were the thematic policies internally coherent and aligned with the EU's aid objectives?	JC5.1 The thematic policies are aligned with the EU's humanitarian aid objectives	* Mapping of alignment between thematic policies and EU's policy objectives and commitments * Identification of any potential contradictions, trade-offs or ambiguities * Stakeholders feedback on the alignment and potential contradictions
	JC5.2 The set of thematic policies are internally coherent and any trade-offs or contradictions in practical implementation are successfully resolved	* Mapping of alignment between thematic policies * Identification of any potential contradictions, trade-offs or ambiguities * Stakeholders feedback on the alignment and potential contradictions
EQ6. To what extent were the EU's humanitarian aid interventions internally coherent, complementary, and avoiding overlaps, including with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism and the Emergency Support Instrument? How successful was the internal coordination of operations?	JC6.1 The EU's humanitarian aid interventions are internally coherent, complementary, and avoiding overlaps, including with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism and the Emergency Support Instrument.	* Evidence of synergies (or lack of them) between UCPM and Humanitarian aid * Evidence on intra-ECHO dialogue and discussion, information sharing etc. * Evidence of decision making to ensure synergies * Identification of possible conflicts or overlaps between EU funded actions (in terms of objectives, activities implemented across the themes/sectors, etc.)
	JC6.2 DG ECHO successfully coordinates its internal operations. Opportunities for synergies between the various instruments (UCPM, ESI) are systematically considered and exploited.	* Nature and types of coordination at HQ and field levels * Evidence of success stories and missed opportunities in achieving coherence and complementarity
	JC6.3. Internal/ external factors which contributed and/or limited the internal coherence of the EU's humanitarian aid interventions are identified	* Evidence of factors contributing/limiting internal coherence

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
EQ7. To what extent were the EU's humanitarian aid interventions coherent with other EU instruments as well as with MS and other humanitarian actors' interventions? How successful is the coordination of operations with those of other actors?	JC7.1 The EU's humanitarian aid interventions are coherent and complementary with those of the Member States and other donors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of synergies (or lack of them) between EU and Member States HA policies/strategies/priorities * Evolution of External Assigned Revenues * Evidence of information/ knowledge and lessons sharing, joint risk assessments, joint advocacy, etc * Evidence of participation and engagement in formal or informal coordination mechanisms * Evidence of joint communication campaigns (with MS and other donors) * Evidence of harmonised approaches to risk assessment, reporting etc. * Nature and types of coordination at HQ and field levels
	JC7.2 The EU's humanitarian aid interventions are coherent and complementary, and avoiding overlaps, with the EU's external financing instruments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of synergies (or lack of them) between ECHO and EU external financing instruments * Evidence on dialogue and discussion, information sharing etc. between relevant DGs and EU institutions * Evidence of decision making to ensure synergies * Nature and types of coordination at HQ and field levels
	JC7.3 DG ECHO actively coordinates its interventions with other (non-EU) humanitarian actors. Opportunities for synergies are actively exploited.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Nature and types of coordination at HQ and field levels * Evidence of harmonised approaches and synergies * Evidence of joint communication (with non-EU actors)
	JC7.4. Internal/external factors which contributed and/or limited the coherence and complementarity of the EU's humanitarian aid interventions with other EU instruments and other humanitarian interventions are identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence on political or institutional barriers preventing coordination and collaboration between relevant DGs and EU institutions * Evidence of obstacles to improve coherence and/or factors hindering coherence
EQ8. What was the EU Added Value of the EU's humanitarian aid interventions? How could EU Added Value be maximised in the global humanitarian scene? What would happen if the EU stopped its humanitarian aid interventions?	JC8.1 The EU's humanitarian aid interventions generate added value, drawing from DG ECHO's specific mandate, role and comparative advantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identification of factors giving a particular EU added value to DG ECHO compared to other donors * Evidence or examples of DG ECHO's policies and priorities reflected in other donors' and international humanitarian agencies' strategies, plans and/or approaches * Donors' and international humanitarian agencies' feedback on DG ECHO's influence beyond funding

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
	JC 8.2 Stopping EU humanitarian aid interventions would have negative consequences for the affected people and the humanitarian system overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Share of projects that would not have gone forward (same scale, scope, timeline) in absence of DG ECHO funding * Assessment based on evaluation evidence gathered (under effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and coherence) and stakeholders' views * Extent to which discontinuation of EU humanitarian aid would negatively affect collective ability of humanitarian system to address expected future needs and requirements
	JC8.3 Some measures and approaches should be put in place in order to maximise the added value of future EU HA interventions considering the future humanitarian aid landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identification of measures and opportunities to increase DG ECHO added value in the future * Future needs and requirements of the humanitarian system that DG ECHO could address providing unique added value
	JC8.4 Specific elements of DG ECHO (e.g. the field network, thematic policies, pilot PPs, advocacy) generate and will continue to generate specific EU added value considering future challenges and trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identification of the different dimensions of DG ECHO added value/ comparative advantages in different contexts * Identification of factors enhancing or reducing DG ECHO's added value in different contexts * Identification of specific aspects contributing to the development of EU added value. Investigate the following components: field network, promotion of IHL, advocacy, partnership approaches, thematic policies * Evidence of expected added value to be provided by specific elements implemented by DG ECHO to addressing future needs and requirements of the humanitarian system
EQ9. To what extent were the objectives stated in the HAR, in the relevant EU and global frameworks achieved? To what extent did the EU's humanitarian aid interventions respond to the most pressing/urgent needs?	JC9.1 EU's humanitarian aid interventions addressed the most pressing/urgent needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Degree of alignment between the needs addressed by EU's humanitarian aid interventions and the most pressing/urgent needs identified by DG ECHO (HIPs) and at international level (HNOs) * Stakeholder views on the extent to which funded actions addressed the most urgent needs

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
	JC9.2 The EU's humanitarian aid strategic and operational response contributed to progress observed in the achievement of objectives stated in the HAR and other global frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Extent to which progress towards the objectives stated in the HAR and relevant global frameworks can be observed * Evidence of the type and volume of activities/ interventions/ measures implemented supporting this objective * Evidence of how actions contributed to achieving outputs and outcomes articulated in the Theory of Change * Share of DG ECHO funded projects exceeding or meeting KRI/KOIs * Analysis of KOIs/ KRIs * Performance of DG ECHO communication campaigns * Analysis of DG ECHO's contribution to wider outcomes and impacts in certain contexts * Evidence of unintended effects (positive or negative) * Stakeholder views on the extent to which funded actions achieved their objectives and generated expected outputs, outcomes
	JC9.3 Internal/external factors (other than thematic policies and the different partnership approaches) facilitated/hindered the contribution of EU's humanitarian aid response to progress in the achievement of these objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mapping of critical barriers and success factors to the achievement of expected results and outcomes * Evidence of DG ECHO support to achieving results (e.g. advocacy, communications, support to operations, field network)
EQ10. To what extent were the objectives of the thematic policies achieved? To what extent did the thematic policies contribute to the effectiveness of the EU's humanitarian interventions? How well were they known by all operating partners?	JC10.1 EU's humanitarian aid strategic and operational response contributed to achieving DG ECHO thematic policies objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Extent to which progress towards the achievement objectives of DG ECHO's thematic policies was observed (per thematic policy) * Degree to which and evidence of how EU's strategic and operational response contributed to achieving DG ECHO thematic policy objectives * Stakeholders views on the level of achievement of the thematic policies objectives
	JC10.2 DG ECHO's sectoral/ thematic policies and guidelines improved the quality of DG ECHO's interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Partner feedback on utility and impact of DG ECHO's thematic policies * Evidence of use of DG ECHO's standards and guidelines and impact on overall effectiveness of operations * Evidence and examples of DG ECHO thematic policies contributing to improved quality * Evidence of successful approaches to increase complementarity and synergies between sectoral policies and how these approaches could be scaled up and/or replicated in other contexts * Practical challenges in implementing these policies
	JC10.3 DG ECHO's partners have high levels of awareness and understanding of DG ECHO's thematic policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Level of awareness about DG ECHO's thematic policies among partners consulted * Evidence of references to DG ECHO's thematic policies in documents reviewed published by DG ECHO partners

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
EQ11. To what extent did the different types of partnership that are possible under the EU's humanitarian aid policy contribute to achieving common (EU and partners') humanitarian objectives? To what extent were the objectives of multi-year strategies such as those of the pilot Programmatic Partnerships, achieved? To what extent did they contribute to the effectiveness of EU's humanitarian aid interventions?	JC11.1 The different types of partnership models facilitated the achievement of common (EU and partners') humanitarian objectives, each model in a unique way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Degree of alignment between the EU's humanitarian objectives and those of a sample of partners * Comparative analysis of effectiveness of different forms of partnerships * Stakeholder (DG ECHO and partners) feedback on the extent to which different types of partnerships contributed to the alignment of humanitarian objectives between the EU and its partners * Evidence of joint communication between DG ECHO and its partners
	JC11.2 The multi-year strategies (multi-year actions and pilot PP) delivered the anticipated benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The extent to which multi-year actions achieved their KOIs and KRIs * The extent to which pilot PPs achieved their KOIs and KRIs * Stakeholder feedback on the benefits generated by multi-year actions and PPP
	JC11.3 Multi-year strategies are more effective than annual funding cycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Comparative analysis of effectiveness of multi-year strategies (including PPP) vs annual funding cycles * Stakeholder feedback on the effectiveness of multi-year strategies compared to yearly action
EQ12. What concrete results were achieved from the angle of assisted populations? What was the benefit and the quantified impact on their lives and livelihoods? What success stories can be gathered from the evidence?	JC12.1 DG ECHO-funded interventions generate concrete, non-quantifiable results and impacts on the life of assisted populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Qualitative analysis of DG ECHO's contribution to impact on lives and livelihoods of assisted populations in certain contexts * Stakeholder feedback (assisted populations) on the impact that DG ECHO-funded interventions had on their life
	JC12.2 DG ECHO-funded interventions generate quantifiable results and impacts on the life of assisted populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Quantitative analysis of DG ECHO's contribution to impact on lives and livelihoods of assisted populations in certain contexts * Levels of satisfaction among assisted populations
	JC12.3 Success stories from the angle of assisted populations can be identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of success stories reported by assisted population consulted or identified in documents reviewed
EQ13. To what extent were the EU humanitarian aid interventions efficient/ cost-effective?	JC13.1 DG ECHO took appropriate actions to ensure cost-effectiveness when making strategic choices about its portfolio of assistance and throughout the project cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of DG ECHO considering cost in relation to effectiveness and timeliness when making portfolio choices (i.e., selecting partners, sectors, approaches, geographical locations, beneficiaries, transfer modalities) * Evidence of DG ECHO considering economy, efficiency and cost-effectiveness in selecting partner proposals and negotiating contracts * Evidence that lessons learned were considered in these decisions

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
	JC13.2 DG ECHO-funded actions were implemented in a cost-effective and efficient manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence that DG ECHO partners considered costs and timeliness when designing their actions, e.g. in terms of methods of delivery, suppliers, choice of local partners / staff, etc. * Evidence of (i) DG ECHO and (ii) DG ECHO's partners monitoring efficiency and cost-effectiveness of funded actions * Qualitative evidence that actions funded by DG ECHO were efficient/ cost-effective * Quantitative evidence (e.g. administrative costs as a % of total budget, cost per unit/ person assisted) that actions funded by DG ECHO were cost-effective * Evidence of cost-effective approaches taken (and factors contributing to efficient implementation)
	JC13.3 Internal and external factors affecting cost-effectiveness were identified and adequately mitigated throughout the project cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Factors affecting cost effectiveness of interventions in different contexts * Evidence of mitigation measures implemented to increase efficiency * There are feedback and learning mechanisms (examples of efficient delivery are identified and disseminated)
	JC13.4 Obligations imposed by the EU to partners in terms of, e.g. reporting, eligibility rules, requests for funds, etc. were necessary (to ensure accountability and transparency and proportionate (i.e. they did not generate unnecessary administrative burden)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence that obligations imposed by the EU ensured accountability and transparency * Partners feedback on reporting, eligibility rules, requests for funds, etc
	JC13.5 Room for further efficiency/cost-effectiveness in future interventions is identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Stakeholders feedback on opportunities to improve efficiency/ cost-effectiveness in the future * Evidence of lessons learned identified by DG ECHO and its partners regarding efficiency/cost-effectiveness of interventions that could be applied widely
EQ14. To what extent were the EU systems, policies and partnerships efficient/ cost-effective (strategic level)?	JC14.1 DG ECHO's budget allocations are based on needs and actions of other donors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence that DG ECHO's budget allocations are based on needs and considered other aspects (gaps in response, partner presence and capacity, own budget) * Evidence that DG ECHO's budget allocations considered the actions of other donors (i.e. share of HIPs that took account of actions and funding of other donors) * Proportion of DG ECHO funding compared to total humanitarian funding (to be used with a comparator) * Stakeholder feedback on the extent to which DG ECHO's budget allocation took into account the needs and actions funded by other donors

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
	JC14.2. DG ECHO budget allocations strike an appropriate balance between needs, gaps, own budget constraints and wider political considerations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence that DG ECHO's funding allocations were not skewed by political considerations * Evidence of changes in budget allocation over the evaluation period (across sectors / geographies) mapped against context changes * Stakeholder feedback on the extent to which DG ECHO struck an appropriate balance between needs, gaps, budget constraints and wider political considerations
	JC14.3 The EU's systems and processes (i.e., the funds allocation system – including for disaster preparedness and sudden onset disasters, IT systems, HIP and project management cycles) allow for a cost-effective/ efficient European Commission's humanitarian aid response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Time to approve, time to grant indicators * Timeliness of DG ECHO decisions relating to funding allocations or changes * Qualitative evidence that EU systems (IT, HIP, project management) were efficient * Partner feedback on efficiency of different systems and processes * Speed of EU humanitarian aid response relative to other donors
	JC14.4 DG ECHO's sectoral/ thematic policies and guidelines improve the cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO's interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence and examples of DG ECHO thematic policies contributing to improved cost-effectiveness or efficiency * Partner feedback on any costs or administrative burden resulting from compliance with thematic policies
	JC14.5 Different types of partnerships contribute to efficiency and cost-effectiveness in a differentiated manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Comparative analysis of efficiency of different types of partnerships
	JC14.6 Multi-annual strategies such as the pilot PPs contribute to maximising efficiencies and cost-effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Partner feedback on relative cost-effectiveness of annual grants versus pilot PPs
	JC14.7 Specific measures and approaches could be implemented to improve the efficiency/cost-effectiveness of the European Commission's humanitarian aid system and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Stakeholders feedback on opportunities to improve efficiency/ cost-effectiveness of the EU humanitarian system * Identified opportunities to improve efficiency/cost-effectiveness in light of possible futures of the humanitarian system and of the drivers and factors shaping it
EQ15. To what extent did the EU's humanitarian aid interventions manage to provide sustainable support for living conditions, alleviate suffering and save lives?	JC15.1 Sustainability elements are incorporated into the design and implementation of EU's humanitarian aid interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of sustainability consideration included in the HIPs and thematic policies * Evidence of DG ECHO considering sustainability in project selection * Mapping of sustainability elements implemented in funded project * Stakeholders feedback on sustainability elements introduced

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
	JC15.2 EU's humanitarian aid interventions provide sustainable support for living conditions, alleviate suffering and save lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Share of DG ECHO-funded actions that have high resilience marker and were considered sustainable * Share of DG ECHO-funded actions including an exit strategy * Examples of sustainable interventions * Evidence that pilot PPs and multi-year actions contributed to increased sustainability * Sustainability of ECHO's support from the perspective of assisted populations * Stakeholders feedback on the sustainability of the funded actions implemented
	JC15.3 Factors that contribute/hinder sustainability (internal and external) are identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of success factors leading to increased sustainability * Evidence of difficulties hindering the development of a consistent approach to sustainability
	JC15.4 There is room for better incorporating sustainability in the design and implementation of EU's humanitarian aid interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Stakeholders feedback on opportunities to improve sustainability of the EU humanitarian interventions
EQ16. How well did the HDP Nexus work, considering both the continuum and contiguuum aspects?	JC16.1 DG ECHO offers the necessary tools, flexibility and predictability (e.g. multi-year funding) to allow partners to address DRR, resilience and early recovery in projects, and to ensure successful handover from humanitarian to development actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of efforts to align DG ECHO's humanitarian response with development assistance in different contexts * Mapping of EU tools supporting DRR, resilience and early recovery * Evidence of the use of specific tools and inclusion of specific elements in project design to increase DRR, resilience and early recovery * Examples of successful handover from humanitarian to development actors * Stakeholders feedback on DG ECHO tools
	JC16.2 The EU's humanitarian aid contributed to the HDP nexus work in the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of approaches to the nexus in DG ECHO's policies and HIPs * Evidence of mechanisms to promote dialogue and cooperation between H-D-P at HQ and field levels * Documentary evidence and stakeholder feedback on the existence and quality of dialogue and cooperation between DG ECHO and D-P actors (HQ and Field level) and their outcomes * Share of funded actions which include H-D, D-P, H-P or triple nexus activities * Share of funded actions that secured additional funding from other donors to continue / scale-up the action * Examples of DG ECHO funded interventions that were mainstreamed into the regional / national / local agenda * Stakeholder feedback on the effectiveness of various approaches (continuum vs contiguuum) and configurations (HD-DP-HP)

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
	JC16.3 In contexts where the HDP Nexus was operationalised in the field, examples of how this led to better synergies between the three levels can be identified (including good practices and lessons learned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence of success stories on the HDP nexus * Evidence that DG ECHO funded actions have led to better synergies between the three levels * Evidence that DG ECHO-funded actions have led to changes in knowledge, awareness and/or behaviour around the nexus
	JC16.4 Internal and external factors hindering the operationalisation of the HDP Nexus (overall and between each pair)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mapping of factors that hindered the successful practical implementation of the double and triple nexus in different crisis contexts (e.g. estranged context) * Evidence of measures implemented to mitigate the effect of hindering factors * Stakeholder feedback on the existence and impact of internal and external factors hindering the operationalisation of the HDP Nexus
	JC16.5 There is room for learning, feedback loops and reflection on how to implement triple nexus and navigate these challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evidence that formal and informal mechanisms for feedback and learning around the nexus among EU institutions are in place and used (in the field and at HQ level) * Room for more effective feedback and learning mechanisms among EU institutions (field and HQ level) is identified * Stakeholder feedback on how to promote reflection and ensure learning around the nexus
Q1: What could the future of the global humanitarian system entail in the near-term? How could different factors and drivers influence and shape this?	Q1.1 What drivers and factors are expected to influence the future of the humanitarian system in the short, medium and longer term? What trends and trajectories are expected to characterise these future drivers and factors? What degree of consensus is there around current projections? To what degree are current assumptions about future trends and projections based on robust evidence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Political, economic, sociological, technical, legal, environmental, and military drivers and factors expected to influence and shape the future of the humanitarian system *Mapping of different possible trends and trajectories concerning key drivers and factors expected to influence the future of the humanitarian system in the near-term. *Degree of consensus and certainty surrounding expected future trajectories and trends *Weak signals and wildcards that could influence the near-term future of the humanitarian system
	Q1.2 What would be the implications of the plausible, alternative future trends identified, and their interactions, for the future of the humanitarian system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Plausible implications for the humanitarian system stemming from identified drivers of change and their associated future trends *Potential implications for the future of the humanitarian system of 'Low-probability – High-impact' trends, weak signals, and wildcards
Q2: How should DG ECHO navigate the future humanitarian aid landscape and what should be its role in the humanitarian system in the near future?	Q2.1. What cross-cutting needs, challenges, and opportunities could stem for DG ECHO from plausible futures of the humanitarian system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Strategic needs, challenges, and opportunities for DG ECHO stemming from plausible futures of the humanitarian system *Critical adaptation and innovation needs stemming from plausible futures of the humanitarian system

Evaluation framework		
EQ	JC	Indicators
	<p>Q2.2. What strategic initiatives and investments should DG ECHO adopt to prepare for and mitigate against challenges and harness opportunities stemming from plausible futures identified? What partners and stakeholders could facilitate/hinder DG ECHO's efforts?</p>	<p>*Possible policy, programming or other measures that DG ECHO could adopt to prepare for and mitigate against potential implications / address identified adaptation and innovation needs</p> <p>*Possible policy, programming or other measures that DG ECHO could adopt to contribute to shaping the future humanitarian system, considering the identified challenges and opportunities</p> <p>*Critical barriers and enablers likely to influence possible policy/programming/ other measures and adaptation and innovation efforts</p> <p>*Stakeholders and partners that could support or disrupt possible policy/programming measures and adaptation and innovation efforts.</p>

Key evaluation findings

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ1

JC1.1. The overarching objectives of EU humanitarian aid remain relevant and appropriate to meeting ongoing and future humanitarian needs and challenges (i.e. they provide a framework for both immediate, early, short-term anticipation and response to emergencies and medium or longer-term preparedness and response actions, the latter mostly for protracted and recurrent crises)

The EU's overarching humanitarian aid objectives remained pertinent in the face of a rapidly changing humanitarian landscape and increasing humanitarian needs. The most relevant objective focused on saving and preserving life, alleviating human suffering, and maintaining human dignity.

The evaluation period saw an increased focus on DP, which was relevant and likely to continue to be relevant given the effects of climate change, such as the rising frequency and intensity of disasters.

JC1.2 The EU's commitments (e.g. allocating 15% funding to forgotten crises; 10% to education) are justified and necessary and are expected to remain relevant in the coming years

The EU's commitments towards forgotten crises and EiE were relevant to addressing significant underfunding and increasing needs.

Stakeholders felt that the EU's focus on forgotten crises and EiE were relevant to addressing significant underfunding issues in the humanitarian landscape. These commitments also helped to advance humanitarian policy discussions and bring attention to less-highlighted issues. Challenges were identified with the practical applicability of the EiE target across specific contexts.

Although implementation of commitments outlined in the 2021 Communication was in its early stages in the evaluation period, these were found to be relevant and necessary, particularly commitments on climate change, adherence to IHL, localisation, and donor practices.

JC1.3 The EU's overall approach to humanitarian aid strikes an appropriate balance between its commitments (i.e. in the context of the Grand Bargain) and constraints (e.g. financial management and accountability requirements)

DG ECHO's overall strategy was pertinent for maximising efforts in line with Grand Bargain commitments.

DG ECHO made progress in aligning its approach with several Grand Bargain commitments, including quality funding, cash programming, and localisation.

The implementation of these commitments was actively pursued, within the financial, legislative, and administrative frameworks, rising humanitarian needs worldwide, and the growing limited resources for humanitarian action leading to a growing humanitarian funding gap.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ2

JC2.1 Strategies (as reflected in HIPs) are aligned with the EU's overarching objectives and commitments with respect to humanitarian aid

DG ECHO's strategies, as outlined in the HIPs, were generally well aligned with the EU's overarching objectives and commitments.

DG ECHO used effective analytical tools, such as the FIT tool and INFORM index, to ensure that funding allocations were aligned with EU objectives and commitments.

In the face of growing humanitarian needs, a financing gap limited the reach of DG ECHO's strategies.

DG ECHO occasionally fell short of clearly communicating or defining its strategy regarding variations to annual funding allocations to its partners.

JC2.2 Strategies in place for addressing humanitarian needs are appropriate, comprehensive and context-adapted, include entry and exit criteria, and address specific challenges of forgotten crises and access

HIPs served as relevant reference points and their preparation was informed by thorough needs assessments.

DG ECHO continuously updated its methodology to enhance HIPs relevance. HIPs were effectively tailored to specific contexts and on-the-ground needs, mostly striking an appropriate balance between tailored regional and country-specific approaches.

The consultation mechanisms underpinning the needs assessments of DG ECHO's HIPs were crucial to ensuring their relevance to the humanitarian context, although the implementation of consultations varied by country and context.

While HIPs were comprehensive and covered many relevant topics, there is potential for improvement by ensuring an adequate and proportionate level of detail for both new and ongoing crises, as well as determining the appropriate amount of detail for the HIPs and their annexes.

Most HIPs demonstrated the flexibility to adapt to changing conditions; however, the extended process of drafting and approving HIPs, while essential for thorough consultations, meant that HIPs did not fully reflect the rapidly changing needs on the ground. This underscores the need for realistic expectations of the process, recognising the necessary compromises between comprehensive input and timely responsiveness to evolving needs.

While most HIPs included entry and exit criteria, the level of detail and quality of entry and exit criteria in HIPs varied considerably. While some exit criteria may be missing as they are not immediately actionable, it is advisable that they are identified early so that they are relevant and effective when the time for implementation arrives.

Stakeholders had mixed views on the relevance of DG ECHO's exit and entry criteria, with many struggling to form clear views, indicating potential awareness issues and highlighting challenges such as cross-sectoral cooperation and national authority involvement in drafting HIPs.

JC2.3 DG ECHO's thematic policies provide a relevant and useful framework to guide and prioritise partners' actions

DG ECHO's thematic policies provided essential frameworks for guiding and prioritising funded actions.

The relevance of thematic policies in guiding and prioritising actions varied between policies and stakeholder groups.

Thematic policies were valuable tools for highlighting emerging and less-discussed issues.

JC2.4 Individual thematic policies are up-to-date (i.e. relevant to current and emerging humanitarian needs and challenges, with no gaps in coverage)

Thematic policies were generally comprehensive and current, although this varied by policy. Some policies, such as those on protection, DP, EiE, cash transfers, supply chain and logistics, and health were noted for their thoroughness and relevance.

While no policies were outdated, some could benefit for review and update, including those on gender, S&S, food assistance, livelihoods, WASH and nutrition.

Consultations with relevant stakeholders were crucial to enhancing the relevance of thematic policies.

JC2.5 The types of modalities of humanitarian aid are appropriately prioritised considering the context and needs identified

The use of cash-based modalities increased throughout the evaluation period, influenced by DG ECHO's advocacy.

DG ECHO and its partners conducted thorough assessments to determine the most appropriate delivery modality.

When cash-based modalities were not chosen, the reasons typically included lack of relevance to the action, logistical challenges, and national government restrictions.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ3

JC3.1 The range of partnership approaches (Certificate, Framework Partners Agreement (FPA), Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA), Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA)) allows the European Commission and its partners to respond appropriately to different crises and contexts

The range of partnership approaches adopted by DG ECHO, including the Humanitarian Partnership 2021-2027, FPA, FFPA, and FAFA, enabled appropriate responses to various crises. However, there were areas where improvements could enhance effectiveness of response (e.g. administrative burden).

Stakeholders highlighted DG ECHO's flexibility and smooth operational processes were highlighted as strengths. Continuous dialogue with partners facilitated successful project implementation.

However, partners reported several concerns with regards to some elements of their partnership with DG ECHO, with some of them associating these issues with the new Humanitarian Partnership Certificate and related process. These concerns included, among others, increased administrative burden and scrutiny (e.g., audits), with a negative effect on operational efficiency.

Stakeholders praised the strategic dialogue meetings with partners, including UN organisations and international bodies, for enabling strategic discussions and leveraging partners' capabilities. However, the dialogue could benefit from more opportunities to act on lessons, monitor and follow-up on implementation of donor requests, and improve information dissemination between the strategic and operational levels.

DG ECHO made significant progress in advancing the localisation agenda and Grand Bargain commitments, as evidenced by the 2023 guidance note on 'Promoting equitable partnerships

with local responders in humanitarian settings’ and the increased involvement of local organisations in DG ECHO-funded actions during the evaluation period.

JC3.2 The range of partnership approaches available provides mutually beneficial forms of partnership with different types of actors (e.g. international NGOs (INGOs), IOs, local actors, Member State agencies)

Stakeholders were generally satisfied with DG ECHO's partnership approaches, appreciating innovative and long-term strategies such as PPs and multi-year funding, which were seen as progressive and beneficial for effective humanitarian responses.

Stakeholders praised DG ECHO's partnership modalities for their relevance and responsiveness to on-the-ground needs, allowing flexibility and adaptability in dynamic humanitarian situations and enabling timely and efficient crisis responses.

Despite the engagement with Member States’ specialised agencies (MSSAs), only a small part of the overall budget was allocated to these partners. There is potential to further exploit these partnerships, particularly in protracted crises, to develop the HDP nexus and exit strategies.

JC3.3 New partnership approaches (e.g. pilot PPs) allow the EU to provide more multiannual, flexible, predictable funding

DG ECHO’s introduction of new partnership approaches, particularly multiannual strategies, brought enhanced funding flexibility and predictability.

Stakeholders valued pilot PPs for their flexibility, allowing resources to be carried over from one year to the next. This facilitated better programming, procurement, and quick responses to emerging crises.

Pilot PPs provided increased funding predictability, enabling partners to adopt a more strategic perspective with pre-committed funding for three years. However, the lack of ‘legal certainty’ due to the non-binding nature of the letter of intent and the risk of budget reductions in subsequent years limited full predictability.

While pilot PPs aimed to reduce administrative burdens, the requirement for detailed annual reports and scrutiny on annual workplans remained time-consuming. Additionally, the process for defining the focus of pilot PPs was top-down, with insufficient involvement from country offices, although this improved with the 2023 PPs.

JC3.4 The current range of modalities of associations with partners remains relevant and appropriate considering new and emerging trends and challenges affecting the humanitarian aid landscape in the future

Stakeholders found the current range of association modalities suitable and adaptable in addressing current and future humanitarian emergencies, effectively encouraging partnerships and aligning well with stakeholders' needs and expectations.

DG ECHO’s multiannual strategies, such as pilot PPs and multi-year funding, were considered more adaptable and better aligned with the Grand Bargain commitments than traditional annual funding models, providing comprehensive coverage and strategic relevance.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ4

JC4.1 The humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence (grounded in IHL) are overall consistently reflected in the design and implementation of EU interventions

DG ECHO was recognised as a principled donor, adhering strongly to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

DG ECHO implemented measures to ensure these principles were consistently integrated into EU interventions, including proposal-based funding and robust monitoring mechanisms at operational level, partnering only with accredited organisations at coordination level, and maintaining the right to separate from the EU's political agenda at strategic level.

DG ECHO's advocacy played a crucial role in upholding these principles.

JC4.2 In complex contexts with restricted humanitarian access, the tension between humanitarian principles and practicalities of delivering humanitarian assistance are resolved successfully

During the evaluation period, DG ECHO partners generally faced additional burdens to ensure adherence to humanitarian principles, with the primary issues being securing access to territories and cooperation with state actors, which were resolved to the extent possible.

Greater engagement with local partners on risk accountability and transfer could help to address future challenges.

JC4.3 Internal/external factors that contributed and/or hindered the alignment between EU interventions and humanitarian principles are identified

Factors hindering the alignment of DG ECHO-funded actions with humanitarian principles include DG ECHO's perceived dependence on the EU's foreign policy agenda, growing humanitarian needs and increased risks from growing local actor involvement.

Factors that supported coherence include the internal commitment of DG ECHO staff to humanitarian principles, close communication between DG ECHO and its partners, and external capacity-building efforts by DG ECHO's partners.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ5

JC5.1 The thematic policies are aligned with the EU's humanitarian aid objectives

DG ECHO's thematic policies were aligned with the EU's humanitarian objectives, particularly Article 2(a) of the HAR, 'to save and preserve life during emergencies and their immediate aftermath [...]'.

JC5.2 The set of thematic policies are internally coherent and any trade-offs or contradictions in practical implementation are successfully resolved

Evidence indicates that thematic policies were internally coherent. This was ensured through cross-referencing, mainstreaming approaches, and consultations with key stakeholders when adopting or updating the policies. In some cases, cross-referencing was not ensured, as some policies were older than others.

The evidence did not highlight any specific example of trade-offs or contradictions among thematic policies that needed to be addressed in practical implementation. However, the

increasing number of policies and mainstreaming requirements was a significant challenge for partners during the evaluation period.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ6

JC6.1 The EU's humanitarian aid interventions are internally coherent, complementary, and avoid overlaps, including with the UCPM and the ESI

During the 2017-2022 period, the EU's humanitarian aid interventions were internally coherent at both strategic and operational level. DG ECHO used several tools (e.g. European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC), UCPM) and funding mechanisms (e.g. geographical HIPs, Enhanced Response Capacity (ERC) HIPs) for different purposes and in different contexts, complementing each other. For instance, the ERC HIP focused on initiatives that may not have been covered by DG ECHO geographical funding envelopes due to the emerging or cross-cutting nature of the issues to be addressed through policy support and innovation.

The EU's humanitarian aid interventions were coherent and complementary with the UCPM and the ESI, given the different objectives of each instrument.

JC6.2 DG ECHO successfully coordinates its internal operations. Opportunities for synergies between the various instruments (UCPM, ESI) are systematically considered and exploited

Overall, DG ECHO coordinated its internal operations successfully. Examples of synergies between DG ECHO's humanitarian aid and the UCPM included DG ECHO's humanitarian and CP coordination during the UCPM activations in Madagascar and Pakistan.

Synergies and complementarity between CP and humanitarian operations could be enhanced. A minority of stakeholders highlighted that the increasing number of UCPM activations outside the EU could potentially affect the perception of DG ECHO's and its partners' adherence to humanitarian principles. This was due to the fact that UCPM assistance is delivered on the basis of national authorities' requests for assistance, which might not always fully align with needs assessments based on humanitarian principles.

The EU's humanitarian interventions were coherent and avoided overlaps with ESI, given its specific scope and objectives. Stakeholders displayed limited awareness and provided little feedback on ESI.

JC6.3. Internal/external factors that contributed and/or limited the internal coherence of the EU's humanitarian aid interventions are identified

Internal factors that contributed to the internal coherence of the EU's humanitarian aid interventions included coordination efforts between DG ECHO HQ and DG ECHO field staff, among DG ECHO partners, and between DG ECHO, its partners, and local implementing partners. Other contributing elements included alignment between objectives and implementation methods, cross-sectoral and mainstreaming approaches.

The main internal factor that hindered internal coherence was a perceived disconnect between DG ECHO HQ and field staff, and among DG ECHO field staff. According to stakeholders, this perceived disconnect reflected the early stages of introduction of new instruments or policies (such as pilot PPs, localisation), which were not always commonly understood by all DG ECHO staff during early phases of implementation. Although coordination between DG ECHO field staff and DG ECHO HQ enhanced internal coherence, stakeholders also indicated that the field network has been given limited attention to (and limited resources) during the evaluation period. A minority of stakeholders

mentioned other internal factors, including limited strategic coordination among DG ECHO HQ units and resourcing issues (staff turnover, workload, insufficient human resources).

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ7

JC7.1 The EU's humanitarian aid interventions are coherent and complementary with those of the Member States and other donors

During the 2017-2022 period, the EU's humanitarian aid interventions were coherent and complementary with those of Member States. However, evidence indicates that more could be done to better leverage DG ECHO and Member States' humanitarian coordination, particularly at strategic and programming levels, such as by seeking to leverage the Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) as a platform to facilitate more than information-sharing activities.

The EU's humanitarian aid interventions were coherent and complementary with those of other donors. DG ECHO's efforts in donor coordination (e.g. joint advocacy efforts, participation in clusters, specific initiatives or forums) were key to coherence here.

JC7.2 The EU's humanitarian aid interventions are coherent and complementary, and avoid overlaps with the EU's external financing instruments

The EU's humanitarian interventions were coherent with other EU external financing instruments, as each instrument pursued different objectives. Where possible, synergies were exploited. For instance, different EU external financing instruments were used in a complementary manner with DG ECHO's humanitarian aid interventions (e.g. Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)). There were also efforts allowing for cross-fertilisation in programming, such as the participation of DG INTPA in HIP preparation and the participation of DG ECHO in the programming of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI), and of the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).

In 2021, the NDICI entered into force as the main funding instrument for EU external action. Evidence, while limited, suggests that the NDICI could function as a platform to facilitate programming and coordinated actions across services with respect to promotion of the HDP nexus.

While evidence showed overall coherence between the EU's humanitarian interventions and the different EU external financing instruments, cooperation between DG ECHO and other EU actors responsible or involved with the management of such funds could be strengthened.

Coordination between DG ECHO, Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) and EEAS was effective. Coordination between DG ECHO and DG INTPA was less effective. Stakeholders were less aware of the effectiveness and results of coordination between DG ECHO and the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR).

JC7.3 DG ECHO actively coordinates its interventions with other (non-EU) humanitarian actors. Opportunities for synergies are actively exploited

DG ECHO coordinated its humanitarian interventions with those of other (non-EU) humanitarian actors. This was mainly achieved through contribution to and support of coordination mechanisms and the UN humanitarian coordination architecture.

For example, DG ECHO participated and/or encouraged its funded partners to participate in existing coordination mechanisms (e.g. clusters, HCTs). These efforts enhanced the coherence of the humanitarian assistance delivered.

JC7.4. Internal/external factors that contributed and/or limited the coherence and complementarity of the EU's humanitarian aid interventions with other EU instruments and other humanitarian interventions are identified

Internal factors that hindered the coherence and complementarity of the EU's humanitarian interventions with other EU instruments and other non-EU humanitarian actors included resourcing issues, limited coordination between different European Commission services, and limited involvement of national and local actors. Internal factors that contributed to enhanced coherence included the importance given by DG ECHO to humanitarian coordination through existing structures and its efforts to work with other EU services and bodies, both at HQ and field level. DG ECHO's joint advocacy efforts with other actors also enhanced coherence and complementarity with other humanitarian interventions.

External factors that hindered the coherence and complementarity of the EU's humanitarian interventions with other EU instruments and other non-EU humanitarian actors included recent changes to other EU actors' priorities, duplication of efforts stemming from new initiatives, and parallel coordination structures and diverging planning cycles for EU financing instruments. The Team Europe approach was seen as an external factor contributing to coherence.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ8

JC8.1 The EU's humanitarian aid interventions generate added value, drawing from DG ECHO's specific mandate, role and comparative advantage

The humanitarian aid interventions financed by DG ECHO generated a clear EU added value.

The main aspects of DG ECHO's added value included: global and local presence compared to other donors; thematic and technical expertise; thematic policies; a programming approach also sensitive to filling in gaps; its stance as a strongly principled donor; role in coordination and advocacy; network of partners; flexibility and financial added value; a toolbox of instruments for preparedness and rapid response to crises.

JC8.2 Stopping EU humanitarian aid interventions would have negative consequences for the affected people and the humanitarian system overall

Evidence indicates that interrupting EU humanitarian aid interventions and funding would have severe negative consequences. This would create a substantial financial gap of about EUR 2,181 million per year, corresponding to 6.5% of all global funding in humanitarian aid.

Other effects would include reduced coordination, increased fragmentation and reduced adherence to humanitarian aid principles.

JC8.3 Some measures and approaches should be put in place to maximise the added value of future EU humanitarian aid interventions considering the future humanitarian aid landscape

Actions that DG ECHO could put in place to enhance EU added value include: strengthening its role in coordination; strengthening advocacy activities; continuing efforts towards

localisation and capacity-building of local actors; supporting and strengthening the field network; facilitating the implementation of thematic policies; enhancing sustainability and HDP nexus considerations; considering simplification of administrative procedures and enhancing multi-year funding.

JC8.4 Specific elements of DG ECHO (e.g. field network, thematic policies, pilot PPs, advocacy) generate and will continue to generate specific EU added value considering future challenges and trends

Specific elements of DG ECHO's approach are likely to continue to generate EU added value, given the future challenges and (political, economic, societal, technological, legal and environmental) trends identified.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ9

JC9.1 EU humanitarian aid interventions addressed the most pressing/urgent needs

JC9.2 The EU's humanitarian aid strategic and operational response contributed to progress observed in the achievement of objectives stated in the HAR and other global frameworks

Overall, the EU's humanitarian interventions addressed the most pressing needs and contributed to progress towards the achievement of objectives stated in the HAR.

Although effectiveness varied across countries, regions and sectors, evidence indicates that DG ECHO-funded actions were effective overall and achieved their intended objectives. During the evaluation period, the majority of KOIs and KRIs were either achieved or exceeded. Previous evaluations also indicated that, overall, DG ECHO-funded actions were effective and achieved their objectives, contributing to saving and preserving lives.

At the strategic level, DG ECHO's efforts contributed to the achievement of objectives stated in the HAR and other global frameworks, such as advocacy efforts in preserving humanitarian space and promoting the respect of IHL.

DG ECHO made important steps to advance its Grand Bargain commitments. These included efforts on the localisation workstream (e.g. contribution to CBPFs), cash-based programming (e.g. funding large-scale cash programmes and promoting the use of cash as the preferred modality), and enhanced quality funding (e.g. PPs). However, margins for improvement exist in several workstreams, particularly localisation, enhanced quality funding, and the HDP nexus.

Evidence offers a strong basis to suggest that DG ECHO's humanitarian interventions were successful in addressing pressing needs and contributing to HAR's objectives. However, several limitations prevent formulation of a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of DG ECHO's strategic and operational humanitarian response during the 2017-2022 period. In addition to the complexity of attribution, challenges and limitations included data scarcity, a lack of baseline information, suboptimal monitoring and evaluation systems, the lack of DG ECHO country-specific KPIs, the absence of comparable indicators across funded actions, and a strong focus on monitoring outputs.

JC9.3 Internal/external factors (other than thematic policies and the different partnership approaches) facilitated/hindered the contribution of the EU's humanitarian aid response to progress in the achievement of these objectives

Internal factors that contributed to the effectiveness of DG ECHO's humanitarian aid included flexibility; advocacy efforts; multi-year funding; thematic policies; multi-

sectoral approach; support to operations and logistics; coordination efforts; use of different tools and instruments; good working relationships with DG ECHO partners; and speed of response. The main external factors that contributed to the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions were DG ECHO partners' capacity and availability of actors on the ground, including local actors.

The main internal factor that hindered progress in achieving objectives was limited engagement of national and local actors. External factors included: the humanitarian funding gap; security issues; logistical; and access constraints; IHL violations; the increasing complexity and severity of crises (e.g. polycrises); limited reliable data on humanitarian needs; national authorities' interference in the delivery of humanitarian assistance (or reluctance to receive humanitarian assistance); unintended impact of the sanctions regime (EU and beyond); limited presence of partners; and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ10

JC10.1 The EU's humanitarian aid strategic and operational response contributed to achieving DG ECHO thematic policies objectives

Not all of the policies explicitly define general and specific objectives. In some cases, these are implicit in the text of the policies. Where general objectives are stated, they mostly align with the objectives of providing assistance and protection and saving life.

Although the evidence did not allow a full assessment of the extent to which the EU's humanitarian aid response contributed to achieving the thematic policies' objectives, it suggests that the results and outcomes of funded actions and DG ECHO's strategic activities progressed towards the achievement of (some) of the objectives of the thematic policies. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in advancing the policies' objectives in some sectors.

JC10.2 DG ECHO's sectoral/ thematic policies and guidelines improved the quality of its interventions

DG ECHO's sectoral/thematic policies contributed, at least somewhat, to enhancing the quality of its responses. This impact varied across sectors.

DG ECHO's partners generally considered that the thematic policies helped them to improve the design of their funded actions. This was particularly the case for the protection, DP, gender and cash transfers policies. Local implementing partners also considered the policies to provide a useful framework for their humanitarian interventions.

The thematic policies generally contributed to the prioritisation of actions to fund, although this impact varied across sectors.

The policies contributed, to some extent, to improving the effective delivery of DG ECHO-funded actions. This depended in part on the extent to which the funded actions were aligned with and adequately implemented the policies.

DG ECHO sought to support its partners to improve the quality of their interventions through the implementation of the policies (e.g. training and guidance).

Evidence provides some examples of factors that might have hindered the effectiveness of the thematic policies and their contribution to improving the quality of DG ECHO's interventions (e.g. growing number of thematic policies and mainstreaming requirements; partners' insufficient capacity and resources to implement all policy requirements; DG

ECHO thematic experts not systematically consulted in the different phases of the project cycle; contextual challenges).

JC10.3 DG ECHO's partners have high levels of awareness and understanding of its thematic policies

A great majority of DG ECHO's partners were aware of DG ECHO's thematic policies. Local implementing partners also had a good, if somewhat lower, level of awareness of most of DG ECHO's thematic policies. The protection, gender and cash transfer policies were best known among the DG ECHO partners and local implementing partners.

The extent to which (and how) DG ECHO's partners and implementing partners used the policies differed considerably across thematic areas.

Despite the generally good level of awareness of the thematic policies among DG ECHO's partners, the survey of DG ECHO staff suggests that the level of understanding of those policies varied across thematic areas. For instance, DG ECHO's shift towards a system-wide approach (rather than a community-based approach) in the DP policy was not systematically understood or implemented.

DG ECHO made efforts to enhance its partners' understanding of the thematic policies and facilitate their implementation (e.g. training, feedback, addition of a thematic policy annex to the HIPs).

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ11

JC11.1 The different types of partnership models facilitated the achievement of common (EU and partners') humanitarian objectives, each model in a unique way

There was good alignment of humanitarian objectives between the EU and its partners, with different partnership models contributing to this alignment by leveraging the unique expertise of various partners. DG ECHO's strategic and high-level dialogues further supported this alignment.

The introduction of pilot PPs by DG ECHO, as well as multi-year actions, facilitated the achievement of common humanitarian objectives, promoting long-term planning, innovative localisation efforts, and the scaling-up of anticipatory actions. These partnerships provided predictability, enabling DG ECHO's partners to focus on longer-term priorities and adapt their capacities accordingly.

Despite these successes, DG ECHO's administrative and reporting requirements, particularly the detailed yearly reporting for pilot PPs and the Single Form, posed significant challenges for partners, especially local partners, who have fewer resources to dedicate to administrative compliance.

JC11.2 The multi-year strategies (multi-year actions and pilot PPs) delivered the anticipated benefits

Multi-year strategies delivered anticipated benefits by providing funding predictability and stability, which enabled better strategic planning and effective crisis response. Multi-year actions and pilot PPs were particularly successful in scaling-up anticipatory action, enhancing sustainable outcomes, and advancing the localisation agenda in line with Grand Bargain commitments.

Despite some partially achieved KRIs in closed pilot PPs, stakeholders reported overall success of multi-year strategies in achieving humanitarian objectives. The extended

timeframe and predictable funding allowed DG ECHO partners to strengthen community trust, enhance local actor capabilities, and foster ownership by national and local governments, particularly in the development and implementation of anticipatory action protocols.

Feedback from the assisted population and national authorities indicated high satisfaction with the services provided through DG ECHO pilot PP funding. Significant improvements were noted in health practices and overall well-being, while the establishment of health posts in remote areas facilitated regular vaccination programmes, provision of basic medicines, and treatment of health emergencies.

JC11.3 Multi-year strategies were more effective than annual funding cycles

Multi-annual strategies provided more predictable and stable funding compared to annual cycles, fostering enhanced cooperation with national actors and advancing the localisation agenda. This approach enabled more structured investments, strategic planning, and sustainable project implementation, leading to potentially more sustainable outcomes.

Despite no significant discrepancy in the achievement of KRIs between multi-year and annual actions, multiannual strategies facilitated a transition from a purely emergency-focused approach to a more comprehensive approach. This allowed DG ECHO and its partners to incorporate sustainable activities into national plans, strengthening local capacities and systems adaptable to future crises.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ12

JC12.1 DG ECHO-funded interventions generate concrete, non-quantifiable results and impacts on the lives of assisted populations

JC12.2 DG ECHO-funded interventions generate quantifiable results and impacts on the lives of assisted populations

JC12.3 Success stories from the angle of assisted populations can be identified

Evidence indicates that DG ECHO-funded interventions generated both non-quantifiable and quantifiable results and impacts on the lives of assisted populations. Examples included beneficiaries' improved well-being and living conditions, better food security, healthcare, safety, nutritional status, greater awareness of DP issues, and ability to cope with immediate after-effects of disasters.

Overall, beneficiaries consulted as part of this (and previous) evaluations indicated that the assistance received addressed their needs and generated quantifiable and non-quantifiable results and impacts. For instance, in Ethiopia, beneficiaries indicated that the assistance addressed their need for childbearing and childcare, strengthening their knowledge of appropriate breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices. In Ukraine, the assisted population highlighted that quality of life had improved, with respondents feeling more confident about legal issues and having better access to health services.

Feedback collected from children as part of this evaluation reveals a positive picture about the assistance received as part of a selection of DG ECHO-funded actions in Bangladesh, Venezuela, and Ethiopia.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ13

JC13.1 DG ECHO took appropriate action to ensure cost-effectiveness when making strategic choices about its portfolio of assistance and throughout the project cycle

DG ECHO continued its efforts to improve the assessment of cost-effectiveness (and efficiency) of humanitarian aid interventions.

DG ECHO often considered efficiency and cost-effectiveness aspects when making strategic choices about funding, although in most cases they were not a determining factor.

DG ECHO made efforts to promote the use of CEA in the design of interventions.

Dashboard ratings of ‘cost-effectiveness/efficiency/transparency’ provided a satisfactory measure of the efficiency of funded actions.

The extent to which DG ECHO considered cost-effectiveness/efficiency and timeliness when selecting partners is unclear.

JC13.2 DG ECHO-funded actions were implemented in a cost-effective and efficient manner

DG ECHO-funded actions were implemented in an efficient manner, albeit with some differences between regions, sectors and types of partners.

The overall efficiency of DG ECHO-funded actions remained relatively stable during the evaluation period. The Southeast Europe and Eastern Neighbourhood region and the MENA region featured higher-than-average total (and indirect) costs per person assisted, as well as share of actions with indirect costs above threshold.

The different modalities of intervention and types of activities carried out in different sectors made it difficult to compare efficiency. Actions in sectors with a high transfer component, particularly cash, were particularly efficient.

DG ECHO partners performed differently in the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of funded actions, based on their unique capacities and advantages relative to other partners.

DG ECHO monitored efficiency and cost-effectiveness throughout the project cycle, but this assessment was not consistently applied and understood across all interventions.

JC13.3 Internal and external factors affecting cost-effectiveness were identified and adequately mitigated throughout the project cycle

Internal factors had a negative impact on the cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO-funded actions. These included complex administrative processes, short funding cycles, and fragmentation of activities.

External factors that limited the cost-effectiveness of actions included: access constraints due to security issues or government policies; economic shocks; and problems related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, DG ECHO’s flexibility facilitated relationships with partners and smoothed dealing with the consequences of external factors.

JC13.4 Obligations imposed by the EU to partners in terms of reporting, eligibility rules, requests for funds, etc. were necessary (ensured accountability and transparency) and proportionate (no unnecessary administrative burden)

The requirements imposed on partners were necessary for accountability and transparency, but some requirements were burdensome (e.g. Single Form, reporting requirements).

DG ECHO should continue its efforts to simplify and streamline processes to achieve greater administrative efficiency.

JC13.5 There is room for further efficiency/cost-effectiveness in future interventions

Future interventions could be more efficient and cost-effective by optimising funding approaches, enhancing operational practices, and strengthening learning strategies.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ14

JC14.1 DG ECHO's budget allocations are based on needs and actions of other donors

JC14.2. DG ECHO budget allocations strike an appropriate balance between needs, gaps, own budget constraints and wider political considerations

DG ECHO's budget allocations were based on needs and considered the concurrent actions of other donors. In contexts of comparable needs and insufficient resources, they also considered wider policy priorities when allocating funding.

DG ECHO's level of funding was in line with global trends, an indication that when allocating resources DG ECHO struck a balance between its own needs assessments and wider funding flows in the humanitarian aid environment.

DG ECHO's flexibility to amend and top up budgets in response to evolving crises was highlighted as a successful approach that at least partially addressed the mismatch between needs and available resources in the humanitarian sector.

JC14.3 The EU's systems and processes (the funds allocation system – including for DP and sudden onset disasters, IT systems, HIP and project management cycles) allow for a cost-effective/efficient European Commission humanitarian aid response

The efficiency and cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO's systems and processes improved during the evaluation period.

The system for the allocation of funding was adequate and improved over time.

DG ECHO's budget absorption capacity was very high overall.

DG ECHO implemented several measures to improve the efficiency of the financial management system.

While the efficiency of DG ECHO's audit and control systems was not consistently assessed, various indicators suggest satisfactory performance, with signs of improvement over the evaluation period.

Other systems within DG ECHO (HR, IT) were efficient, while learning mechanisms for humanitarian aid could be improved.

JC14.4 DG ECHO's sectoral/thematic policies and guidelines improve the cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO's interventions

The thematic policies generally improved the cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO's interventions.

Policies for cash, logistics, food assistance and nutrition were particularly conducive to cost-effectiveness. DP was recognised as intrinsically cost-effective.

Several stakeholders, especially DG ECHO partners, expressed concern about the high number of policies and associated administrative costs and burden.

JC14.5 Different types of partnerships contribute to efficiency and cost-effectiveness in a differentiated manner

Different types of DG ECHO partners contributed to the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of funded actions differently, based on their unique capacities and advantages relative to other partners.

Different types of partners also differed in the measures they took to ensure efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the delivery of DG ECHO-funded actions.

JC14.6 Multiannual strategies such as the pilot PPs contribute to maximising efficiencies and cost-effectiveness

Multi-annual strategies such as pilot PPs could contribute to improving cost-effectiveness, although it might be too early to tell whether they increased the efficiency of DG ECHO-funded actions.

The administrative and reporting burden was broadly the same under the two modalities of partnership.

JC14.7 Specific measures and approaches could be implemented to improve the efficiency/cost-effectiveness of the European Commission's humanitarian aid system and processes

Specific measures and approaches could be implemented to improve efficiency and/or cost-effectiveness. These include ensuring the flexibility of funding through softly earmarked funding and other flexible funding arrangements, e.g. multi-year funding, progress towards empowering local and national responders, and planning more realistic coverage for administrative costs.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ15

JC15.1 Sustainability elements are incorporated into the design and implementation of EU humanitarian aid interventions

Sustainability elements were more consistently incorporated in DG ECHO's HIPs and thematic policies compared to the previous period, as well as in DG ECHO partners' proposals and throughout the implementation of humanitarian actions.

JC15.2 EU's humanitarian aid interventions provide sustainable support for living conditions, alleviate suffering and save lives

There was a notable increase in DG ECHO-funded actions showing continuity of results or sustainable effects, rising from 30% to over 58%. This improvement reflects DG ECHO's efforts to ensure the sustainability of funded actions.

DG ECHO-funded actions emphasised capacity-building for local institutions and communities, enhancing local ownership and the likelihood of sustained benefits. Approximately 38.5% of actions focused on empowering local populations, 17% on capacity-building for national/local actors, and 15.5% on capacity-building for local humanitarian partners.

The majority of sustainable activities were implemented in sectors such as health (36 actions), WASH (30), protection (24), nutrition (18), and DP/prevention (18). These efforts contributed significantly to the resilience and long-term impact of interventions.

The sustainability of DG ECHO's humanitarian interventions varied between sectors and contexts (e.g. DRR). Some challenges remained, especially planning exit strategies and ensuring sustainability in more complex or less stable contexts.

JC15.3 Factors that contribute/hinder sustainability (internal and external) are identified

Key factors identified as limiting the sustainability of DG ECHO-funded actions included: a lack of planning for sustaining results during the project planning and delivery phase; insufficient involvement of communities and beneficiaries; and misalignment between different EU initiatives. Challenges such as volatile security conditions, short-term funding cycles, and the nature of protracted crises also hindered sustainability efforts.

Enabling factors contributing to achieving sustainable effects included: DG ECHO's increased focus on capacity-building with local partners; collaboration with development partners to integrate humanitarian and development strategies; flexibility in adapting project designs; and the adoption of multiannual strategies providing a more stable funding environment for better strategic planning.

JC15.4 There is room for better incorporation of sustainability in the design and implementation of EU's humanitarian aid interventions

Focusing on innovative and durable environmental solutions, as per DG ECHO's Guidance on the operationalisation of the minimum environmental requirements, could significantly enhance the sustainability of DG ECHO-funded actions. Developing tools and methodologies to make responses greener and more climate-friendly could improve long-term outcomes and resilience.

Standardising multi-year actions and extending pilot PPs funding, alongside closer collaboration with development actors, could bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and development. This approach could provide a more predictable funding environment, allowing for better strategic planning and enhancing the sustainability of interventions.

Key conclusions and findings related to EQ16

JC16.1 DG ECHO offers the necessary tools, flexibility and predictability (e.g. multi-year funding) to allow partners to address DRR, resilience and early recovery in projects, and to ensure successful handover from humanitarian to development actors

Despite DG ECHO's active promotion of the HDP nexus approach through multi-year and quality funding, DRR, resilience, and early recovery projects, its efforts were hindered by differing mandates, funding cycles, and geographical focus of relevant EU services.

Throughout the evaluation period, the EU strengthened its efforts to link humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, and development initiatives. It advocated for a more integrated approach, despite numerous conceptual, political, and institutional challenges.

Evidence highlights the varying programming logics and timeframes between DG ECHO and other EU entities (DG INTPA, EEAS), which impeded coordinated actions across EU services.

While DG ECHO provided tools and support to operationalise the HDP nexus approach, stakeholders reported insufficient tools, flexibility, and funding predictability to facilitate complementarity between humanitarian and development programmes.

JC16.2 The EU's humanitarian aid contributes to the HDP nexus work in the field

The HDP nexus approach has been integrated into EU instruments, such as the NDICI-Global Europe programming. This aims to support countries most in need and contribute to international commitments such as the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

Efforts to promote dialogue and cooperation between humanitarian, development, and peace actors were evident at both HQ and field levels. HDP nexus coordination groups and task forces were established, although the process depended heavily on individual efforts.

Despite progress in some areas, overall cooperation among EU entities was suboptimal. Stakeholders suggested improving coordination between DG ECHO and development actors to address the root causes of crises and enhance the operationalisation of the HDP nexus.

JC16.3 In contexts where the HDP nexus was operationalised in the field, examples of how this led to better synergies between the three levels can be identified (including good practices and lessons learned)

Despite coordination challenges, there are success stories in the operationalisation of the HDP nexus by DG ECHO and other EU services, demonstrating effective integration of humanitarian, development, and peace activities.

Across different regions, DG ECHO and EU services successfully operationalised the HDP nexus approach through coordinated efforts, joint action plans, and integration of disaster preparedness and development initiatives. Success stories in regions such as the SAIO, Upper Nile Basin, and West and Central Africa highlight the importance of strategic collaboration, innovative funding mechanisms, and alignment with local and international partners to address complex humanitarian and development challenges.

Across various countries, DG ECHO demonstrated effective coordination and integration of the HDP nexus approach, successfully aligning humanitarian, development, and peace efforts. Examples include joint action plans, disaster preparedness, and social protection initiatives in Chad, Uganda, and Mozambique. These highlight the importance of collaborative frameworks and partnerships with local and international stakeholders to address complex crises and promote long-term resilience.

JC16.4 Internal and external factors hindering the operationalisation of the HDP nexus (overall and between each pair)

There were internal barriers to HDP nexus implementation. DG ECHO faced significant internal challenges in operationalising the HDP nexus, including: different funding priorities and cycles between humanitarian and development sectors; lack of structured coordination mechanisms; insufficient resources and institutional capacities; and varying approaches and objectives between actors.

There were also external barriers to HDP nexus implementation. These included: the absence of national strategies; limited willingness of governments to cooperate; restricted humanitarian space; political instability; and lack of coordinated mechanisms between development donors and humanitarian clusters.

JC16.5 There is room for learning, feedback loops and reflection on how to implement the HDP nexus and navigate these challenges

There was insufficient cooperation between DG ECHO and other Commission services working on the HDP nexus. Further improvements could be achieved by facilitating regular interactions and joint initiatives, improving strategic alignment and operational

effectiveness. Enhanced cooperation could ensure a more holistic response to crises, leveraging the strengths of both humanitarian and development actors.

Implementing continuous learning, feedback mechanisms and reflective practices could be essential for the effective operationalisation of the HDP nexus, as there is a need for ongoing learning and adaptation.

The use of benchmarking exercises to explore and adopt best practices from Member States and other international donors could significantly enhance DG ECHO's HDP nexus implementation. For example, Denmark's Integrated Humanitarian and Development Framework and Switzerland's Unified Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and Development offer valuable lessons. By adopting similar approaches, the Commission could ensure better coordination, resource utilisation, and a more comprehensive response to crises.

Human resources-related challenges included the lack of rotation between DG ECHO HQ and field staff and the need for staff with development backgrounds. Revising the selection process for field positions and promoting staff rotations could help to align strategic and operational plans, fostering better synergy and knowledge-sharing within DG ECHO.

ANNEX IV. OVERVIEW OF BENEFITS AND COSTS

Cost effectiveness

The efficiency and cost-effectiveness of humanitarian actions are considered at different levels and through different means, such as:

- the design and selection of the EU-funded projects. Indeed, cost-effectiveness is part of the Single Form where partners submit their proposals and DG ECHO decides which actions to fund.
- the monitoring of the actions by DG ECHO field officers.
- the use of the different aid modalities according to their cost-effectiveness (e.g. cash versus in-kind assistance),
- coordination efforts to avoid duplication
- logistics

The methodology for the allocation of humanitarian funding is based on thorough needs assessment and is essential to ensure that the allocation of aid is relevant and effective and targets the people most in need (and is not dependent on the cost of the action). This implies that cost-effectiveness is not a determining factor in the allocation of humanitarian aid, which remains primarily needs-based. Indeed, the cost of an action can vary considerably from one country / context to another, because of different specific conditions (e.g. economic, logistics, access), which are not related to the efficiency of the action itself. This would create bias if the humanitarian actions or responses were to be compared from one country (or sector) to another.

In addition, as documented in a study carried out by DG ECHO in 2021 “Better Evidence for DG ECHO impact on Beneficiaries”, the assessment of cost-effectiveness (i.e. costs per person reached) at DG ECHO and more broadly in the humanitarian sector, remains challenging, for several reasons:

- It may be difficult to isolate the effect of a specific humanitarian action from other similar actions,
- It may be difficult to attribute results and impacts of interventions to a specific actor while EU-funded actions receive support from several donors (attribution problem),
- Given the urgency of humanitarian emergencies and interventions (e.g. for sudden crises), planning and monitoring documents may be limited.
- The effects of humanitarian aid actions may be difficult to measure and un-quantifiable,
- Subsequently, the necessary elements to conduct cost effectiveness analysis are limited and as a consequence, DG ECHO relies mostly on a qualitative assessment of the cost-effectiveness of its actions.

Benefits

Member States often look at the EU as a donor to provide assistance in crises where they are not able to intervene in a national capacity. Member States also benefit from the EU’s ‘humanitarian advocacy role, which aims to increase humanitarian space to ensure access to hard-to-reach areas and ensuring

last mile delivery. In addition, the EU coordination, as well as efforts to push for more effective provision of humanitarian aid, encourage economies of scale.

A potential discontinuation – or even reduction - of DG ECHO's interventions in the humanitarian aid field would result in i) a substantial financial gap affecting the ability of the humanitarian system globally and the EU particularly, to address humanitarian needs and achieve results; ii) reduced coordination,, increased fragmentation and extra costs (considering the size and capacities of some EUMS); iii) reduced adherence to humanitarian aid principles iv) increased challenges and decreased compliance to International Humanitarian Law and the EU's ability to build a strong global rules-based order based on multilateralism v) increased instability in third countries.

Simplification and burden-reduction

More predictable funding (through multi-year funding), simplified reporting, flexibilities embedded in regional programmes, guidance provided in DG ECHO's thematic policy documents have the potential to generate economies of scale, reduce the administrative burden and bring more efficiency gains allowing partners to reach out to more beneficiaries and/or to provide more quality support.

Possibility to apply simplified reporting (8+3 reporting template) following the Grand Bargain commitments could reduce the administrative burden on stakeholders while also potentially simplifying the reporting regarding the instrument.

ANNEX V. STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATION - SYNOPSIS REPORT

This Stakeholder Synopsis Report provides an overview of the results from the stakeholder consultation carried out in the context of the *Comprehensive Evaluation of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid (2017-2022)*. The evaluation was carried out by ICF on behalf of the European Commission (DG ECHO) between August 2023 and December 2024. The objective of consultations conducted was to ensure that all relevant stakeholders were given an opportunity to express their views on the EU's humanitarian aid during the 2017-2022 period. This report accompanies the Final Evaluation Report and should be read in conjunction with it.

Consultation strategy and stakeholder types

The consultation strategy relied on several methods to ensure a comprehensive and representative collection of views from a wide range of stakeholders. These are described in detail below.

Scoping interviews

The evaluation team conducted 14 scoping interviews to discuss the expectations around the evaluation and identify key areas or issues of focus. The data collected informed the refinement of the evaluation approach. Stakeholders consulted in the scoping interviews include DG ECHO staff (5); DG ECHO partners (5); and other European Commission services, namely DG INTPA, DG NEAR, FPI, and the EEAS (4).

Inception workshops

Two inception workshops were held. These include a Theory of Change workshop, aimed at enabling refining the Theory of Change, and a meta-evaluation workshop, to assess whether findings from the meta-evaluation were applicable to DG ECHO's humanitarian aid and to explore whether previous recommendations had been implemented. Both workshops gathered a selection of DG ECHO staff, including headquarters staff, field staff, and thematic experts. The Theory of Change workshop was attended by 20 participants and 15 participants attended the meta-evaluation workshop.

Targeted consultations: Key Informant Interviews and workshops

The evaluation team conducted 86 Key Informant Interviews with different stakeholder groups, as outlined in the table below.

Key Informant Interviews conducted

Stakeholder type	Number of Interviews
DG ECHO HQ	16
DG ECHO thematic experts	7

Stakeholder type	Number of Interviews
DG ECHO field staff	5
DG ECHO partners	24
Local implementing partners	11
Member States	7
Other donors	2
Networks and research institutes	3
Other EU Institutions and Entities	4
Clusters	4
Development actors	2
Private sector	1

In addition, 11 workshops gathering key stakeholders were conducted, including six thematic workshops and four geographical workshops. The table below provides an overview of participants attending each workshop.

Overview of participants per workshop

Workshop	Participants
Geographical workshops	
South East Asia and the Pacific	Participants: 12 DG ECHO field staff (9); DG ECHO thematic experts (2); DG ECHO HQ (1)
Southern Africa and Indian Ocean	Participants: 13 DG ECHO field staff (10); DG ECHO thematic experts (1); DG ECHO HQ (2)
West (and Central) Africa	Participants: 16 DG ECHO field staff (14); DG ECHO thematic experts (2)

Workshop	Participants
Upper Nile Basin	Participants: 9 DG ECHO field staff (8); DG ECHO HQ (1)
Thematic workshops	
Pilot Programmatic Partnerships	Participants: 16 DG ECHO partners (16)
Thematic policies	Participants: 17 DG ECHO HQ (6); DG ECHO thematic experts (9), DG ECHO field staff (2)
HDP Nexus	Participants: 17 DG ECHO (12); DG INTPA (1); DG NEAR (2); FPI (1); EEAS (1)
Partnerships and projects	Participants: 15 DG ECHO partners (15)
Advocacy workshop	Participants: 15 DG ECHO HA (8); DG ECHO field staff (6); DG ECHO field staff (1)
Strategy, priority and EU added value	Participants 10 DG ECHO HQ (5); European Parliament (1); Member States (4)
Foresight workshop	Participants: 16 DG ECHO partners (13); Networks/Research institutes (3)

Case studies: case study interviews and focus groups

The evaluation team conducted field missions to inform the preparation of five case studies. Case study interviews (both remotely and in-person) with key stakeholders (e.g. DG ECHO field staff and thematic experts, national authorities, DG ECHO partners, local implementing partners, etc.) were carried out in selected countries. Stakeholders consulted for case studies were selected, in collaboration with DG ECHO and its partners, based on their expertise, familiarity or relation to the theme being examined and the geographic area of work. In addition, ten focus groups with assisted population were conducted. The table below presents an overview of the interviews and focus groups conducted for the five case studies.

Case studies interviews and focus groups conducted

Case study	Interviews conducted	Focus participants groups
Humanitarian access	22	NA ⁽¹⁵⁸⁾
Disaster Preparedness and Response to natural hazards	16	4 online focus groups: Qasim Mangrio and Hohli villages, Pakistan (9) Ameer Hassan KK and Nawab Abdul Aziz villages, Pakistan (10) Dharar and Phangario villages, Pakistan #3 (13) Possarko and Sayansar villages, Pakistan (11)
Pilot Programmatic Partnerships	25	3 in-person focus groups: Gondar, Ethiopia (2) Janamora, Ethiopia (26) Janamora, Ethiopia (26)
DG ECHO Shelter and Settlements in forced displacement contexts	21	3 in-person focus groups: Boryslav, Ukraine (13) Lviv, Ukraine (8) Yavoriv, Ukraine (14)
DG ECHO as a Global Actor	32	NA

⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ The evaluation team could not conduct focus groups in DRC due to safety and security considerations in the rural areas of the selected EU-funded interventions.

Online surveys

Three online surveys were conducted to inform the evaluation. The table below presents the stakeholder groups consulted and responses received to surveys.

Online surveys responses

Survey	N. of responses received
DG ECHO HQ and field staff	94 responses overall: 46 from HQ staff and 48 from field staff.
DG ECHO partners	100 responses
Local implementing partners	63 responses

Projective drawing technique

The projective drawing technique aimed to gather feedback from children reached by the EU's humanitarian interventions, to depict and describe their personal stories and most significant change resulting from their involvement in EU-funded actions. The evaluation team identified a selection of partners and funded actions to engage in the projective drawing technique. Participants were children involved in EU-funded actions, who were asked to participate by local test coordinators. In total, 227 children across Bangladesh, Venezuela, and Ethiopia participated.

Public consultation

A Public Consultation was conducted to capture the views of the general public. The Public Consultation was launched by DG ECHO on the European Commission's 'Have your say' portal. A total of 37 respondents from across four respondent groups replied to the consultation. Five respondents uploaded position papers. An analysis of responses received is provided in the Public Consultation Factual Summary Report.

Findings from the stakeholder consultation

This section presents findings of consultations by stakeholder group focussing on DG ECHO partners, local implementing partners and assisted population.

DG ECHO staff

The majority of DG ECHO staff consulted through the online survey agreed that the EU's overall humanitarian aid objectives remained relevant across the 2017-2022 period ⁽¹⁵⁹⁾. The

⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff. Save and preserve life=96% (90/94); Provide necessary relief and assistance to people affected by long-lasting crises=69% (65/94); Help finance the transport of aid=72% (68/94); Carry out short-term rehabilitation work=51% (48/94); Ensure preparedness for risks of natural disasters=72% (68/94); Support civil operations= 68% (64/94).

majority of DG ECHO staff consulted also considered the commitment to forgotten crises ⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ and the commitment to EiE ⁽¹⁶¹⁾ appropriate and justified to address existing funding shortfalls on these issues in the humanitarian system. **DG ECHO staff consulted indicated that DG ECHO strategies, as described in the HIPs, were aligned with the EU's overarching objectives and commitments ⁽¹⁶²⁾, and were informed by comprehensive need assessments ⁽¹⁶³⁾.** This was achieved using different analytical tools, such as the FIT tool. A minority of stakeholders noted that whilst the FIT tool shows much promise, there is room for improvement, primarily for it to include more qualitative data ⁽¹⁶⁴⁾. DG ECHO staff agreed that HIPs were tailored to specific contexts and were flexible to respond to evolving needs ⁽¹⁶⁵⁾. Crisis modifiers were also regarded as tools ensuring the flexibility of DG ECHO's approach ⁽¹⁶⁶⁾. In terms of modalities, the majority of DG ECHO staff indicated that DG ECHO appropriately prioritizes the types of modalities considering specific contexts and needs ⁽¹⁶⁷⁾. **Thematic policies were seen as valuable tools for facilitating discussion and highlighting lesser-known issues ⁽¹⁶⁸⁾.** Thematic policies were generally seen as comprehensive and up to date ⁽¹⁶⁹⁾, although this varied by policy. **In terms of partnerships**, 84% (79/94) of DG ECHO staff responding to the survey indicated that having different types of partners helped achieving common humanitarian objectives. 45% (42/94) agreed with the statement that the modalities of association with the different types of partners allowed DG ECHO and its partners to respond appropriately to different crises, while 22% (21/94) disagreed. DG ECHO staff had mixed views on the relevance of strategic partnerships, with some stakeholders indicating the need to better foster strategic relations with partners ⁽¹⁷⁰⁾. A minority of staff indicated the potential to better exploit partnerships with Member States Specialised Agencies ⁽¹⁷¹⁾. As regards pilot PPs, 52% (47/94) of DG ECHO staff indicated that pilot PPs provided more flexibility and predictability of funding. **As regards multi-year funding**, 79% (65/94) of DG ECHO staff indicated that

⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff (Relevant - 72%, 68/94, Partially relevant – 17%, 15/94); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (6 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (3 out of 7); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (1 out of 5); Geographic workshop (West (and Central) Africa).

⁽¹⁶¹⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff (Relevant: 33%, 31/94, Partially relevant – 32% 30/94; Not relevant – 32%, 32/ 94); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (2 out of 7). 26 out of 94 DG ECHO staff responding to the survey indicated that the EiE commitment is less relevant (Open question).

⁽¹⁶²⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=70% (66/94)

⁽¹⁶³⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=70% (66/94); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (2 out of 7); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (1 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (2 out of 16); Geographic workshops (Southern Africa and Indian Ocean workshop, Upper Nile Basin workshop, West (and Central) Africa workshop).

⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (4 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (2 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (1 out of 7).

⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=81% (76/94)

⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ Geographic workshops (Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Workshop; Upper Nile Basin Workshop; West (and Central) Africa workshop; South-East Asia and the Pacific workshop)

⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff= 69% (65/94); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (1 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (3 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (1 out of 7).

⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (2 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (3 out of 16); Thematic workshop (Thematic policies workshop).

⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (10 out 27); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (1 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (4 out of 7). Survey with DG ECHO staff: for each policy, the majority of DG ECHO staff (50% or more) consulted agreed that each thematic policy is up-to-date and addresses new and emerging needs.

⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (7 out of 16), DG ECHO Thematic experts (2 out of 7).

⁽¹⁷¹⁾ Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (4 out of 16).

multi-year funding provided more flexibility and predictability of funding, though only 34% (31/94) indicated that multi-year funding was more effective than annual funding cycles.

DG ECHO staff indicated that the EU's humanitarian interventions were internally coherent and complementary ⁽¹⁷²⁾. 46% (43/94) of DG ECHO staff responding to the online survey indicated that the EU's humanitarian interventions avoided overlaps with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). During other consultation activities, staff consulted provided examples that illustrated how DG ECHO's humanitarian aid and the UCPM leveraged synergies during the evaluation period ⁽¹⁷³⁾. Only 26% (34/94) indicated that the EU's humanitarian interventions were coherent and avoided overlaps with the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI), although 60% (57/94) did not have an opinion on this matter or were not aware of coherence with ESI. **As regards Member States**, DG ECHO staff indicated that DG ECHO actively sought to coordinate its humanitarian interventions with those of Member States ⁽¹⁷⁴⁾. However, they also reported that there is room to enhance coordination with Member States ⁽¹⁷⁵⁾. **As regards other donors**, DG ECHO staff agreed that DG ECHO actively sought to coordinate its humanitarian aid interventions with those of other donors and non-EU humanitarian actors, both at strategic and operational levels ⁽¹⁷⁶⁾. According to DG ECHO staff (59%, 54/94), DG ECHO **actively sought to avoid overlaps with the EU's external financing instruments** (e.g., EU Trust Funds), and cooperation with FPI and EEAS was somewhat effective, while they were less knowledgeable about coordination with DG NEAR ⁽¹⁷⁷⁾. DG ECHO staff indicated the need to further enhance coordination with other EU actors, particularly DG INTPA ⁽¹⁷⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁷²⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=62% (31/94); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (2 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (4 out of 16); Interview with DG ECHO thematic expert (1 out of 7); Geographic workshop (South East Asia and the Pacific workshop).

⁽¹⁷³⁾ Case study 2: Disaster Preparedness and response to natural disasters; Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (12 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (4 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (4 out of 7); Scoping interviews with DG ECHO (3 out of 5); Meta-evaluation workshop; Geographical workshops (Southern Africa and Indian Ocean; West (and Central) Africa workshop); Survey with DG ECHO staff (2 out of 13 - open question).

⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=57% (54/94); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (12 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (2 out of 7); Scoping interviews with DG ECHO (2 out of 5); Thematic workshops (Advocacy workshop)

⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (11 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (3 out of 7); Thematic workshop (EU added value and strategy workshop). Survey with DG ECHO staff (7 out of 17 – Open question N. 12).

⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff (other donors)=76% (72/94); (non-EU humanitarian actors)=59% (54/94); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (15 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO field (4 out of 5); Geographical and thematic workshops (Southern Africa and Indian Ocean ; Upper Nile Basin ; West (and Central) African ; South East Asia and the Pacific; Thematic policies ; Advocacy workshop; EU added value and strategy); Scoping interviews with DG ECHO (3 out of 5).

⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ For FPI, DG ECHO staff responding to the survey indicated that coordination was effective (51%, 40/94); for EEAS, DG ECHO staff responding to the survey indicated that coordination was effective (59%, 48/94).

⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=15% (12/94); Interview with DG ECHO thematic expert (2 out of 7); Interviews with DG ECHO field (2 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (10 out of 16); Online survey with DG ECHO Partners Staff: 13 out of 47 - Open question. N-17.2.

DG ECHO staff noted the following aspects as providing an EU added value: DG ECHO's **field presence** ⁽¹⁷⁹⁾, its **thematic and technical expertise** ⁽¹⁸⁰⁾, **advocacy** role ⁽¹⁸¹⁾, global stance as a principled donor and **needs-based approach** to funding ⁽¹⁸²⁾ and its **flexibility** ⁽¹⁸³⁾.

The majority of DG ECHO staff agreed that the EU humanitarian interventions addressed the most pressing, urgent needs ⁽¹⁸⁴⁾, and contributed to achieving the HAR objectives ⁽¹⁸⁵⁾. The majority of DG ECHO staff indicated that DG ECHO played an important (or crucial) role in improving living conditions of affected people ⁽¹⁸⁶⁾, reducing morbidity and mortality ⁽¹⁸⁷⁾; and preserving the dignity of life ⁽¹⁸⁸⁾. **In addition, they indicated that DG ECHO played an important role in:** i) preserving the **humanitarian space** and ensuring respect for **IHL** ⁽¹⁸⁹⁾; ii) strengthening needs-based delivery of principled humanitarian aid ⁽¹⁹⁰⁾; iii) increasing **visibility** of humanitarian crises and needs ⁽¹⁹¹⁾; iv) enhancing coherence and complementarity of humanitarian response ⁽¹⁹²⁾; and v) enhancing humanitarian **policy** and **operational**

⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff= 99% (91/92); Thematic and geographic workshops (Southern Africa and Indian Ocean; EU added value and strategy workshop; West (and Central) Africa workshop; Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (15 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (5 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (5 out of 7).

⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=92% (85/94); Thematic workshop (Advocacy workshop); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (9 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (3 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (5 out of 7).

⁽¹⁸¹⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=65% (60/94); Thematic and geographic workshops (South East Asia and the Pacific; EU added value and strategy; Upper Nile Basin; West (and Central) Africa; Advocacy workshop); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (10 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (3 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (3 out of 7)

⁽¹⁸²⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=70% (65/94); Thematic and geographic workshop [EU added value and strategy workshop; West (and Central) Africa; Advocacy workshop); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (10 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (3 out of 5); Interviews with thematic experts (3 out of 7).

⁽¹⁸³⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=69% (64/94); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (6 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (3 out of 7).

⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=86% (81/94); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (14 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (6 out of 7); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (3 out of 5); Geographical workshop (Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Workshop).

⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=69% (65/94); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (14 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (6 out of 7); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (3 out of 5); Geographical workshop (Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Workshop).

⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=69% (65/94) indicated that DG ECHO played an important (55%, 52) or crucial (14%, 13) in this sense.

⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=55% (52/94) indicated that DG ECHO played an important (41%, 39) or crucial (14%, 13) role in this sense.

⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=65% (61/94) indicated that DG ECHO played an important (52%, 49) or crucial (1%, 12) role in this sense.

⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=63% (59/94); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (8 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (2 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (1 out of 7).

⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=79% (74/94).

⁽¹⁹¹⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=64% (60/94).

⁽¹⁹²⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=59% (55/94).

leadership ⁽¹⁹³⁾. DG ECHO staff also agreed that EU strategies contributed to the aims of global commitments, including the **Grand Bargain** ⁽¹⁹⁴⁾.

The majority of DG ECHO staff agreed that the EU's systems and processes have been conducive to an efficient and cost-effective humanitarian response ⁽¹⁹⁵⁾. They indicated that DG ECHO considered cost-effectiveness and timeliness when making strategic choices ⁽¹⁹⁶⁾. However, DG ECHO staff was divided when asked the extent to which these factors influence the final decisions, with the relative majority stating that these are considered, but are not a determinant factor ⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ (e.g. due to contextual volatility, insufficient training or guidance for field staff on how to take these considerations into account, and insufficient collection of cost data at the field level). **The majority of DG ECHO staff agreed that allocations were based on needs** ⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ and that recent or emerging needs and contextual changes were appropriately reflected in policy documents and funding decisions ⁽¹⁹⁹⁾. They indicated that these were considered in strategic decisions about allocations. However, only 41% (39/94) of DG ECHO staff indicated that DG ECHO sufficiently takes into account the actions of other donors when taking funding decisions. Similarly, only 42% (40/94) indicated that DG ECHO's decisions relating to funding allocations or changes were made in a timely manner. **Overall, DG ECHO staff indicated that thematic policies generally improved the cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO's interventions** ⁽²⁰⁰⁾. However, a minority of DG ECHO staff expressed concerns over the high number of policies currently in place, given partners' difficulties in meeting mainstreaming requirements ⁽²⁰¹⁾. DG ECHO staff had mixed views regarding the efficiency of the **different modalities of association with partners and multi-year funding**. On the pilot PPs, only 13% (12/91) of DG ECHO staff surveyed indicated that pilot PPs were more efficient than consecutive actions funded on an annual basis, with some stakeholders expressing concerns about the lack of a clear view of how pilot PPs translated into efficiency gains on the ground ⁽²⁰²⁾. Nevertheless, pilot PPs provided a higher level of predictability by allowing partners to adopt a more strategic perspective ⁽²⁰³⁾.

Only a minority of DG ECHO survey respondents (47%, 44/94) reported that sustainability elements were incorporated into the design and implementation of the EU's humanitarian aid interventions. The majority of respondents (58%, 54/94) stated that there was room for better incorporating sustainability in the design and implementation of EU humanitarian aid interventions. Several interviewees recognised DG ECHO's increasing focus on environmental sustainability considerations and disaster preparedness, which was

⁽¹⁹³⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=64% (60/94).

⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=53% (50/94).

⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=56% (52/92).

⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff= 57% (54/94); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (6 out of 16).

⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=44% (41/94).

⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=54% (51/94).

⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=51% (48/94).

⁽²⁰⁰⁾ Survey with DG ECHO staff=48% (44/92) (average across all policies); Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (5 out of 16); Thematic workshop (Thematic policies workshop).

⁽²⁰¹⁾ Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (6 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (3 out of 5); Interviews with thematic experts (1 out of 7); Thematic workshop (Thematic policies workshop).

⁽²⁰²⁾ Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (4 out of 16).

⁽²⁰³⁾ Case study 3: Pilot Programmatic Partnerships; Survey with DG ECHO=52% (47/91).

acknowledged as a significant element of their sustainability efforts ⁽²⁰⁴⁾. On the **HDP Nexus**, only 40% (38/94) of DG ECHO staff consulted indicated that the EU's humanitarian aid contributed to operationalising the Nexus in the field, with several stakeholders highlighting different factors hindering this (e.g. different funding cycles, priorities, and mandates among HDP actors) ⁽²⁰⁵⁾.

DG ECHO partners

The majority of partners consulted agreed that the EU's overall humanitarian aid objectives remained relevant across the 2017-2022 period ⁽²⁰⁶⁾. Partners indicated that DG ECHO strategies, as described in the **HIPs**, were informed by comprehensive needs assessments ⁽²⁰⁷⁾, were tailored to specific contexts ⁽²⁰⁸⁾, and were flexible to respond to evolving needs ⁽²⁰⁹⁾. They also indicated that strategies considered access challenges ⁽²¹⁰⁾, addressing specific challenges of forgotten crises ⁽²¹¹⁾, and were tailored to the needs of most vulnerable groups ⁽²¹²⁾. Consultation with partners for the development of HIPs were regarded as enablers for their relevance ⁽²¹³⁾. The need to better include local actors in such consultations was highlighted by a minority of partners ⁽²¹⁴⁾. Partners agreed that DG ECHO appropriately prioritises the types of **modalities**, considering specific contexts and needs ⁽²¹⁵⁾. DG ECHO's advocacy on the use of cash as a modality was also positively regarded. Partners emphasised the importance for DG ECHO to continue exploring ways to increase opportunities for **multi-year** and more **flexible financing** ⁽²¹⁶⁾. They indicated that their **partnership** with DG ECHO was suitable and adaptable in light of current and future emergencies ⁽²¹⁷⁾, and that the different modalities of association with DG ECHO allowed them to respond appropriately to different

⁽²⁰⁴⁾ Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (6 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO Thematic experts (3 out of 7); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (4 out of 5).

⁽²⁰⁵⁾ Thematic and geographic workshops (Southern Africa and Indian Ocean workshop; EU added value, strategy, and priority, Upper Nile Basin; West (and Central) Africa; South East Asia and the Pacific Workshop, HDP Nexus workshop); Survey with DG ECHO staff. Interviews with DG ECHO HQ (13 out of 16); Interviews with DG ECHO field staff (4 out of 5); Interviews with DG ECHO thematic experts (4 out of 7).

⁽²⁰⁶⁾ Survey with partners staff. Save and preserve life=97% (97/100); Provide necessary relief and assistance to people affected by long-lasting crises=90% (90/100); Help finance the transport of aid=74% (74/100); Carry out short-term rehabilitation work=73% (73/100); Ensure preparedness for risks of natural disasters=86% (86/100); Support civil operations= 75% (75/100).

⁽²⁰⁷⁾ Survey with partners staff=81% (81/100).

⁽²⁰⁸⁾ Survey with partners staff=86% (86/100).

⁽²⁰⁹⁾ Survey with partners staff=68% (68/100).

⁽²¹⁰⁾ Survey with partners staff=73% (73/100).

⁽²¹¹⁾ Survey with partners staff=58% (58/100).

⁽²¹²⁾ Survey with partners staff=75% (75/100).

⁽²¹³⁾ Interviews with partners (9 out of 24).

⁽²¹⁴⁾ Partnerships and projects workshop.

⁽²¹⁵⁾ Survey with partners staff=79% (70/100).

⁽²¹⁶⁾ Interviews with partners (2 out of 24); Foresight workshop; Partnerships and projects workshop; pilot Programmatic Partnership workshop.

⁽²¹⁷⁾ Survey with partners=73% (73/100); Interviews with partners (10 out of 24); partnerships and projects workshop.

crises ⁽²¹⁸⁾. Although pilot Programmatic Partnerships were positively regarded, partners noted margins for improvement as regards the administrative burden ⁽²¹⁹⁾.

On the alignment with the **humanitarian principles**, 79% (79/100) of partners consulted reported not encountering challenges when trying to ensure consistency with the four humanitarian principles in DG ECHO-funded actions. Partners also expressed positive views with regards to the internal coherence of DG ECHO's humanitarian response, both at strategic and operational levels ⁽²²⁰⁾. Partners had mixed views regarding the coherence between DG ECHO's humanitarian aid, the **UCPM**, and **ESI**, with some stakeholders being less knowledgeable about the latter instruments. As regards external coherence, partners positively regarded DG ECHO's efforts in **coordination** fora, such as cluster mechanisms ⁽²²¹⁾. 53% (53/100) of partners indicated that DG ECHO played an important role in **enhancing coherence** and complementarity of humanitarian response.

DG ECHO partners noted the following aspects as providing an EU added value: DG ECHO's **field network** ⁽²²²⁾, its **expertise** ⁽²²³⁾, its global stance as a **principled donor** ⁽²²⁴⁾, **flexibility** ⁽²²⁵⁾, and its **partnerships approaches** ⁽²²⁶⁾. 79% (79/100) of partners indicated that a potential discontinuation of DG ECHO's funding would have a negative impact, as the scope and scale of their organisation's humanitarian assistance would be reduced.

80% (80/100) of partners consulted agreed that **DG ECHO-funded interventions generated the expected results and achieved their objectives**. Partners also indicated that DG ECHO played an important role in improving living conditions of affected people ⁽²²⁷⁾, reducing mortality ⁽²²⁸⁾, alleviating suffering ⁽²²⁹⁾, reducing vulnerability and improving resilience ⁽²³⁰⁾, and preserving the dignity of life ⁽²³¹⁾. In addition, they also agreed that DG ECHO contributed to preserve humanitarian space and ensuring respect of IHL (62%, 62/100), increasing visibility of humanitarian crises and needs (75%, 75/100), enhancing humanitarian policy and operational leadership (65%, 65/100). DG ECHO's multi-year funding was regarded as contributing to effectiveness (64%, 64/100), as well as its advocacy efforts (51%, 51/100), and its speed of response to emerging crises (67%, 67/100).

⁽²¹⁸⁾ Survey with partners=73% (73/100)

⁽²¹⁹⁾ Case study 3: pilot Programmatic Partnerships; Interviews with partners (10 out of 24); pilot Programmatic Partnerships workshop; partnerships and projects workshop; Scoping interview with partner (1 out of 5)

⁽²²⁰⁾ Strategic level: Survey with partners=71% (71/100); Operational level: Survey with partners=68% (68/100)

⁽²²¹⁾ Interviews with partners (16 out of 24); Partnerships and projects workshop; Case study 4: Shelter and Settlements in forced displacement contexts.

⁽²²²⁾ Survey with partners=68% (68/100); Interviews with partners (17 out of 24); Partnerships and projects workshop.

⁽²²³⁾ Survey with partners=63% (63/100); Interviews with partners (8 out of 24).

⁽²²⁴⁾ Survey with partners=69% (69/100); Interviews with partners (11 out of 24).

⁽²²⁵⁾ Survey with partners=60% (60/100); Interviews with partners (9 out of 24).

⁽²²⁶⁾ Survey with partners=53% (53/100); Interviews with partners (10 out of 24).

⁽²²⁷⁾ Survey with partners=75% (75/100).

⁽²²⁸⁾ Survey with partners=69% (69/100).

⁽²²⁹⁾ Survey with partners=64% (64/100).

⁽²³⁰⁾ Survey with partners=61% (61/100).

⁽²³¹⁾ Survey with partners=73% (73/100).

63% (63/100) of partners consulted agreed that DG ECHO funding allocations to specific countries and regions were based on needs. 54% (54/100) of partners also agreed that **DG ECHO funding allocations took efficiency and cost-effectiveness criteria into account** in an appropriate way, and 60% (60/100) reported that DG ECHO monitored efficiency and cost-effectiveness throughout the project cycle. Partners implemented different actions to ensure the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of funded actions, such as, among others, the use of local staff, local procurement, feedback and learning mechanisms, assessment of the most appropriate modality, and working through local partners. Partners (87%, 87/100) reported considering costs and timeliness when designing DG ECHO-funded actions, as well as factors affecting efficiency and cost-effectiveness (81%, 81/200). They (64%, 64/100) also agreed that cost-effectiveness obligations imposed by the EU upon partners were necessary and proportionate, although they also highlighted that **administrative burden** (e.g., associated to reporting requirements) remained an issue during the 2017-2022 period ⁽²³²⁾.

Partners reported implementing different **actions to ensure the sustainability** of the funded actions, such as ensuring capacity building at national and local level (89%, 89/100), community engagement and participation (86%, 86/100), integration of DG ECHO-funded activities with national/local systems (71%, 71/100), advocacy, policy dialogue, and coordination (66%, 66/100), and environmental considerations 52% (52/100). However, they also identified different factors affecting the sustainability of the funded actions, such as the lack of planning for sustainable results, insufficient involvement of communities, lack of alignment between different EU initiatives, and lack of strategic focus on elements known to be more sustainable (e.g., livelihoods activities, DP). On the **HDP Nexus**, 63% (63/100) indicated that the operationalisation of the Nexus remains limited. They had mixed views whether DG ECHO's humanitarian aid contributed to operationalising the HDP Nexus. According to partners, different factors affect the operationalisation of the HDP Nexus, such as lack of coordination between humanitarian, humanitarian, and peace actors, and different funding priorities or cycles between them ⁽²³³⁾.

Local implementing partners

The majority of local implementing partners consulted agreed that the **EU's humanitarian objectives** ⁽²³⁴⁾ and **commitments** related to forgotten crises ⁽²³⁵⁾ and EiE ⁽²³⁶⁾ **remained relevant** during the 2017-2022 period. For instance, DG ECHO's focus on EiE was regarded as relevant given that the sector was sometimes left unaddressed by other donors. Local implementing partners also positively regarded DG ECHO's advocacy on the use of cash as the preferred modality as particularly relevant ⁽²³⁷⁾.

Only a minority (2%, 17/63) indicated encountering challenges when ensuring the **alignment with humanitarian principles** when implementing the actions. 89% (56/63) indicated that DG ECHO-funded were **internally coherent**, and complementary with those of other donors and

⁽²³²⁾ Interviews with partners (16 out of 24); Case study 3: pilot Programmatic Partnerships.

⁽²³³⁾ Interviews with partners (19 out of 24); Survey with partners staff=64% (64/100); Foresight workshop.

⁽²³⁴⁾ Survey with local implementing partners. Save and preserve life=97% (61/63); Provide necessary relief and assistance to people affected by long-lasting crises=90% (57/63); Help finance the transport of aid=87% (55/63); Carry out short-term rehabilitation work=81% (51/63); Ensure preparedness for risks of natural disasters=89% (56/63); Support civil operations= 79% (79/63).

⁽²³⁵⁾ Survey with local implementing partners=75% (47/63); Interviews with local implementing partners (5 out of 11).

⁽²³⁶⁾ Survey with local implementing partners=76% (48/63).

⁽²³⁷⁾ Interviews with local implementing partners (5 out of 11).

humanitarian actors in the field (83%, 52/63). They (73%, 46/63) indicated that DG ECHO field staff actively engaged with coordination mechanisms, and that exchanges with DG ECHO field staff contributed to the successful implementation of the funded actions.

According to local implementing partners, the following aspects of DG ECHO's humanitarian aid provided an **EU added value** ⁽²³⁸⁾: DG ECHO's field network (53%, 33/63), its expertise (63%, 40/63), its coordination role (57%, 35/63), its global stance as a principled donor (64%, 40/63); its thematic policies (62%, 38/63), its flexibility (57%, 36/63), partnerships approaches (61%, 39/63), speed of response (54%, 34/63), and its emergency response tools (64%, 39/63).

The majority of local implementing partners indicated that DG ECHO-funded actions they were involved in have **reached the number of assisted populations targeted and achieved their objectives** ⁽²³⁹⁾. They also reported that DG ECHO played an important role in enhancing humanitarian policy and operational leadership, strengthening needs-based delivery of humanitarian aid, increasing visibility of humanitarian crises and needs, preserving humanitarian space and ensuring respect of IHL, improving donor practices, influencing and shaping the global humanitarian system, improving living conditions of affected people, preserving the dignity of life, alleviating suffering, reducing vulnerability and improving resilience.

Local implementing partners reported having **considered costs and timeliness** when designing DG ECHO-funded actions (89%, 56/63), as well as factors affecting efficiency and cost-effectiveness (84%, 51/63). They also agreed that the cost-effectiveness obligations imposed by the EU upon partners were necessary and proportionate (77%, 49/63), although a minority indicated that administrative burden remains an issue ⁽²⁴⁰⁾. Local implementing partners consulted took different measures to ensure efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the delivery of DG ECHO-funded actions, such as the use of local staff, local procurement, feedback and learning mechanisms, and assessing the most appropriate modality.

Similarly, they reported adopting different measures to enhance the **sustainability** of funded actions, such as community engagement and participation, capacity building at national/local levels, advocacy, policy dialogue and environmental considerations. On the **HDP Nexus**, 57% (36/63) indicated that DG ECHO provided the necessary tools flexibility, and predictability to facilitate complementarity between humanitarian and development actors, and 53% (33/63) agreed that DG ECHO's humanitarian aid contributed to operationalising the HDP Nexus in the field. According to local implementing partners consulted ⁽²⁴¹⁾, different factors hindered the operationalisation of the Nexus, such as lack of coordination between different actors, lack of institutional capacities in the country of implementation, legal and political barriers, lack of national strategies linking humanitarian, development and peace efforts, and operational challenges.

Assisted populations

Assisted populations consulted for this evaluation indicated that the support they received generated concrete quantifiable and non-quantifiable results on their lives and well-being. Assisted population consulted during focus group discussions in Ethiopia and Ukraine indicated

⁽²³⁸⁾ Survey with local implementing partners; Interviews with local implementing partners (11 out of 11).

⁽²³⁹⁾ Survey with local implementing partners=88% (55/63); Interviews with local implementing partners (8 out of 11).

⁽²⁴⁰⁾ Interviews with local implementing partners (5 out of 11).

⁽²⁴¹⁾ Survey with local implementing partners; Interviews with local implementing partners (9 out of 11).

that the support received helped their household to address some of their basic needs ⁽²⁴²⁾. In **Ukraine**, the support provided led to non-quantifiable results by improving the living conditions of beneficiary internally displaced people and generating a stronger sense of confidence and security. Beneficiaries received legal and psychological assistance, in addition to financial support to access health services, provision of IT appliances, and improved WASH facilities. In **Ethiopia**, assisted population indicated that the assistance received as part of a pilot PP addressed their needs for childbearing and childcare, strengthening their knowledge of appropriate breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices. In **Pakistan**, assisted population consulted reported that the assistance helped them to assure education for their children, buy food for their livestock, repay debts, get livestock vaccinations, and gain a better understanding of risks and preparation to react to the impact of extreme weather events. Improved hygiene conditions, access to drinkable water, and adequate shelter during heavy rains were also reported as valuable results achieved by DG ECHO-funded interventions.

Feedback collected from children consulted for this evaluation shows a positive picture of the assistance received as part of a selection of DG ECHO-funded actions in Bangladesh, Venezuela, and Ethiopia. The data suggest positive feelings towards the school environments in all countries and regions that were part of this study. In all three countries, the drawing exercise suggested a very positive atmosphere in the classrooms of DG ECHO-funded EiE projects. Reasons included the opportunity to learn, meeting friends, and getting school supplies (e.g. backpacks with notebooks and pens). In Bangladesh, drawings suggested that teachers were seen as important figures in students' lives. In Venezuela, drawings suggested positive emotions and happiness about being in school.

Other stakeholders

In addition to DG ECHO staff, partners, local implementing partners, and assisted population, feedback was also gathered from a broader range of stakeholders. The number of consultations with these stakeholders was smaller compared to other groups. These stakeholders were likely to focus their feedback on specific elements of DG ECHO's humanitarian interventions. Their views and feedback are summarised below.

Member States' representatives and other third country donors ⁽²⁴³⁾

According to these stakeholders, the EU's humanitarian objectives and commitments remained relevant and appropriate during the evaluation period. These stakeholders positively regarded DG ECHO's needs-based approach and its advocacy on the humanitarian principles and respect of IHL. DG ECHO's participation to coordination mechanisms and support to UN-led coordination architecture was also considered key in fostering the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance and coherence with actions implemented by other donors. However, all Member States consulted highlighted that there is unexploited potential when it comes to strategic coordination between the EU and Member States on humanitarian assistance.

Other EU entities and bodies ⁽²⁴⁴⁾

Other EU entities and bodies consulted agreed that the EU's humanitarian interventions were coherent with the EU's external financing instruments. However, a minority of stakeholders reported that coordination among different EU services managing different EU funding

⁽²⁴²⁾ In-person focus group discussions with assisted populations in Ethiopia; In-person focus group discussions with assisted populations in Ukraine.

⁽²⁴³⁾ Interviews with Member States (7); Other donors (2); EU added value and strategy workshop.

⁽²⁴⁴⁾ Interviews with other EU entities and bodies (5); Workshop on the HDP Nexus; Scoping interviews (4)

instruments could be strengthened. The different funding cycles and priorities across different EU services were regarded as factors hindering coherence. A minority of stakeholders also positively regarded DG ECHO's increased focus on Disaster Preparedness. On the HDP Nexus, these stakeholders generally agreed that the operationalisation of the HDP Nexus remains limited, notwithstanding the EU's efforts in this sense. They identified some factors that hindered the operationalisation of the Nexus, such as the different mandates between development and humanitarian actors, lack of structural coordination, and differing priorities across EU services.

Clusters and development actors ⁽²⁴⁵⁾

These stakeholders positively regarded DG ECHO's thematic policies, with some policies showcasing DG ECHO's focus on emerging trends (e.g., environmental sustainability) or sectors that were deprioritised by other donors (e.g., EiE). They also positively regarded DG ECHO's needs-based approach and its engagement in coordination mechanisms to foster coherence with initiatives and actions carried out by other humanitarian actors and donors. Respondents also highlighted the added value of DG ECHO's field network, its expertise and advocacy role. However, they underlined that more efforts are needed to advance on some Grand Bargain commitments, particularly those related to enhanced quality funding, the HDP Nexus, localisation, and simplification. A minority of stakeholders also highlighted the need to decrease administrative burden on DG ECHO's partners.

Networks, research institutes, and private sector ⁽²⁴⁶⁾

These stakeholders agreed that the EU's humanitarian objectives and commitments remained relevant and appropriate during the 2017-2022 period. They also agreed that DG ECHO's humanitarian interventions generated added value, given DG ECHO's field presence, needs-based approach and flexibility. All networks and research institutes consulted underlined the need to enhance efforts on Grand Bargain commitments, particularly those on localisation and the HDP Nexus. They identified different factors hindering the operationalisation of the HDP Nexus, such as different mandates and cycles between development and humanitarian actors. Finally, they positively regarded DG ECHO's increased focus on environmental and Disaster Preparedness considerations.

Findings from the public consultation

A majority of respondents to the public consultation indicated that DG ECHO's approach and focus on the different humanitarian crises was relevant to the most pressing humanitarian needs during the period evaluated (2017-2022). Respondents highlighted some contributing factors, such as DG ECHO's needs-based approach and the flexibility of DG ECHO's funding mechanisms.

In addition, most respondents indicated that **DG ECHO's humanitarian aid was effective in saving and preserving life** during emergencies and providing the necessary assistance to those in need of aid. Respondents highlighted several factors that in their view contributed to such effectiveness, including DG ECHO's strong field presence, expertise, diverse range of adequate partners, needs-based approach, coordination efforts, and thematic policies.

They also indicated that **DG ECHO's humanitarian aid was internally coherent**. Several hindering factors affecting internal coherence were mentioned, such as an increased disconnect

⁽²⁴⁵⁾ Interviews with clusters (4); Interviews with development actors (2).

⁽²⁴⁶⁾ Interviews with networks and research institutes (3); Interview with private sector (1); Foresight workshop

between DG ECHO HQ and field staff, and different approaches among DG ECHO field staff. While respondents agreed on the coherence between DG ECHO humanitarian aid and the UCPM, they also highlighted areas of concern. Respondents indicated that the Team Europe approach enhanced synergies between DG ECHO and Member States. They also highlighted their appreciation for DG ECHO's efforts in engaging with third countries, other donors, and other international organisations.

Respondents also noted that the operationalisation of the HDP Nexus remained limited, urging increased cooperation among different Commission's services on development aid.

A majority of respondents agreed that DG ECHO's humanitarian response generated added value compared to that of Member States. This perception was associated to several elements, including DG ECHO's funding size, global reach, field network, expertise, partnership models, needs-based approach, role in policy development, advocacy, and focus on forgotten crises.

ANNEX VI. THEORY OF CHANGE

Figure 1. Overview of the Theory of change for the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid (2017-2022)

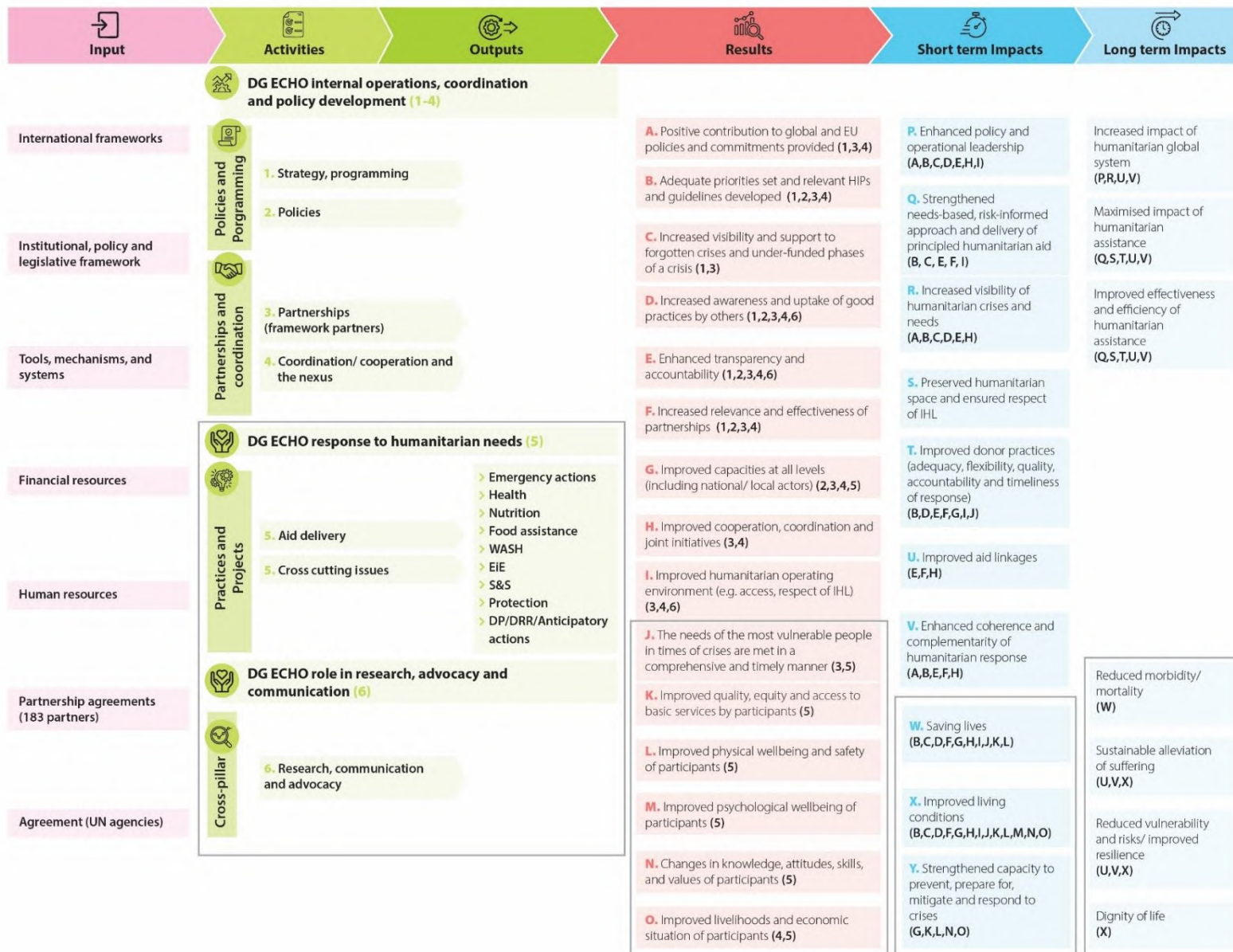


Figure 2. Detailed mapping of the rationale for intervention, objectives and commitments, inputs, and external factors of the Theory of change for the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid (2017-2022)



Figure 3. Detailed mapping (I) of the activities, outputs, results, and impacts of the Theory of change for the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid (2017-2022)

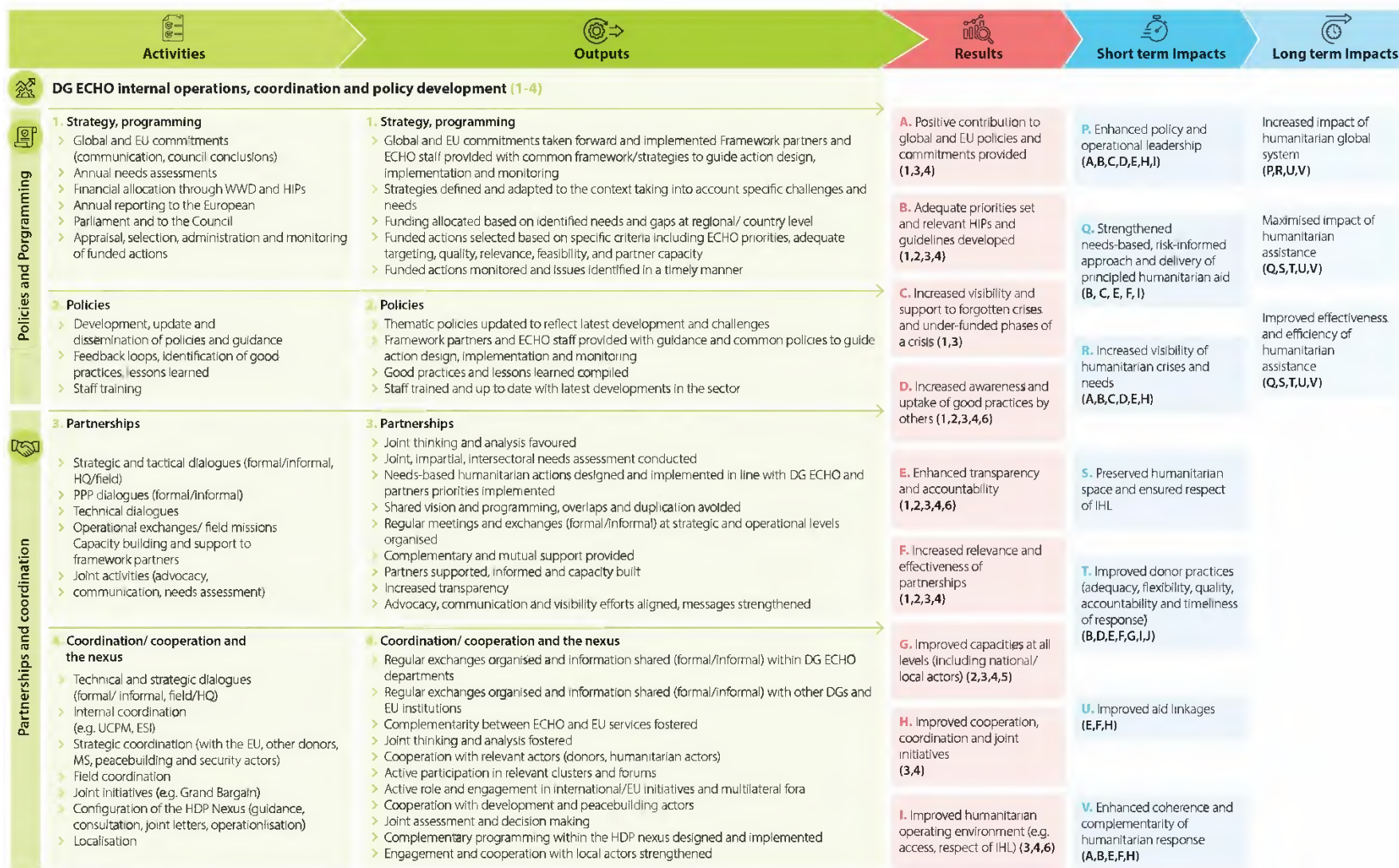


Figure 4. Detailed mapping (II) of the activities, outputs, results, and impacts of the Theory of change for the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid (2017-2022)

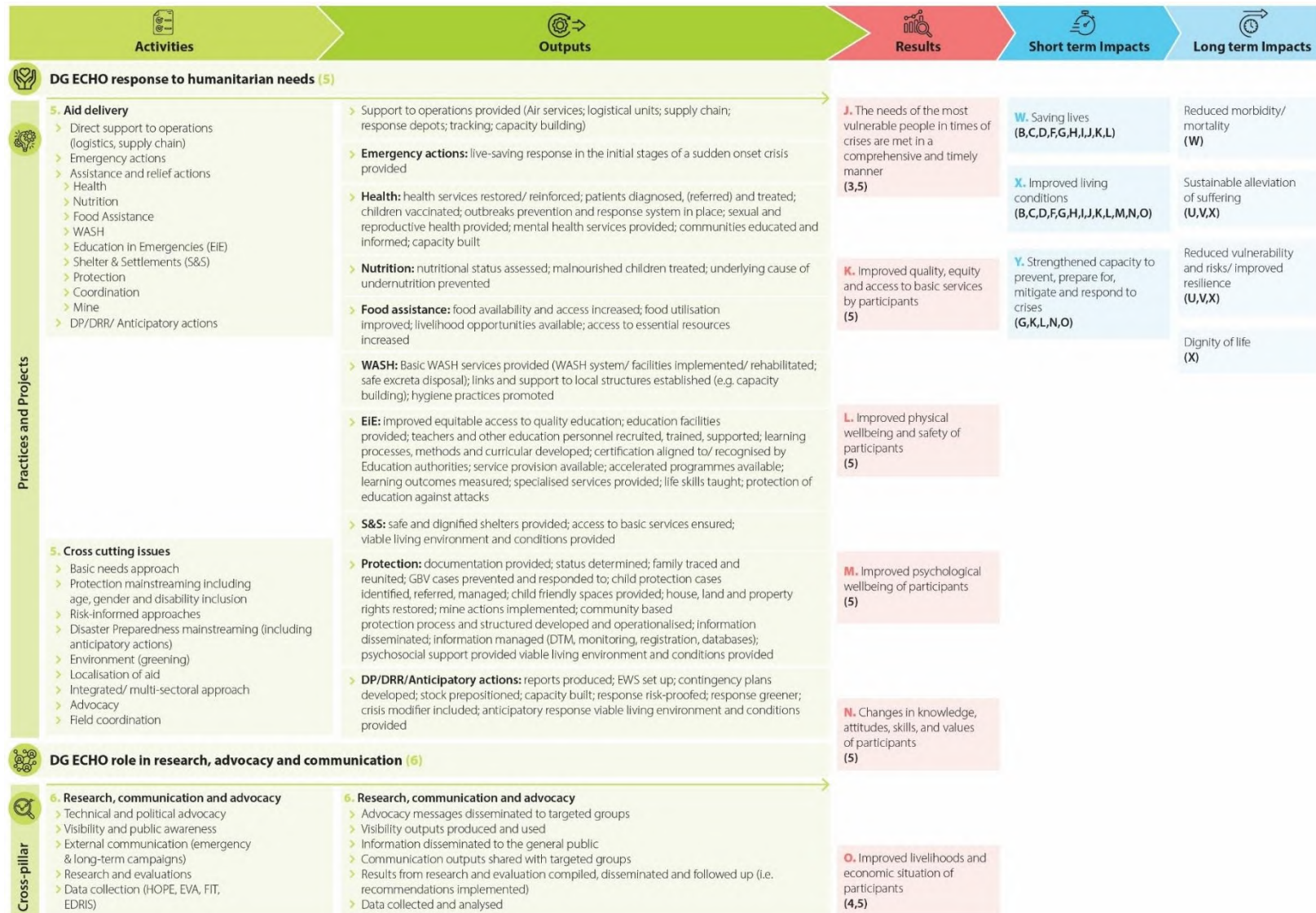


Figure 5. Detailed mapping of the assumptions of the Theory of change for the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid (2017-2022)

