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General Guidelines on Operational Priorities for Humanitarian Aid in 2022

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The European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) manages the EU's humanitarian aid for the victims of conflicts or disasters, both natural and human-induced, in non-EU countries. DG ECHO's mandate is to save and preserve life, to reduce or prevent suffering, and to safeguard the integrity and dignity of people affected by humanitarian crises by providing relief and protection. By taking early action and focusing on preparedness, DG ECHO seeks to preserve livelihoods and build the resilience of affected populations. It also facilitates coordination on humanitarian assistance with, and among, EU Member States' humanitarian departments and agencies. The overall priority is to manage aid in the most effective and efficient way possible, so that EU-funded assistance has maximum effect, while respecting international law and the principles of impartiality, neutrality, humanity, non-discrimination and independence.

DG ECHO is also responsible for the management of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)¹, which covers interventions in Member States and other countries², and is involved in the implementation of Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 on the provision of emergency support within the Union³. That Regulation lays down a framework for EU emergency support in the form of specific measures appropriate to the economic situation in the event of an ongoing or potential natural hazard or human-induced disaster. This kind of emergency support can be provided only where the exceptional scale and impact of the disaster is such that it gives rise to severe wide-ranging humanitarian consequences in one or more Member States, and only in exceptional circumstances where no other instrument available to Member States and the EU is sufficient. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic is leading to an unprecedented loss of life in the EU and causing untold hardship, the Commission has proposed⁴ that emergency support be activated in accordance with Article 2 of the Regulation and that some of its provisions be amended to address the special needs of the outbreak.

The document is drawn up under Article 16(1) of the Humanitarian Aid Regulation⁵ and covers humanitarian aid operations for the year ahead. It does not cover DG ECHO's activities in the field of civil protection, which are instead described in the annual work programme for civil protection actions to be adopted on the basis of Decision No 1313/2013/EU.

The Commission's May 2021 Communication on *The EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles*⁶ sets out key actions to strengthen the EU's global humanitarian impact, in order to meet the substantial rise in humanitarian needs that has been triggered by COVID-19.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/mechanism_en.

² [Decision No 1313/2013/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 924), as amended by Decision [\(EU\) 2019/420](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 March 2019 (OJ L 77 I, 20.3.2019, p 1).

³ [OJ L 70, 16.3.2016](#), p. 1.

⁴ Proposal for a Council Regulation activating the emergency support under Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 of 15 March 2016 and amending its provisions in respect of the COVID-19 outbreak ([COM\(2020\) 175 final](#)).

⁵ [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996](#) concerning humanitarian aid (OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1).

⁶ COM(2021) 110.

1. General context for 2022

Humanitarian crises have become steadily more complex and severe in recent decades, and the trend is expected to continue in 2022. Conflict remains the main driver of humanitarian needs. Fuelled by climate change, disasters triggered by natural hazards are also increasing in intensity and scope, while economic shocks take a toll on the most vulnerable. The interaction of climate, economic, environmental and conflict risks is aggravating existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, and affecting humanitarian needs, particularly for the most vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the situation, leading to a sharp increase in the number of people in need, emphasising the interlinkages between human, animal and environmental health, and requiring a ‘health system’ approach.

Across the world, 238 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance⁷ and protection, and more funding than ever before is required if we are to respond appropriately.

By Mid-October of 2021, available funding covered only 39.3% of the United Nations (UN) humanitarian appeal for the year (at that point, the call was for USD 36 billion). The most underfunded emergencies to date (less than 22% funded) are those in Zimbabwe, Haiti, Pakistan and Chad.

In situations of protracted conflict, insecurity often prevents the delivery of aid where help is most needed. Accessing and protecting the most vulnerable continue to be challenged by widespread and growing lack of compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) and the humanitarian principles. The percentage of civilian victims in conflicts has risen dramatically, students and educational staff are exposed to attacks and military use of educational facilities, and the security of humanitarian personnel has remained a critical challenge. 2020 was among the most violent years on record for humanitarian workers, with 475 workers attacked, 108 killed, 242 wounded and 125 kidnapped⁸.

Protracted violence continues to force people to flee from their homes. At the end of 2020, almost 82.4 million were forcibly displaced worldwide by conflict and violence, according to the UN’s Refugee Agency⁹. The global number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has again reached an all-time high with more than 55 million people displaced in their own country¹⁰. In 2020, over two thirds of the world’s refugees came from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Syria, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Yemen and Afghanistan continue to be the countries most affected by conflict-related internal displacement. Only just over 250 000 refugees returned to their country of origin, demonstrating the protracted nature of most of today’s conflicts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created extraordinary and unprecedented challenges for the humanitarian response system. Its direct and secondary impacts have heightened humanitarian needs and heightened vulnerabilities worldwide. Travel and access restrictions due to the pandemic remained a challenge to response capacity, the unimpeded movement of humanitarian workers within and across countries, and the free flow of life-saving assistance, medicines and equipment. The pandemic has resulted in a global learning crisis, exacerbating existing inequalities and reversing gains in access to education. At its height, 1.6 billion children had their education disrupted due to school closures and 463 million of them had no access to any form of remote learning¹¹.

⁷ [Global Humanitarian Overview](#), December 2020 (UN OCHA)..

⁸ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/humanitarian-day>.

⁹ [UNHCR - Global Trends in Forced Displacement – 2020](#).

¹⁰ [IDMC | GRID 2021 | 2021 Global Report on Internal Displacement \(internal-displacement.org\)](#).

¹¹ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/covid-19-least-third-worlds-schoolchildren-unable-access-remote-learning-during>

In humanitarian crises, the hardest hit are the most vulnerable, including people with disabilities, the elderly, women and children. Children are particularly vulnerable: almost two thirds of the world's children live in a country affected by conflict; of these, one in six live within 50 km of a conflict zone¹². This not only threatens children's physical and mental health, but it often deprives them of education and limits their future life opportunities. More than half of refugees of school age are out of school¹³.

Girls living in conflict-affected countries are more likely to be out of school. Girls and women also face a much greater risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including early marriage and pregnancy, and are more affected by disasters. Preventing and responding to SGBV (which affects women, girls, men and boys) are still not prioritised from the earliest stages of emergencies. Humanitarian responders often lack sufficient mechanisms and funding to ensure that it is addressed comprehensively. Due to discrimination and environmental, physical, economic and social barriers, people with disabilities are more likely to be excluded from emergency responses and humanitarian services. They also face additional threats and vulnerabilities.

According to the *2021 Global Report on Food Crises*¹⁴, more than 155 million people across 55 countries experienced acute hunger requiring urgent food, nutrition and livelihood assistance in 2020. The worst food crises were (in order of severity) in the DRC, Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan and, Ethiopia, with over 60% of the population affected (98 million) living in the African continent. The latest (March 2021) Hunger Hotspot analysis¹⁵, identified three countries with zones being at risk of famine (Yemen, South Sudan and Nigeria), but the situation is deteriorating quickly and famine-like conditions (IPC phase 5)¹⁶ are emerging in other countries. In addition, high levels of acute and chronic malnutrition in children living in emergency conditions remain a cause of concern. Conflict continues to be the key driver of food insecurity, which has been exacerbated by the economic shocks associated with the COVID-19 crisis.

While global humanitarian needs are increasing dramatically, funding is not. It is therefore essential to anticipate, identify and focus on main priorities and respect the principles guiding the EU's humanitarian budgetary allocations are based. In 2022, EU humanitarian aid will remain focused on supporting those most in need following sudden-onset, protracted and forgotten crises¹⁷. Encouraging humanitarian actors to achieve greater efficiency is also essential.

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

¹² [Children affected by armed conflict, 1990-2019, Peace Research Institute Oslo, Conflict trends, 2020.](#)

¹³ [Stepping Up: Refugee Education in Crisis, UNHCR report \(2019\).](#)

¹⁴ [http://www.fightfoodcrises.net/grfc-2021/en/.](http://www.fightfoodcrises.net/grfc-2021/en/)

¹⁵ [Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity \(March to July 2021 outlook\).](#)

¹⁶ [http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/ipc-overview-and-classification-system/en/.](http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/ipc-overview-and-classification-system/en/)

¹⁷ The methodology used to that end is supported by the Index for Risk Management (INFORM).

2. Priorities

2.1 Horizontal thematic priorities: improving aid effectiveness, efficiency and quality of operations

The Commission Communication on the EU's humanitarian action provides an overarching framework for the thematic priorities in 2022. Given the growing challenges, the EU will give a renewed impetus to more effectively address growing humanitarian needs.

Aid effectiveness and result-oriented actions will remain priorities in 2022. The 2021 Grand Bargain annual meeting¹⁸ acknowledged the significant progress made in the 5 years since its launch, and secured commitment to the Grand Bargain 2.0¹⁹, which will expand its strategic outreach. In 2022, DG ECHO should continue to deliver on a variety of commitments, such as potential simplification of reporting, flexibility, and less earmarking and further progress in multi-year programming, coordinated needs assessment and localisation. On the donor side, DG ECHO will maintain its leading role as a member of the Facilitation Group in order to secure the necessary reforms in a more strategic manner *on the basis of a quid pro quo* approach. The introduction of an enhanced humanitarian programme cycle (HPC 2020) reinforces (among other things) the linkages between the humanitarian needs overview (HNO) and humanitarian response plans (HRPs) and sharpens the focus on inter-sectoral aspects of needs. It will require particular attention, in terms of reviewing the lessons learned and supporting the process, in order to encourage positive elements while addressing potential weaknesses.

DG ECHO will continue to pilot multi-annual programmatic partnerships with a selection of partners (NGOs, UN agencies and international organisations). These will improve strategic partnerships, while seeking to progress Grand Bargain commitments such as greater efficiency in aid delivery, support for local actors and promotion of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDP nexus).

The first contributions to Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPF)²⁰ in 2020 have been evaluated in 2021, resulting in a decision to continue funding Country-Based Pooled Funds, as one means of supporting the localisation agenda.

Aid effectiveness and efficiency will also be pursued through the dissemination, implementation and updating, where necessary, of existing policies. In this context, DG ECHO will build on its upcoming humanitarian logistics policy to continue raising the profile of humanitarian logistics and helping partners to improve their capacity in this area, in complementarity with other humanitarian actors' activities. Systematic monitoring and reviews by the Commission's humanitarian experts, and the use of key results indicators, will ensure that EU-funded operations are implemented in accordance with the relevant standards and will provide a more comprehensive picture of DG ECHO's results, performance and resources requirements.

DG ECHO will continue to support the development of innovative solutions and approaches in cooperation with a wide range of actors, including financial institutions, the private sector and the scientific community. In this regard, using digital technology that enhances cost-effectiveness and ensuring the interoperability of relevant data will be of particular importance in facilitating coordinated assessments, response analysis and the delivery of assistance. Innovative financing methods based on blending are expected to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our response and help harness private capital. The EU's research and innovation programmes²¹ offer opportunities to harness technological innovation, technical skills and expertise, and foster their active involvement in humanitarian contexts. DG ECHO will seek to build on the promising example of the Horizon 2020 Prize for Affordable High Tech for Humanitarian Aid to promote the sharing and scaling-up of innovative practices amongst donors and humanitarian implementers.

¹⁸ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/grand-bargain-annual-meeting-2021-summary-note>.

¹⁹ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain>.

²⁰ <https://www.unocha.org/our-work/humanitarian-financing/country-based-pooled-funds-cbpf>.

²¹ See European Innovation Council (EIC) Horizon 2020 prizes for [affordable high-tech for humanitarian aid](#), [early warning for epidemics](#) and [blockchains for social good](#).

DG ECHO will promote the further integration of climate and environmental considerations in humanitarian aid policies and interventions, even in short-term emergency contexts, on the basis of the ‘no harm’ principle (which takes account of the negative effects of aid). As the climate and environmental crisis deepens, humanitarian actors are faced with a collective responsibility to ensure that their operations address climate impact and do not harm further the environment in which people live, and ultimately their health and well-being. In 2022, DG ECHO will step up capacity-building support to mitigate the environmental impacts of humanitarian response. It will also issue guidance on basic environmental requirements in humanitarian operations. Reducing the climate change and environmental impact of EU-funded humanitarian operations contributes to the objectives of the Communication on the EU’s humanitarian action, which places a strong emphasis on addressing climate and environmental factors as part of humanitarian programming. It will also contribute to the European Green Deal²².

In line with the Communication on the EU’s humanitarian action, in 2022 DG ECHO and France (in the context of its upcoming Presidency of the Council of the EU) will co-organise the first-ever European Humanitarian Forum. This international meeting will promote high-level discussions on humanitarian policies, strategies and operations. It will serve as an inclusive platform for strategic, open debates between the EU’s political decision-makers and the wider international humanitarian community, including UN agencies, signatories of the Humanitarian call for action²³, international NGOs, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, international financial institutions, academics, think tanks, local responders and local people’s representatives.

Thematic policies

Over the years, the Commission has developed policies and guidance²⁴ in areas such as protection, gender, health, food, nutrition, shelter, education, and disability. These documents outline its position on key international frameworks and standards, and provide its implementing partners with concrete recommendations on programming. The overall objective is to ensure the quality, coherence and accountability of EU-funded humanitarian operations.

As in previous years, the overarching priority of EU humanitarian aid operations in 2022 will be to provide for protection and to meet the life-saving needs of affected populations, with a focus on the most vulnerable.

Protection and focus on the most vulnerable

Systematic violations of the IHL have been consistently on the rise. In some armed conflicts, IHL violations are widely reported as strategic methods of warfare. Such methods have long-term humanitarian consequences. The continued prevalence of breaches of IHL and of humanitarian principles have made protection a key challenge in today’s humanitarian contexts in particular in armed conflicts involving non-state actors.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to prioritise protection in its humanitarian assistance, in line with the provisions of the Communication on the EU’s humanitarian action and the Commission’s staff working document (SWD) on *Humanitarian protection: improving protection outcomes to reduce risks for people in humanitarian crises*²⁵. The Commission will also support existing good practices, including better monitoring of IHL violations, and advocate for compliance with IHL.

Humanitarian crises have a different impacts on women, girls, boys and men. Their differentiated needs and specific vulnerabilities in crisis and post-crisis situations should be addressed accordingly.

DG ECHO will continue to mainstream gender and age across all sectors, and advance the implementation of the approach to **sexual and gender-based violence** in humanitarian crises that was outlined in the SWD

²² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en.

²³ <https://multilateralism.org/actionareas/humanitarian-call-for-action/>.

²⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/echo/node/519>.

²⁵ SWD(2016)183, 23.05.2016.

on *gender: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance*²⁶ and the DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker²⁷. This work is in line with, and contributes to the implementation of, the EU's strategic approach and action plan on women, peace and security²⁸ and the EU Gender Action Plan III²⁹. The EU will also remain an active member of the 'Call to Action on Protection from Gender Based Violence in Emergencies'³⁰ initiative, which has adopted a new roadmap³¹. DG ECHO will continue to support prevention and response to SGBV through targeted actions.

Humanitarian crises expose children to unspeakable physical and psychological suffering. In line with the first-ever Strategy on the Rights of the Children adopted in 2021 and covering 2021-2024, the Commission will continue to place an emphasis on child protection, addressing all types of violence against children as well as providing mental health and psychosocial support. Specifically, DG ECHO will intensify work to prevent and end grave violations against children affected by armed conflict (CAAC), including with advocacy activities promoting compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

People with disabilities are disproportionately affected by natural hazard and human-induced disasters. They also face multiple barriers in accessing humanitarian services (e.g. water, shelter and food) and may have specific protection needs. In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to ensure the implementation of the 2019 *operational guidance on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in EU-funded humanitarian aid operations*³² and work in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It will also support the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, including by supporting the capacity building of humanitarian organisations to adequately respond to the needs of persons with disabilities.

DG ECHO will continue to provide strong support for **Education in Emergencies** (EiE) (in line with the Commission's SWD on *Education in Emergencies in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations*³³), promote effective investment in education, and earmark 10% of the EU's initial humanitarian budget to EiE, as in 2021.

Innovative approaches and lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic will contribute to efforts to achieve overall aims of its assistance:

- to restore and maintain access to safe, quality and inclusive primary and secondary education for the most vulnerable children, including girls and children with disabilities;
- to promote integrated programming and capacity development;
- and to support the commitments of the Safe Schools Declaration³⁴.

Sectoral policies

DG ECHO will continue to prioritise a '**basic needs**'-approach: an integrated multi-sectoral or cross-sectoral approach to programming that aims to meet/contribute effectively to the basic needs of affected populations. Addressing needs in a coordinated and demand-driven way puts people back at the centre of interventions, especially where they are empowered to make choices and tailor the assistance to meet their individual needs.

²⁶ SWD(2013)290, 22.7.2013.

²⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_age_marker_toolkit.pdf.

²⁸ [EU comprehensive approach on UNSCR 1325 and 1820](#).

²⁹ SWD(2020) 284 final.

³⁰ <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/>.

³¹ [CALL TO ACTION on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies](#)

³² https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/2019-01_disability_inclusion_guidance_note.pdf.

³³ [SWD\(2019\) 150 final/2, 19.7.2019](#).

³⁴ <https://ssd.protectingeducation.org/>

In this regard, and in line with the Grand Bargain commitments, DG ECHO will continue to encourage the use of **cash transfers, which give** affected populations the dignity of choice, flexibility and more control over their own lives. In particular, DG ECHO will continue to encourage the use of **multi-purpose cash transfers**, i.e. cash transfers used by beneficiaries to meet their basic needs.

In order to strengthen transparency and accountability, and to reflect improvements in the light of field experience, DG ECHO is in the process of revising its guidance to partners on the delivery of large-scale cash transfers and the thematic policy on cash transfers.

DG ECHO's aid in the form of **food assistance and nutrition** continues to represent over a quarter of the EU's annual humanitarian aid budget, making the EU one of the world's major donors in this sector. DG ECHO will continue to provide **food assistance** adapted to the needs of specific groups and crisis situations, including the choice of the most appropriate forms of intervention and delivery, be it cash, vouchers or essential food items in critical times, or livelihood protection in full respect of the 'do no harm' principle. In line with the G7 famine prevention and humanitarian crises compact³⁵, DG ECHO will aim to increase the efficiency of its aid and the coordination with other donors in the five commitment areas³⁶, inter alia through an increased use of anticipatory action mechanisms.

DG ECHO will continue to support funding for **nutrition** in emergencies and the development and widespread use of tools and innovative approaches to ensure efficient and effective programming. As nutrition outcomes are multi-faceted, DG ECHO promotes a multi-sectoral and integrated approach to address severe and moderate acute malnutrition and closer coordination of humanitarian and development approaches. It closely follows recent developments and changes in the nutrition sector, in order to be able to adapt the provision of nutrition services, to build resilient communities and to reach as many malnourished people as possible. The EU humanitarian nutrition approach³⁷ contains guidance on the provision of nutrition interventions to the most vulnerable population groups.

Health assistance will remain a core sector of DG ECHO's humanitarian aid intervention. The overriding objective of DG ECHO's health assistance is to limit excess preventable mortality, mental health conditions, permanent disability, and disease associated with humanitarian crises. DG ECHO is increasingly faced with the need to respond to complex health crises driven mainly by disasters. The increased frequency and severity of disease outbreaks calls for improved epidemics preparedness and response. Ebola and the COVID-19 pandemic have stretched international capacities and demonstrated that health crises have an impact that goes far beyond immediate health needs, affecting livelihoods and compromising the survival of the most vulnerable. DG ECHO will continue to fund needs-based, high-quality and context-specific health services to people affected by crises, in accordance with its *health - general guidelines* and the technical annexes³⁸. By adopting an integrated response, DG ECHO endeavours to support people as they struggle to emerge from crises, through a 'health system' approach that looks at all the needs to be addressed.

The EU approach to **shelter and settlement** (S&S) acknowledges the increased needs for humanitarian interventions in this area, and their importance for efficient and effective post-disaster responses and anticipatory action. Shelter is of crucial importance in providing protection, strengthening health and re-establishing livelihoods. Promoting locally appropriate shelter solutions and delivering S&S services in urban contexts, reinforcing local capacity and ownership, and recognising the environmental element of any S&S action will continue to underpin DG ECHO interventions in this area, in line with the *Humanitarian shelter and settlements guidelines*³⁹.

³⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/g7-foreign-and-development-ministers-meeting-may-2021-communicue/g7-famine-prevention-and-humanitarian-crises-compact>.

³⁶ Five commitment areas: address critical funding gaps; promote humanitarian access; respect for International Humanitarian Law and protection of civilians; scale-up anticipatory action; partner with the World Bank Group to enhance crisis preparedness and response; and strengthen our data and analysis to facilitate early action.

³⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/nutrition_thematic_policy_document_en.pdf.

³⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/health2014_general_health_guidelines_en.pdf.

³⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/shelter_and_settlement_guidelines.pdf.

As one of the largest donors in the area, DG ECHO has contributed significantly to improving access to **Water, sanitation and hygiene** (WaSH) services for people affected by humanitarian crises. The primary objective of the WaSH policy is to save lives and alleviate the suffering of populations facing severe environmental health risks and/or water insecurity in the context of humanitarian crises. Systematic quality control, respect of the international quality standards, and systematic performance monitoring are core aspects of DG ECHO's WaSH policy⁴⁰.

Humanitarian logistics is one of the sectors in which further policy development is expected. In 2022, DG ECHO will develop a policy in this area, in order to help raise the profile of logistics in humanitarian operations, support partners in logistics planning, make efficiency and effectiveness gains, and to leverage the capacity of logistics to contribute to the greening of humanitarian aid. In addition, it will launch a European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC), as set out in the Communication on the EU's humanitarian action, through which the Commission will fill gaps to ensure efficient and sustainable humanitarian supply chains, particularly in the face of emergencies, in a way that complements existing initiatives. More information on the EHRC is presented in section 2.10.

Humanitarian-development-peace nexus and cross-cutting issues

The objective of humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDP nexus) is to better link urgent relief and longer-term solutions, aiming at reducing needs and tackling the root causes of conflicts and crises. Without compromising the humanitarian principles, DG ECHO's seeks to contribute to longer-term strategies to build the capacity and resilience of the most vulnerable people and address the underlying reasons for their vulnerability. It will continue to coordinate with relevant development and peace actors, to shift to a more systematic and up-front coordination between humanitarian, development and peace actors at headquarters and on the ground. This will include coordination among EU institutions, EU Member States and other relevant organisations, including the World Bank, to find opportunities for complementarity and jointly contribute to strengthening resilience and building sustainable peace. This work will continue to be based on the specific conditions in each context, scaling up beyond the original six pilot countries (Chad, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan and Uganda)⁴¹, and in line with a principled humanitarian response.

The process of programming the geographical, thematic and non-programmed envelopes with the rapid-response pillar under the single new neighbourhood and development cooperation instrument (NDICI-Global Europe), including activities linked to Team Europe, will provide an opportunity to strengthen implementation of the HDP nexus further, in complementarity with DG ECHO's actions.

The EU has responded to the needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, in line with the priorities of Team Europe and the Council's recognition that an enhanced HDP nexus approach is key to addressing the health crisis⁴². The Team Europe response is global, focusing on vulnerable groups and addressing three priorities:

- emergency response;
- support for health, water/sanitation and nutrition systems; and
- support for socio-economic recovery that helps partner countries to 'build back better' by focusing on a sustainable, green, digital, just and resilient recovery.

In its humanitarian operations, DG ECHO will continue to factor in the pandemic situation and resulting needs, in order to reach the most vulnerable populations.

Over 80 million people are **forcibly displaced** worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalised violence, or human rights violations. The Commission Communication *Lives in Dignity: from Aid-*

⁴⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/WaSH_policy_doc_en.pdf.

⁴¹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/com_2018_774_f1_report_from_commission_en_v4_p1_998566.pdf.

⁴² [Joint Communication on The global EU response to COVID-19](#) and [EU Council Conclusions on Team Europe](#).

*dependence to Self-reliance*⁴³ outlines a development-led approach to forced displacement. Its main objective is to strengthen the resilience and self-reliance of both the displaced and their host communities through a multi-actor approach from the outset of displacement crises. Both development and humanitarian actors will continue to implement the approach in a growing number of countries.

DG ECHO will further strengthen its efforts to raise awareness about the situation of vulnerable IDPs. This will build on the work of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, and its report to the UN Secretary-General, published in October 2021.

Displacement triggered by disasters, environmental degradation and the effects of climate change, is a growing challenge. DG ECHO will continue its operational and policy engagement in this area. As of 1 January 2022, the EU will be Vice-chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement, and Chair for 18 months from 1 July 2022.

The **Global Compact on Refugees**⁴⁴ is a multilateral framework aimed at developing a more sustainable and dignified response to refugees' needs, in line with the EU approach to forced displacement and development. In 2022, the EU will continue to implement the commitments made at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 and strengthen its engagement following the High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2021.

Scaling up **social protection systems** has been identified as one of the core means of enhancing the resilience of vulnerable populations, providing more durable solutions and enabling quick and efficient humanitarian assistance in response to sudden-onset disasters. While this has traditionally come within the remit of development, the humanitarian community can play an important role in aligning with and complementing these efforts by supporting the creation of shock-responsive social protection systems and safety nets, including through cash transfers, for the most vulnerable.

In 2018-2019, Commission services developed a guidance package on 'social protection across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus' (SPaN)⁴⁵. In line with the guidance, DG ECHO will continue to engage with development actors to support the development of shock-responsive social protection systems where feasible.

An increasing number of people in need of humanitarian assistance are seeking refuge in cities. Given the high population density, crises affecting **urban** centres tend to have a much more severe impact, as demonstrated by the number of casualties of urban warfare or from disasters, such as the Beirut explosion of August 2020. More intensive dialogue with actors central to urban settings, such as local authorities and city planners, is required to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. In this context, in 2022, DG ECHO will continue to advocate for greater attention to humanitarian needs, preparedness and resilience in urban environments. It will further explore the potential of area-based approaches and other analysis tools to improve the assessment and response to urban crises.

Risk-informed preparedness for response and early action

DG ECHO focuses on areas in which its humanitarian mandate and expertise add the most value-added: preparedness for response and early action. In this way, it contributes to the priority 4 of the Sendai Framework ('enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to Build Back Better in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction')⁴⁶.

⁴³ COM(2016) 234 final.

⁴⁴ <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/refugees-compact#:~:text=The%20global%20compact%20on%20refugees%20is%20a%20unique,seeks%20to%20better%20define%20cooperation%20to%20share%20responsibilities.>

⁴⁵ <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/sp-nexus.>

⁴⁶ <https://floodresilience.net/resources/item/sendai-framework-priority-4-build-back-better.>

Preparedness should not be regarded as a separate policy sector - it is an essential component of all DG ECHO's humanitarian policies. Accordingly, it applies to any type of crisis and any type of risk, such as natural hazards, epidemics, conflicts and violence.

DG ECHO promotes both the mainstreaming of preparedness activities in all the operations it funds to strengthen first responders' capacity to respond, and the implementation of targeted interventions to reinforce preparedness capacities ahead of a crisis.

It consistently integrates a risk analysis into its needs-based approach to preparedness. Understanding and anticipating potential risks is critical to being able to act early and intervene before a crisis hits or a situation deteriorates, thus reducing suffering and humanitarian needs. Concurrently, DG ECHO promotes a people focused approach to preparedness, prioritising assistance according to individual's vulnerabilities and risk exposure, and leaving no-one behind.

The core objective of DG ECHO-funded preparedness interventions is to strengthen the capacity of in-country preparedness and response systems (all first responders) to act as locally and early as possible. To this end, DG ECHO promotes a system approach, focussing at the same time on strengthening communities and national and local governments' capacities, in order to ensure sustainability.

In 2022, DG ECHO will pursue its risk-based approach, further promoting anticipatory actions and the integration of climate and environmental concerns, as outlined in its 2021 *disaster preparedness guidance note*⁴⁷ (2021) and in the revised *Resilience Marker*⁴⁸.

In parallel, it will engage further with development, resilience and peace actors to achieve more sustainability in humanitarian action, and coherence and continuity with other Commission actions, thus contributing to the HDP nexus objectives.

Also, it will seek further synergies with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism⁴⁹ (UCPM) to engage with, and support, local and national government structures and response systems, including the use of specific tools such as the civil protection prevention and preparedness missions.

2.2 Operational priorities reflected in the budget allocation

2.2.1 General methodology

In line with Article 214 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union⁵⁰, the Humanitarian Aid Regulation⁵¹, and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid⁵², and acting on the basis of the relevant financing decision (Commission implementing decision financing humanitarian aid operational priorities from the general budget of the European Union), DG ECHO is committed to providing relief and protection for populations affected by natural hazard or human-induced disasters. The needs-based assessment leading to the allocation of funding is supported by its funding allocation methodologies, based *inter alia* on

⁴⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/default/files/dg_echo_guidance_note_-_disaster_preparedness.pdf

⁴⁸ See Section 4 of the electronic Single Form (eSF): www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/ngo/action-proposal/fill-in-the-single-form.

Resilience Marker guidelines - https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/resilience_marker_guidance_en.pdf.

⁴⁹ UCPM: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/mechanism_en.

⁵⁰ Article 214 TFEU.

⁵¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid (OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1).

⁵² 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, p. 1).

INFORM Risk, INFORM Severity (see next section) and expert input, while also paying special attention to forgotten crises.

The analytical preparatory work serves as a basis for DG ECHO's Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs), which provide detailed information on the operational priorities that it has identified.

DG ECHO constantly re-appraises humanitarian crises as they evolve. If the need for humanitarian assistance diminishes (often due to the start of rehabilitation and development activities), it winds down its humanitarian work. High priority is given to the close coordination of humanitarian aid and development activities as part of the HDP nexus approach. The exit strategy for all areas of humanitarian interventions is reviewed twice a year - first, when funds are initially allocated, and then through a mid-term review. The latter is an opportunity to review priorities for remaining funds in the light of evolving needs. To the extent possible, humanitarian exist strategies are discussed and coordinated with development and peace actors from the moment they are envisaged.

2.2.2 INFORM Risk and INFORM Severity

The **INFORM Risk** Index⁵³ is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters, analysing three dimensions of risk:

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

INFORM Severity⁵⁴ is a composite indicator that summarises a wide range of quantitative information about crisis severity. It makes it possible to measure and compare the severity of humanitarian crises and disasters globally, on the basis of three dimensions of crisis severity:

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

2.2.3 Forgotten crises assessment

The forgotten crises assessment seeks to highlight severe humanitarian crises where affected populations are receiving **no or insufficient international assistance due to the lack of humanitarian funding**, and which receive little to no international media attention. In principle, the EU as a global, principled donor allocates at least 15% of its initial annual humanitarian budget to forgotten crises. The following crises were identified in the 2021-2022 assessment. This assessment, seeking to be as much as possible based on evidence, relies principally on information from the INFORM indexes, explained here above, the Europe Media Monitor Tool (EMM⁵⁵) as well as input from field experts. The final list of Forgotten Crises receiving budget is prepared in agreement with Commissioner for Crisis Management.

⁵³ <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk>.

⁵⁴ <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Severity/About-INFORM-Severity-Index>.

⁵⁵ The Europe Media Monitor (EMM) explores and presents news reported by the world's online media. Monitoring thousands of news sources in over 70 languages, the system uses advanced information extraction techniques to automatically determine what is being reported in the news, where things are happening, who is involved and what they said.

<https://emm.newsbrief.eu/overview.html>

Region	Conflict/country
Africa	Cameroon: Conflict and violence in the north-west/south-west regions
	Central African Republic (CAR) regional crisis (CAR, Cameroon, Chad)
	Democratic Republic of the Congo: Complex crisis
	Burundi: regional Refugee crisis
	South Sudan
	Madagascar: Drought
	Algeria: Sahrawi Crisis
	Somalia
Asia	Pakistan: Food crisis
	Myanmar: Conflict and displacement in Kachin and Northern Shan States
	Rohingya regional crisis
	Philippines: Armed conflict in Mindanao
Latin America and Caribbean	Colombia: Internal armed conflict
	Haiti
	Central America: Food insecurity and violence (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico)
Europe	Ukraine: Conflict

2.2.4 Other considerations

DG ECHO aims to address as many crises as possible within its available budget, and to ensure a swift, efficient, and comprehensive response. While funding allocations are based on needs assessment and co-ordination with other donors, certain factors that are outside of DG ECHO's control may reduce the volume of aid that can actually be delivered to the beneficiaries – in particular, the presence of implementing organisations on the ground and their capacity to respond in a given crisis zone (absorption capacity), and the intertwined problem of access restrictions caused either by insecurity or administrative impediments.

DG ECHO aims to ensure that proper needs assessment and monitoring take place, and only operates in remote management mode only where absolutely necessary and justified by humanitarian imperatives.

Restrictions faced by partners are most prevalent in areas of conflict, where there is a marked absence of the rule of law or due to political and administrative impediments. They can also be due to politically motivated obstruction from governments or the *de facto* authorities.

2.2.5 Operational objectives and budget planning

The draft EU budget for 2022 earmarks EUR 1 529 321 913 for humanitarian aid and disaster preparedness (DP) is⁵⁶. This is to be used for operations aimed essentially at:

- (a) providing humanitarian aid for vulnerable people affected by natural and human-induced crises or exceptional situations or circumstances comparable to those, which have entailed or are likely to continue entailing major loss of life, physical and psychological or social suffering or material damage;
- (b) providing an initial response to cover the immediate needs of the most vulnerable in the days and weeks after a large scale emergency or a sudden-onset humanitarian crisis, and humanitarian assistance for response and DP to populations affected by disasters where a small-scale response is adequate, and to populations affected by epidemic outbreaks;

⁵⁶ Draft budget 2022, as proposed by the Commission, excluding allocation for technical assistance.

- (c) supporting strategies and complementing existing strategies that enable local communities and institutions to prepare better for, mitigate and respond adequately to disasters by enhancing their capacities to cope and respond, thereby increasing resilience and reducing vulnerability;
- (d) increasing awareness and understanding of, support for, humanitarian issues through public awareness and information campaigns, especially in the EU and in other countries where the EU is funding major humanitarian operations;
- (e) improving the conditions for delivering humanitarian aid by supporting transport services to ensure that aid is accessible to beneficiaries, including by means of the medical evacuation of humanitarian staff where the unavailability of such transport services could adversely affect the timely and effective provision of assistance to beneficiaries;
- (f) improving the coherence, quality and effectiveness of humanitarian aid, e.g. through the development of innovative approaches, methodologies, tools, support for capacity building, coordination and preparedness, the development of innovative approaches, methodologies and tools, and support for coordination and preparedness;
- (g) contributing to the resilience of populations and communities in need; and
- (h) supporting targeted disaster-preparedness interventions in line with the four priorities defined in the guidance note.

DG ECHO will maintain its broadened **regional approach**, with regional responses in certain HIPs. A regional approach has the considerable advantage of lending added speed and flexibility to EU humanitarian assistance, and simplification/streamlining among HIPs.

The following sections set out in more details on how DG ECHO will support humanitarian and food assistance for vulnerable people affected by disasters, and on DG ECHO disaster preparedness operations (DIPECHO).

2.3 West and Central Africa

The West and Central Africa region⁵⁷ is characterised by three conflict dynamics (the central Sahel, Lake Chad, and Central African Republic regional crises) that, compounded by COVID-19 related measures, have further exacerbated humanitarian needs throughout 2021, and in particular in terms of food and nutrition.

The total number of people in need stands at 35.1 million, while the number of those in need of emergency food assistance has rocketed up to 25.7 million, from 17.2 million at the beginning of 2020. At least 2.5 million children under five require urgent life-saving treatment for malnutrition. The number of people forcibly displaced by conflicts and violence stands at 7.5 million.

The region also remains prone to regular epidemics outbreaks and natural hazards.

⁵⁷ The region includes the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, the Central Africa Republic (CAR), Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, São Tomé e Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Figures provided in the text refer primarily to the situation in the following countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Nigeria.

Central Sahel

In 2021, the humanitarian situation deteriorated in the north and centre of Mali and in border regions in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. This area is experiencing a proliferation of security incidents and community conflicts, triggering population movements and growing numbers of forcibly displaced people. In Mali and Burkina Faso, attacks by non-state armed groups on national armed forces and villages are more and more frequent, as are counteractions by military actors and inter-community violence. All parties to the armed conflict tend to disregard IHL, resulting in ever-greater civilian casualties, forced displacement, and protection needs. The expansion of armed conflicts has disrupted the local economy and livelihoods, and has limited the presence of the state, leading to a rise in the need for basic services, particularly WaSH, healthcare and education. More than 4 000 schools and 400 health centres are closed or affected by the prevailing insecurity.

Humanitarian needs across the three countries are massive and all indicators show a deterioration of the situation. In 2021, the total number of people in need is 13.2 million, compared to 9 million in 2020 (+47%) and 7.67 million in 2019 (+72%). The number of IDPs and refugees increased to 2.3 million, from 1.71 million in 2020 (+34%) and 1.28 million in 2019 (+80%).

In Burkina Faso, due to violence spreading across the country's western, northern and eastern regions, there has been a 15-fold increase in the number of IDPs, from 90 000 in January 2019 to 1 312 000 in July 2021, making this the fastest growing displacement crisis in Africa. Mali has 5.9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and 421 000 forcibly displaced people. Mauritania hosts 66 000 refugees from Mali. In the western regions of Niger, the deteriorating trend in the security situation is similar to that in Mali and Burkina Faso, with attacks targeting the armed forces and a shrinking 'humanitarian space'. The cumulative number of forcibly displaced people (refugees, returnees and IDPs) has reached 550 000 individuals.

In a context of extreme fragility, the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated needs in all sectors.

In 2022, DG ECHO will focus on the food and nutritional crisis, and on the humanitarian consequences of conflict. It will provide emergency multi-sectorial assistance (notably protection, healthcare, and EiE) to the most vulnerable conflict-affected populations (refugees, IDPs and host/local communities) in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, *inter alia* through rapid response mechanisms (RRMs).

In addition, it will enhance preparedness and response capacity in high-risk areas, including through anticipatory actions, and emergency response to epidemics and natural hazard and/or human induced disaster, as appropriate.

Lake Chad basin crisis

The security situation has mostly deteriorated across the Lake Chad basin (affecting Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad), uprooting thousands more people and prolonging the displacement and adversity faced by over 5 million civilians across the region. In the four countries affected by the Lake Chad crisis, some 16.5 million people face food insecurity at 'crisis' or 'emergency' levels and more than 2 million children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition and require life-saving treatment. Recurrent attacks and insecurity, along with the associated security response, have restricted free movement. Farming, trade, transhumance and other activities are affected, depriving millions of people of their means of survival and limiting access to basic services. The violence has also forced many schools to close. The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated this emergency context and attendant needs.

In north-east Nigeria, the situation is particularly complex, with 8.7 million people in need, including around 1.9 million forcibly displaced, an observed 80% increase in food insecurity compared to 2020 and risks of famine for people unable to access assistance (estimated at 800 000 individuals).

Cameroon is the second-hardest hit country. The far north of Cameroon is home to 1.2 million people in need and 559 348 have been forcibly displaced (113 973 Nigerian refugees, 321 886 IDPs and 123 489 returnees). At the beginning of 2021, 380 000 people would be in severe food insecurity during the lean season (June to August).

In Chad, 5.5 million people are in need of assistance, of whom 1.8 million are severely food-insecure, including 549 000 of the 657 000 inhabitants of the Lake province. The Lake province hosts more than 401 500 displaced, i.e. over 60% of the total population.

Epidemic outbreaks are frequent in the Lake Chad region, linked to poor healthcare coverage and lack of access to clean water and sanitation. The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the situation, with heightened risks for the most vulnerable groups, such as women, the elderly, people with chronic medical conditions, and children at risk of malnutrition.

A strong deterioration of the security/humanitarian situation is observed in north-west Nigeria, which has the worst public health indicators in the country, and in the Lake province. The scale of devastation is caused by the ongoing conflict in Cameroon's Anglophone regions (south-west and north-west), has displaced over 700 000 people internally, while 67 456 people have sought refuge in Nigeria. With over 513 000 refugees in a population of 16.3 million, Chad is affected by the insecurity prevailing in neighbouring countries, while internal displacements are driven by transhumance-related and inter-communal tensions (24+ incidents in the first half of 2021). Chad hosts a total of 509 321 IDPs and returnees, and has one of the highest densities of displaced people in the world (6% of the population). As a result of conflicts and displacements, of limited natural resources and minimal access to social services, Chad is ranked last in the World Bank's Human Development Index.

In 2022, humanitarian efforts will continue to prioritise multi-sectoral emergency assistance and protection for populations affected by conflict (IDPs, refugees, returnees, local population, and host communities) including in hard-to-reach areas.

Food assistance will remain key, along with shelter, nutrition, healthcare, and WaSH. Support will also be aimed at enhancing preparedness and response capacities in high-risk areas, including through anticipatory actions. In addition, DG ECHO will advocate for a stronger strategy on humanitarian access and the respect of IHL.

Central African Republic (CAR) regional crisis

The crisis in the CAR remains one of the world's most acute, despite the February 2019 signature of a peace agreement by the Government and 14 armed groups. The agreement was a major step in resolving the conflict, but it is being implemented very slowly and is frequently violated. Insecurity has worsened severely over the past 2 years, with an increase in violence, in particular attacks against civilians, the humanitarian community and MINUSCA⁵⁸, restricting the 'humanitarian space'. Armed groups maintain a very strong hold on the country and presidential and parliamentary elections led to major tensions and instability in 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic has further compounded the socio-economic situation in the country.

Humanitarian needs remain very high with 2.8 million people (over half of the population) in need of humanitarian assistance. Some 47% of the population (2.3 million) are food insecure and one in four (1.4 million) have been forcibly displaced. The spillover of the crisis to neighbouring countries continues (some 325 000 refugees from the CAR are still hosted in Cameroon, 206 500 in the DRC and 118 200 in Chad), while the limited numbers of returnees face challenges when it comes to peaceful co-existence with local communities in resettlement areas, as well as land and property issues.

The CAR is one of the most dangerous countries for humanitarians. Humanitarian actors operate in a highly insecure environment and are continuously targeted by armed groups and criminals, which greatly affects humanitarian access.

In 2022, assistance will prioritise emergency needs in unstable and hard-to-reach areas or areas affected by natural hazards. Efforts will ensure a swift and flexible response capacity in this volatile context. DG ECHO

⁵⁸ United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

will continue to intervene in all sectors that cover the essential needs of the targeted populations, while ensuring a balance across sectors. Aid will include food assistance and short-term livelihood support, healthcare and nutrition services, WaSH interventions, protection, EiE, the provision of shelter and non-food items for the conflict-affected population in the CAR and, to some extent, the neighbouring countries. Due to the significant socio-economic recession and severe food insecurity, food assistance will remain a priority. Assistance will include DP wherever possible.

Within the humanitarian remit, assistance for refugees in Cameroon, the DRC and Chad will seek to foster sustainable solutions and strengthen self-reliance, due to weak return perspectives in the short to medium-term. At the same time, it will be important to adequately address the humanitarian needs of host communities.

Advocacy efforts will continue to help ensure that the CAR crisis, including its regional dimension, becomes higher on the international agenda and receives an adequate international response.

Activities will be closely coordinated with development cooperation instruments, particularly but not exclusively in the health sector, with a view to promoting the implementation of the HDP nexus.

Food and Nutrition crisis in West and Central Africa

Conflicts and violence further exacerbate, in particular, the food and nutrition crisis affecting in West and Central Africa.

Compared to the 2020 lean season, food insecurity has increased by 80% in Nigeria, 75% in Chad, 33% in Burkina Faso and 13% in Niger. In Nigeria (the country affected most), 12.8 million people are in need of emergency food assistance, with particularly critical situations in conflict areas: in northern Nigeria, as of March 2021, several indicators suggest that a significant proportion of the population (close to 10%) may be facing famine conditions. Conflict in north-west and south-west Cameroon is fuelling a food crisis: food insecurity in these regions has grown by 23% compared to last year.

Severe food crises have recently spread in coastal areas, hitting Sierra Leone and Liberia in particular. In those two countries, the number of people in food crisis has quadrupled in 2021 compared to the annual average of the past few years (from 680 000 in 2015-2020 to 2.7 million people in 2021).

Acute malnutrition is an emergency in various regions of Niger, Chad and Nigeria. At least 2.5 million children under five require urgent lifesaving treatment for malnutrition across the Sahel.

A five year sequence of food and nutrition crises, with unprecedented figures recorded in 2021, has seriously reduced the resilience of the most vulnerable populations and overwhelmed national capacities to respond. Conflicts have forcibly displaced more than 7.5 million people across the Sahel in 2021, severely impacting their livelihoods and those of local communities. This has changed the scale and scope of the food assistance required, from addressing recurrent time-bound crises (hunger gaps) to responding to massive persistent food insecurity of forcibly displaced populations.

In 2022, there is no prospect of a significant fall in the number of acutely undernourished children, given the root causes of undernutrition are many-fold and the worsening trend. Food insecurity drivers are bound to persist and to undermine ongoing resilience-building efforts. Therefore, steady humanitarian engagement is required in the Sahel.

Humanitarian efforts to address the food and nutrition crisis will continue to focus on the most vulnerable populations in areas with no national capacity, as follows:

- health and nutrition support to address the most acute nutrition needs of children under five, where the global acute malnutrition emergency threshold has been exceeded;
- provision of adequate food assistance to populations facing severe food insecurity; a
- support to enhance preparedness and response capacity in high-risk areas.

This response will complement other dimensions of the humanitarian response, i.e. multi-sectoral emergency assistance and protection for populations affected by conflict, and emergency response to epidemics and natural hazards as appropriate.

Interventions will primarily cover vulnerable populations in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria, while also considering unmet emerging needs in other countries, particularly in coastal countries whose food insecurity situation is being closely monitored by DG ECHO. Disaster risk reduction and anticipatory actions will be supported, with a view to enhancing the resilience of the populations and local response capacities.

2.4 East and Southern Africa

2.4.1 Upper Nile Basin

South Sudan

The formation of a Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity in February 2020 was welcomed as an encouraging development and a significant step towards sustainable peace in South Sudan. However, 18 months later, the revitalised peace agreement has still not been implemented, due to disagreements between political parties on security arrangements, including the constitution of a unified national army and a command structure. Power struggles go on and the country is experiencing an increase in violence at subnational and local level, which risks unravelling the peace agreement and compounds the already very dire humanitarian situation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the humanitarian crisis, impeding aid delivery and access to hard-to-reach populations. The crisis is protracted (7.24 million food-insecure people) with large-scale displacement (2.2 million South Sudanese refugees in the region, 1.6 million IDPs), extremely weak public health and education infrastructures, and longstanding vulnerabilities (under-nutrition, large-scale epidemics, very poor access to safe water). The pandemic has also increased protection risks. Recurrent floods are becoming more intense and frequent every year, destroying agricultural lands and many families' livelihoods in a region in which six counties are experiencing famine-like levels of food insecurity.

South Sudan is one of the most challenging countries for humanitarian aid workers, with frequent operational interference and bureaucratic impediments, in addition to an increase in reported attacks against humanitarian staff and assets. The cost of humanitarian operations has also increased, as the operating environment has been complicated by COVID-19.

Under its 2022 strategy for South Sudan, DG ECHO will build on the previous year's strategy and focus on addressing severe food insecurity, acute malnutrition and epidemics, and providing protection assistance and life-saving activities, in particular in the event of new shocks. It will also support the humanitarian community activities through enhanced emergency response, coordination, logistics, safety and context analysis.

Sudan

The removal of former President Omar Al Bashir in April 2019 paved the way for a 39-month transition period. Prime Minister Hamdok took office in August 2019 and is leading a transitional government. The Government signed a historic peace agreement with 11 opposition groups in October 2020 and positive developments have been observed since March 2021 in its discussions with the Sudan's People's Liberation Movement-North.

The EU plays an important role in supporting the transition, which provides an opportunity for increased engagement by development donors and to pursue a more ambitious HDP nexus approach, to which DG ECHO remains committed.

The positive political developments are taking place in a context of severe economic crisis affecting the whole population (9.8 million food-insecure people, i.e. 21% of the population). This comes on top of large-scale humanitarian crises (1.1 million refugees, 2.4 million IDPs) linked to unresolved conflicts and natural disasters. The transitional government is committed to tackling past impediments to humanitarian access and to removing all the bureaucratic restrictions. However, humanitarian partners in the field continue to face administrative difficulties in accessing the most vulnerable.

The devastating floods of 2020 had a significant impact in the country, and heavy rains and flash flooding were reported in most of its states in the first few months of 2021. It is expected that such natural hazards will occur more frequently.

Inter-communal/inter-tribal conflicts and armed attacks have increased in number and in intensity in 2021. Since January 2021, conflict has displaced more than 350 000 people, mainly in Darfur states. Given the high numbers affected by shocks in 2021, the rising food and fuel prices combined with stagnant income increases people's vulnerability.

In early November 2020, the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region sparked an outflow of refugees into eastern Sudan in search of safety. Since then, more than 46 000 refugees have been registered in Sudan. In the light of the volatile situation in Ethiopia, a considerable influx of Ethiopians is expected in the coming months. Military tensions remain high particularly (particularly around contested border areas) and the quality of the humanitarian response in eastern Sudan is not yet up to standards.

The COVID-19 pandemic is poised to have devastating secondary consequences due to weak public health and education infrastructure and longstanding vulnerabilities (undernutrition, large-scale epidemics, very poor access to safe water). The pandemic has further exacerbated protection risks.

Under its 2022 strategy for Sudan, DG ECHO will build on the previous year strategy and focus on reinforcing emergency response capacity in high-risk zones, providing an appropriate response to the health, nutrition, protection and food security crisis, and supporting humanitarian activities through enhanced coordination, logistics, safety, security and context analysis.

Uganda

Uganda continues to host the largest number of refugees in Africa, with close to 1.5 million people mostly from South Sudan and the DRC. While borders were closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees continued to enter. The scale of the refugee crisis continues to overwhelm national and local capacities. Apart from the impact of the pandemic, Uganda faces regular large-scale epidemics and natural hazards.

Uganda is a pilot country for HDP nexus and the UN Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). The processes are linked, as EU services and Member States have agreed to address forced displacement challenges in Uganda and support the country's roll-out of the CRRF. The overall objective is to contribute to the establishment of durable solutions for displaced and vulnerable people, targeting both refugee and host communities.

DG ECHO's strategy for 2022 will build on the previous year's strategy and focus on life-saving assistance to refugees and host communities, based on vulnerabilities, and strengthening DP to address the plethora of crises including epidemics, new refugee influxes and natural hazards.

2.4.2 Horn of Africa⁵⁹

With multiple natural hazard and human-induced disasters and epidemics continuing to affect the Horn of Africa in 2021, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated sharply, in particular due to political instability and drought in Somalia, and the dire humanitarian fall-out of the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, with over 5 million people in need of emergency assistance in that region alone. Refugee's conditions have deteriorated in all hosting countries. While early combined humanitarian-development funded air and ground control efforts succeeded in limiting the desert locust infestation in reachable areas (Kenya, southern Ethiopia), the threat remained in 2021.

In 2021, 18-20 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, including over 2.5 million newly displaced people.

Given the satisfactory results of the HDP nexus approach to the refugee situation in **Djibouti**, DG ECHO will continue to prioritise protection services and other types of assistance to vulnerable migrants, in coordination with the EU Delegation. It is estimated that the number of forcibly displaced from neighbouring countries will increase, in particular due to ongoing conflicts in Ethiopia.

The humanitarian outlook in **Ethiopia** remains bleak for 2022, with widespread, overlapping and critical humanitarian needs across the country. The spillover effect of the Tigray conflict is intensifying with active hostilities and significant displacements in many parts of Ethiopia that were already engulfed in ethnic-based political crisis.

The Tigray conflict has given rise to huge and acute humanitarian needs, including grave protection concerns for the affected population that suffered horrific violence. There are nearly 4.5 million IDPs across the country, including over 2 million in Tigray and in neighbouring areas. A challenging security context and access and logistical constraints to the delivery of life-saving aid make it difficult for humanitarian actors to scale up and address the immense level of need in Tigray. As many as 14 humanitarian workers have been killed since the start of the conflict in November 2020.

Beyond the Tigray conflict, people in Ethiopia continue to grapple with other humanitarian emergencies triggered by increasing conflict and inter-communal clashes, recurrent climatic shocks, natural hazards, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other disease outbreaks, and limited access to health services. Across Ethiopia, food security remains a critical concern, due to recurrent poor agricultural seasons that do not leave farmers enough time to recover, internal violence, massive forced population displacements that disrupt livelihood assets and access to markets, price rises, the economic impact of the pandemic, and the desert locust infestation (the worst in the country and the region for 25 years). Overall, more than 13 million people are estimated to be in need of emergency food assistance (IPC3+), including over 2 million one step below famine (IPC 4), of whom 1.8 million live in Tigray, and close to 1 million in Tigray facing famine conditions (IPC 5) in Tigray. Ethiopia also continues to face high levels of acute malnutrition rates, estimated to be affecting 7.1 million children under five, pregnant women, and nursing mothers, especially in rural and hard to reach areas, and areas with poor access to essential services and a limited humanitarian response.

The refugee situation in the country has continued to deteriorate significantly in 2021, with the end of the *prima facie* refugee status recognition for Eritrean refugees, the destruction of several refugee camps in Tigray region, and the slow and problematic registration process for South Sudanese refugees, especially in Gambella region. Protection, malnutrition, insufficient food, lack of access to clean water and health care, and gender-based violence are among the biggest humanitarian concerns.

⁵⁹ Horn of Africa region includes the following countries : Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Eritrea.

The mostly involuntary returns by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) of thousands of Ethiopian migrants without proper immigration status has resumed in the second half of 2021. The migrants, who include vulnerable unaccompanied minors and Tigrayans are facing huge protection concerns.

The protection of civilians and advocacy for the respect of IHL, humanitarian access and humanitarian principles will remain paramount in the context of Ethiopia. Given DG ECHO's budget, mandate and comparative advantage in the country, the evolving situation and the risk of conflict spreading beyond its borders, the priority in 2022 will be to address the acute needs of people affected by inter communal ethnic conflicts or violence, i.e. IDPs, host communities and those affected by conflict or displacement, and returned/integrated/relocated populations. In view of the widespread unpredictable conflicts, DG ECHO will maintain a flexible approach in order to be able to adapt to a very fluid situation. In particular, it will focus on areas in which the problems are assessed as the most acute or that have been under-represented in the RSP map due to lack of data, partners and limited support. This may include people affected by new shocks, such as natural hazards, climatic shocks and epidemic outbreaks. A further priority remains the support for the refugee response, ensuring that essential assistance such as food and water, and basic services are covered in the various refugee settings, in particular where there are new arrivals, but also that their protection framework is maintained in line with refugee law, despite a challenging political environment. Finally, DG ECHO will remain committed to addressing the urgent humanitarian needs of returnees and deportees, while at the same time advocating for more long-term and sustainable.

Earlier this year, the Government of **Kenya** instructed the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to plan for a closure of all refugees camps by the end the year. However, to organise such an operation and make sure that all returns are voluntary, UNHCR will have to clarify the status of every person currently living in the camps. It will also be necessary to identify durable solutions for those who are not willing or able to go back to their place of origin (mainly Somalia and South Sudan), due to unfavourable conditions.

In the meantime, **Kenya** and **Somalia** are facing the prospect of another drought, following two consecutive below-average rainy seasons (end of 2020 and March-May 2021). The food insecurity figures are already rising and the next rainy season (October-December 2021) will be crucial. It is already estimated that over 980 000 people in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of Kenya, in addition to the over 520 000 in camps, will need food assistance in 2021 and beyond, while the number of malnourished children is estimated at nearly 79 000. In Somalia, people's ability to cope with recurrent shocks has been decimated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a declining economy and multiple forced displacements. The number of people in need of emergency food assistance is projected to reach 2.85 million by the end of 2021. About 800 000 children under five suffer from moderate, and another 162 000 suffer from severe acute malnutrition.

Conflicts in **Somalia** continue to cause massive (mostly internal) displacement, civilian casualties, and the destruction of property and livelihoods. Escalating conflict and insecurity, and armed actors' disregard for IHL and human rights, give rise to widespread life-threatening protection concerns, while also hindering principled humanitarian access.

DG ECHO's support for **Kenya** in 2022 will focus on basic survival services (food, WaSH, healthcare and nutrition, protection and EiE) for the most vulnerable people living in formal or informal camps in the ASALs, while efforts will continue to be made to link humanitarian interventions for refugees with durable solutions.

In **Somalia**, DG ECHO will prioritise emergency-focused life-saving assistance and protection for conflict affected populations and those suffering from high levels of food insecurity or epidemic outbreaks. Early response capacity will be strengthened in areas with high levels of displacement, in IPC 3+ and with a high prevalence of acute malnutrition. EiE outreach to displaced out-of-school children and integrated actions, including protection, will also be supported.

2.4.3 Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (SAIO)⁶⁰

The SAIO region is highly vulnerable to various hazards, including floods, cyclones, droughts, epidemics and armed conflict resulting in loss of life and livelihood assets. This has led to high levels of acute food insecurity and malnutrition, population displacement and millions in need of humanitarian assistance.

Global warming, the scale and frequency of extreme weather events, and climate change scenarios have had severe effects on agricultural patterns, impacting harvests and the food security of over 28 million people in rural and urban areas in 2021 and undermining development gains in the region. Large parts of southern Angola, Eswatini, southern Madagascar and Zambia have received their lowest seasonal rainfall in 40 years. It is estimated that in the SAIO region, almost 4.9 million children under 5 year in the SAIO region are facing global acute malnutrition. About 16.5 million people across the region live with HIV.

In the *Grand-Sud* of Madagascar, over 1.35 million people are acutely food insecure. Thousands are facing catastrophic levels of famine and famine-like conditions. The food security situation is compounded by worsening health, water and sanitation conditions across the country. Global acute malnutrition (GAM) in children under five doubled in the first half of 2021, reaching an alarming rate well above emergency thresholds (15%). In Zimbabwe, at least 6.8 million people (about 50% of the population) are facing food insecurity and are in need of humanitarian assistance, representing.

The escalation of the crisis situation in Cabo Delgado province (northern Mozambique) continued to be of concern in 2021. The province has suffered from violent activity for nearly 4 years, with armed groups' attacks on villages and civilians, and clashes with security forces, causing deaths and forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee within the province and to the in neighbouring provinces of Niassa and Nampula. Nearly 50% of the IDPs are children and nearly 1 million people are food-insecure. The conflict has disrupted the education of thousands of pupils.

The region has also been facing powerful waves of COVID-19, with cases spreading rapidly. In July 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) ranked six of the countries (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Botswana and Namibia) in the top 10 countries in Africa in terms of COVID-19 infections, accounting for 87% of the total. South Africa alone accounted for nearly half of the cases and deaths in the period in question. Other countries (e.g Eswatini, Mozambique, Malawi and Madagascar) have tightened their measures. Persons of concern (PoCs) are facing barriers in accessing services, while humanitarian actors encounter obstacles in delivering assistance. It is likely that the economic consequences of the outbreak will exacerbate vulnerability and humanitarian needs in the 2021/2022 lean season. The season is usually from November to March, but this year it is projected to start earlier and last longer.

DG ECHO's strategy for 2022 will be based on three pillars:

- needs-based, rapid and life-saving humanitarian aid to populations affected by natural hazard and human-induced disasters, mainly in northern Mozambique and southern Madagascar;
- EiE services for displaced populations and their host communities in Cabo Delgado and neighbouring provinces in northern Mozambique. The focus is on ensuring safe learning spaces and providing adequate education programmes for children in areas affected by violence and forced displacement; and
- reinforcing past DP investments across the region, in particular for climate related disasters and urban preparedness, and engaging in conflict preparedness.

DG ECHO will remain actively involved in expanding on the many opportunities to strengthen the HDP nexus approach in the region, in particular in relation to chronic food insecurity, resilience to drought, disaster risk reduction and early recovery of communities affected by natural disasters; and EiE, in

⁶⁰ SAIO region includes the following countries : Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Comoros Islands, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

developing an integrated approach in northern Mozambique and building a comprehensive response capacity in the *Grand-Sud* of Madagascar. Advocacy for the respect of ‘humanitarian space’, humanitarian principles and IHL will remain critical.

2.4.4 Great Lakes region⁶¹

The Great Lakes’ region continues to be confronted with a multitude of complex crises, both protracted and acute, affecting millions of people. These crises include natural hazard and human-induced disasters, leading to high levels of insecurity, leading to recurrent forced displacement, food insecurity and under-nutrition, and protection issues relating to violence, coercion and deprivation. The level and brutality of armed conflicts in the eastern parts of the DRC have deteriorated further in 2021. In addition, the region faces recurrent outbreaks, including measles, malaria, cholera, yellow fever, dengue, Ebola and other viral haemorrhagic fevers, and, (since 2020) COVID-19.

Many crisis-affected people lack livelihood opportunities and often live in extreme poverty. Food insecurity and under-nutrition remain among the most significant humanitarian problems, especially in the DRC, where over 27 million people were food-insecure in 2021 and 3.3 million children under five faced severe acute malnutrition. The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in the region has further worsened the plight of the most vulnerable people. Access to basic social services and the rule of law are inadequate, especially in the DRC, the Republic of Congo and Burundi.

The protection of civilians in conflict-affected areas remains a major concern in the DRC. A scaling-down of the UN stabilisation mission there (MONUSCO) risks increasing insecurity. Ongoing conflict and high insecurity are also partly responsible for the dramatic food insecurity, as they often prevent farmers from tilling their land and accessing local markets. Over five million people are internally displaced in the DRC, one of the highest figures in the world.

The Great Lakes region hosts over a million refugees, mainly from Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda, the CAR and South Sudan. The DRC, Tanzania and Rwanda host the largest numbers of refugees. Densely populated refugee camps and settlements of IDPs remain at high risk of COVID-19 transmission. Tanzania is maintaining pressure on Burundian refugees to repatriate.

The increased return of refugees to Burundi (one side-effect of the 2020 elections) is expected to continue in 2022. While the Government is inviting them to repatriate, question marks remain as to whether the country has absorption capacity allowing for the sustainable reintegration of large numbers of returnees. Burundi ranks 185th out of 189 countries in the UN Development Programme’s last Human Development Index (2020). Food security is a structural problem and remains critical. Around 128 000 people were internally displaced in mid-2021 because of recurrent floods, landslides and other natural hazards. In addition, human rights and protection concerns remain, especially for the returnees. Working conditions for aid organisations remain difficult.

In the DRC, serious humanitarian needs exist throughout the country, but the situation remains particularly challenging, with ongoing complex emergencies and crises, in the eastern provinces of Ituri, North and South Kivu, and Tanganyika. Of 179 countries, the DRC is considered the fifth most fragile state in the world in 2021. Significant protection concerns exist, including a high prevalence of gender-based violence.

In 2022, DG ECHO will address urgent humanitarian needs arising from epidemics and population displacements in conflict zones and life-threatening situations in non-conflict areas in the DRC. It will pay particular attention to the protection of civilians affected by conflict. It will continue to support ‘crisis modifiers’, which allow ongoing aid projects to react swiftly to newly developing crises, and emergency response mechanisms to ensure swift response capacity in such volatile contexts.

⁶¹ Great Lakes region includes the following countries : Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Angola, Republic of Congo and Zambia.

It will also address food insecurity and acute malnutrition in the region, taking account of emergency thresholds and local capacities and overall funding availability.

DG ECHO will prioritise the provision of immediate multi-sectorial assistance and protection responding to the basic needs of refugees, while working with development actors on longer term solutions for more protracted situations. It will continue to advocate for the voluntary character of any refugee returns. In Burundi, it will focus mainly on protection activities, including for returning refugees.

All countries in the region are prone to natural hazard and human-induced disasters. DG ECHO already supports ongoing DP actions in Burundi, the Republic of Congo and the DRC, and will provide additional funds in the DRC.

In line with the HDP nexus commitments, DG ECHO continues to be actively involved in the search for self-reliance solutions in forced displacement settings for IDPs and refugees in the region, and durable solutions for returning refugee to Burundi, in coordination with development partners. It will continue to advocate for the respect of ‘humanitarian space’, humanitarian principles and IHL will be maintained, along with support for humanitarian coordination and logistics where relevant, including vital humanitarian ECHO Flight services to access remote areas in the DRC. While supporting emergency responses to epidemics, it will also aim to integrate preparation and emergency response to communicable disease outbreaks into health sector support, while ensuring coordination with on-going development interventions in this sector where feasible.

2.5 Eastern Neighbourhood and Western Balkans

Turkey

Turkey is hosting the highest number of refugees in the world (around 4 million), including nearly 3.6 million Syrians under temporary protection, who are mostly living in protracted displacement and need both humanitarian and development support. With limited access to public services, they include at-risk and particularly vulnerable groups (e.g. unaccompanied minors, or sex workers), including the economically vulnerable.

From a socio-economic perspective, the restrictive measures introduced to contain the spread of COVID-19 have further worsened the already precarious socio-economic conditions of the refugees. ‘Emergency Social Safety Net’ (ESSN) data show that 85% of them are economically vulnerable, while 79% report that they have engaged in negative coping mechanisms, such as eating fewer meals and reducing portion sizes (April 2021).

Protection remains a major need, as refugees (particularly those belonging to marginalised groups) face difficulties in accessing social services and exercising their rights. In 2022, EU humanitarian support in Turkey will focus on the full transition of selected health, protection, and EiE programmes from humanitarian to development assistance, via the ‘Conditional Cash Transfer for Education’ (CCTE), and on basic needs, through the ESSN. In line with the transition objective, EU humanitarian funding will focus on filling gaps in these sectors, and a multi-sectoral approach will be encouraged in project implementation as well as strengthening linkages among sectors.

Ukraine

As the conflict in eastern Ukraine enters its 8th year, the situation remains extremely volatile. Humanitarian needs are expected to remain high, despite the Government’s continued commitment to a policy of inclusion towards the population there, and the drop in casualties. An estimated 3.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in the non-government controlled areas (NGCAs) and in the areas along both sides of the contact line. People living in the NGCAs, particularly near the contact line, are regularly exposed to

threats to life and safety (shelling, mines) and blatant violations of IHL. Access to essential services, markets and livelihood/job opportunities is limited.

In 2022, the EU humanitarian aid will remain focused on the most pressing needs in the areas of health, shelter and non-food items (NFIs), WaSH, EiE, protection and other basic needs. DG ECHO will continue to advocate for an improved ‘humanitarian space’ and for the rights of the conflict-affected population.

Western Balkans and Caucasus⁶²

Since the beginning of 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has faced an increase of irregular arrivals of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants transiting to northern and western European countries. At the end of June 2021, a highly fluctuating estimate indicates that nearly 6 000 such PoCs are currently present in the country. Around 3 300 are accommodated in the five existing temporary reception centres (TRCs), while more than 2 500 PoCs are reportedly sleeping rough all over the country, mainly in the cantons of Una-Sana, Tuzla and Sarajevo.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to fund humanitarian activities, with a gradually reduced engagement, in complementing the work of DG NEAR and other development actors. EU humanitarian aid will focus on protection, including child protection, and life-saving assistance outside TRCs, particularly in the winter.

The 6-week long hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 have resulted in thousands of casualties, including civilian deaths and injuries. Nearly 100,000 people are estimated to be in need of assistance to overcome the shock of the conflict. Despite the fragile ceasefire signed in November 2020, the consequences of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, between Azerbaijan and Armenia, may still require additional EU humanitarian support in the course of 2022, in particular in Nagorno-Karabakh itself, where DG ECHO continues to advocate for unhindered humanitarian access.

2.6 Middle East

2.6.1 Syria Regional crisis

Syria

The Syria conflict continues to cause immense displacement, casualties and tremendous suffering for the civilian population. Currently, 13.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria itself, almost half of whom are children. The Syria crisis is by far the largest displacement crisis of our time. More than 12 million Syrians remain displaced, including 6.7 million inside the country. A total of 1.8 million new IDP movements and 448 000 spontaneous return movements were recorded in 2020, most of them in north-west Syria.

The conflict remains characterised by blatant violations of IHL and widespread human rights violations. In 2021, as part of its principled and needs-based humanitarian response throughout the country, DG ECHO has continued to provide life-saving assistance in response to acute humanitarian needs (in particular, of displaced people) and protracted needs compounded by drought and water shortages. The situation is of particularly serious concern in north-west Syria, where over 3 million civilians are in dire humanitarian need. Since 2020, DG ECHO has swiftly adapted its response to meet the needs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁶² Western Balkans and Caucasus contains Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova and Serbia.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to provide swift, needs-based multi-sectorial life-saving response. Its strategy will reflect the deterioration of the humanitarian situation, which is characterized by a significant increase in basic needs, IHL violations and protection challenges, along with a reduction in aid resources and government capacity due to the COVID-19 and the economic crisis. Sectors will include protection, healthcare, WaSH, coordination, livelihood support, education, emergency preparedness and first-line response. Specific COVID-19-sensitive and programming will continue while the pandemic remains in the country. Humanitarian access and the protection of civilians, including humanitarian workers, will remain serious challenges.

DG ECHO will prioritise assistance to the most vulnerable, regardless of their geographical location, using all available means and based on its partners' operational capacities. While conditions for return are still not met, it will continue to provide assistance on the basis of needs rather than status. It will also continue to keep risk management at the centre of its response strategy. It will continue its strong humanitarian advocacy to ensure respect of IHL, enhanced access and the protection of civilians. While it is premature to consider exit scenarios (due to the co-existence of protracted and acute humanitarian needs at scale), it will continue to seek coherence and complementarity with other EU financial instruments, encouraging partners to explore referrals and resilience opportunities within their programming.

Lebanon

In 2021, Lebanon is facing a wave of multiple (economic, political, fiscal, financial, monetary and sanitary) crises that are unprecedented in magnitude and are having devastating effects on the economic vulnerability of the population, including the many refugees. A bleak economic outlook, systemic inefficiencies and a deteriorating fiscal situation (due to falling tax revenue and higher public debt) are feeding social instability. The absence of a functioning government for over a year, rampant inflation and unstable exchange rates are contributing to shortages of fuel and other vital supplies. The removal of subsidies is causing hardship and putting essential products beyond the reach of many Lebanese nationals and refugees. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the situation. Poverty has drastically increased over the past year, now affecting 74% of the population.⁶³ Lebanon hosts the highest number of refugees *per capita* worldwide, with an estimated 1.5 million registered and non-registered Syrian refugees. The issue of Syrian refugees has long been at the centre of political debates and rhetoric and is only exacerbated by the deteriorating fuel and power crisis. Social tension between refugees and host communities is on the rise. On top of all the ongoing crises, Lebanon is still grappling with the consequences of the massive explosions in the port of Beirut in August 2020.

In 2022, DG ECHO will maintain its focus on the provision of life-saving assistance and protection of the most vulnerable, in order to address existing and emerging humanitarian needs. Protection and accountability remain key elements of its strategy. While it will continue to focus mainly on Syrian refugees, established humanitarian needs amongst other groups, including vulnerable Lebanese, could be included in an integrated response, as and where appropriate. Close coordination between different EU services and instruments will remain paramount in ensuring the operational continuity of actions and assistance, notably to tackle the longer-term needs resulting from the explosions.

Jordan

In 2021, Jordan is hosting 756 878 refugees, the second highest number of refugees *per capita* in the world. They include 668 332 Syrians (539 471 live in urban areas and 128 861 reside in camps)⁶⁴. Following the Government's decision in early 2019 to suspend UNHCR registration of non-Syrian asylum seekers, an estimated 7 000 individuals have only minimal protection (due to the absence of documentation), and limited access to basic services. Furthermore, despite the successful regularisation exercise in the period to

⁶³ UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) report, September 2021: <https://www.unescwa.org/news/escwa-warns-three-quarters-lebanon%E2%80%99s-residents-plunge-poverty>

⁶⁴ UNHCR, July 2021.

March 2019 to formalise the status of Syrian refugees residing in urban areas, an estimated 30 000 refugees remain undocumented, and therefore more vulnerable and at the risk of detention and/or forced relocation to camps.

The refugees' socio-economic situation has deteriorated further due to the COVID-19 crisis. The education sector has also been heavily impacted by the crisis and child labour, early marriage and gender-based violence are on the rise.

The Syria crisis has shown up some of the underlying challenges that Jordan faces in areas such as employment, the business environment, climate change and management of natural resources. The socio-economic situation of refugees has further deteriorated due to the COVID-19 crisis. The education sector has also been heavily impacted by the crisis and child labour, early marriage as well as gender-based violence are on the rise.

Some 5 years after the closure of the north-eastern border with Syria, around 10 000 people are still stranded at the 'berm' on the Syrian side of the border (Rukban) and this number is not expected to fall significantly. In addition, the COVID-19 crisis has led to the temporary closure of the only UN health clinic located on the Jordanian side of the border, forcing those with emergency medical conditions to visit health facilities in Syrian Government held areas, with no means of return, and therefore facing high protection risks.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to assist refugees in host communities and in refugee camps, focusing mostly on access to protection, healthcare and education services. In addition, it will keep providing WaSH services to the population stranded at the 'berm'. In parallel, it will continue its coordination efforts with other EU instruments to ensure a smooth transition to longer-term solutions for refugees and host communities.

2.6.2 Palestine⁶⁵

The civilian population in Palestine continues to suffer from the consequences of the ongoing Israeli occupation and recurrent IHL violations. In Gaza, the already precarious humanitarian situation has deteriorated significantly following the escalation of hostilities in May 2021. Israeli restrictions on the entry of goods and people, compounded by the protracted COVID-19 crisis, have contributed to increased vulnerabilities and a sharp drop in socio-economic indicators. Living conditions are deteriorating at an alarming rate and record-high levels of unemployment have reduced people's purchasing power and their access to food.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to assist and protect the most vulnerable and isolated communities in Gaza, which are affected by conflict and economic hardship, with support for those who have been affected by the recent conflict. In the West Bank, particularly in the light of Israel's continuing policy of settlements, evictions, demolitions and confiscations, it will continue to support vulnerable communities who are at risk of displacement and lack access to basic services. EU humanitarian assistance in Palestine will maintain its focus on protection and advocacy against recurrent IHL violations. Close coordination with other Commission services and the EEAS will continue to ensure programming complementarity between immediate relief and resilience-building.

⁶⁵ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

2.7 North Africa, Iraq and Arabian Peninsula

Iraq

In a highly unstable context, Iraq's recovery process continues to face political, security and socio-economic challenges. The overall humanitarian response is steadily declining. The 2021 HNO depicts a stagnating humanitarian situation with 286 000 refugees and 1.2 million IDPs in the country, of whom 184 470 live in 27 camps (mostly in the Kurdistan region of Iraq) and rely on humanitarian assistance. Between May 2020 and May 2021, there was an overall 33% decrease in the population of formal IDP camps countrywide, due to the Government's policy of camp closures, which led to waves of secondary displacement involving over 107 000 secondary or tertiary displaced persons. Some 4.8 million former IDPs have returned to their areas of origin or settled in informal sites. Nearly 4 years after of Islamic State, protection risks for IDPs and returnees remain acute and have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. According to the 2021 HNO, over 590 000 IDPs need specialised protection services. As many as 5.5 million people are still lacking some form of civil documentation and nearly 500 000 children have no identification document. The detention of children, including foreign nationals, is of particular concern. The entire health system is under heavy strain.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to the most vulnerable populations in Iraq through multi-sector assistance in IDPs camps and informal settlements, and the protection of those deprived of their liberty, where needs are most acute and partners can have a tangible impact. Specific actions to support the Iraqi health system's response to COVID-19 are also envisaged with a special focus on the vaccination campaign.

Yemen

After over 6 years of conflict between the internationally recognised government of Yemen (IRG) and the Houthi group (Ansar Allah), Yemen remains the site of the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with a staggering 67% of the population, or 20.7 million people, requiring some form of humanitarian assistance and protection. The impact of the conflict on civilians, the economic consequences of the war and restrictions on imports of essential commodities have resulted in 16.2 million people facing severe food shortages, with the food emergency being further compounded by health, nutrition and WaSH needs. Malnutrition levels are among the highest in the world, with 25% of the population, (about 7.5 million people) suffering from moderate or severe acute malnutrition. This includes 2.25 million children (of whom an estimated 400 000 are severely acutely malnourished) and 1 million pregnant and lactating women. Over 4 million people have been displaced, with 1 million living in informal sites. The overall health system is extremely fragile, with fewer than half of the health facilities operating because of ongoing fighting, and the disruption in the payment of public servants' salaries. More than 20 million people are in need of healthcare, while the already dilapidated healthcare system is struggling to address needs relating to COVID-19 and other epidemics, and the direct effects of the conflict (on top of regular healthcare). The situation is exacerbated by limited access to safe water and sanitation among half of the population (15.4 million). Of an estimated 7.8 million school-aged children in Yemen, at least 2 million are out of school and 4.7 million children need help to ensure the continuation of their education. Children comprise about a third of the 3.3 million IDPs, who are also in acute need.

In 2022, DG ECHO will focus on multi-sector and integrated interventions that address the needs of people directly exposed to conflict and displacement, and to the health, nutrition and food security crises. It will prioritise WaSH activities aimed at preventing malnutrition and the transmission of epidemics, including by mainstreaming the response to COVID-19. Humanitarian protection will remain a key aspect of its response in Yemen. It will build on the existing RRM for new displacements and will contribute to coordination and critical logistical capacities and the development of interoperable systems enabling better integration of emergency and recovery assistance, thus supporting the HDP nexus approach. It will focus on locations with the highest concentration of life-saving needs:

- areas of active conflict and populations trapped in conflict zones;
- areas hosting large numbers of newly displaced people, including migrants and asylum seekers and;
- areas with high levels of malnutrition, food insecurity or epidemics.

Algeria - Sahrawi crisis

The Sahrawi refugees hosted in five camps in south-west Algeria (near Tindouf) are almost entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance, with little prospect for return, integration or resettlement. Overall humanitarian funding for this forgotten crisis remained stable in 2021, USD 24.7 million, which is in line with the average over the last 5 years (around USD 25.5 million). The EU has provided more than 50% of the total. While COVID-19 has had a limited impact on the camps, the third wave has been the strongest so far. Very few of the refugees have been vaccinated. The breach of the ceasefire and hostilities in Western Sahara have triggered a new wave of displacements.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to focus on the refugees' basic needs, such as food assistance, water and sanitation, essential medicines, and EiE. It will remain a close eye on the evolution of the pandemic and advocate for more vaccinations. It will pay additional attention to the environmental impact of the projects it funds. In parallel, it will keep advocating for greater burden sharing by other donors and other EU instruments that could support livelihood and self-reliance initiatives. Employment opportunities are particularly important for young people, who feel increasingly frustrated by their dependency on aid and their bleak future prospects.

Egypt

Egypt is host to a population of over 265 000 refugees and asylum seekers, who are living in some of the most overcrowded and poorest neighbourhoods of the country's largest cities, where the host communities suffer from similar levels of vulnerability. The refugees are mostly (50.4%) from Syria, but also from Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia etc. More than half are women, 87 000 are children, including 4 176 unaccompanied and separated children. They face many significant barriers in accessing basic services, while also suffering from high levels of discrimination and stigmatisation. 70% of refugee and asylum seeker households report not being able to meet their basic needs, with many resorting to negative coping strategies.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to support refugees and asylum seekers by addressing the most vulnerable through an effective 'one refugee' approach and focusing on protection and education. It will seek to address the many and disparate needs of the refugee community. The approach will also reinforce the HDP nexus framework, including coordination and advocacy initiatives.

Libya

Following the appointment of a Government of National Unity in March 2021, the political and security situation in Libya has improved slightly with greater access to basic services and cash. However, the country remains fragile, with a weak governance infrastructure, poor public finance management and under-development resulting in sub-standard public service delivery, leaving the most vulnerable people with unmet humanitarian needs. The country's economy has been severely affected by the conflict, the absence of a functioning government and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. This has significantly affected people's lives, with shortages in medical, food and fuel supplies, multiple displacements, breakdown of the social and medical infrastructure, disruption of basic services and communication, and violations of IHL and International human rights law. The 2021 HRP estimates that 1.3 million people are in need and 430 000 are the most in need of humanitarian support. According to the International Organization for Migration

(IOM)⁶⁶, 224 000 people remain internally displaced, while 642 408 people have returned to their place of origin. The number of migrants has increased to 591 415, including 42 769 refugees and asylum seekers.

If peace holds and results in a stable government that is willing and able to embark on recovery and reconstruction, humanitarian programming will be decreasing towards a gradual exit in favour of multi-year development and stabilisation operations. In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to pursue its support strategy, considering protection as the entry point for all sectors/programmes (mainly protection, health, EiE, and multi-purpose cash transfers for food and NFIs) based on a solid protection risk analysis, in order to ensure access to the most vulnerable people excluded from assistance. It will continue to advocate for the respect of IHL and initiatives aimed at strengthening local partners' capacities to implement an appropriate humanitarian response. It will also support the EWARNS communicable disease surveillance system in Libya.

2.8 Asia

2.8.1 South West Asia and Central Asia Region

Afghanistan

The conflict in Afghanistan had intensified continuously in recent years and was seen as one of the deadliest conflicts in the world. In 2021, it came to a dramatic head, with the withdrawal of international troops before the end of August, and the Taliban taking over Kabul on 15 August. The first half of 2021 saw the highest number of civilian casualties since the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) started counting them in 2009. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be devastating and greatly exacerbates an already dire situation, affecting the survival and resilience of large parts of the population, particularly the most vulnerable. The 2021 HRP identified 18.4 million people in need of humanitarian aid, double the figure identified for 2020 (9.4 million). The number of IDPs had reached 550 000 mid-August and many more were expected to flee conflict areas, in addition to the 3.4 million or more who had already been displaced. A severe drought hit the country in the spring, further increasing the number of people suffering from food insecurity (now 12 million). There are still 2.4 million registered Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan and an estimated equal number of undocumented Afghans without official refugee status or the associated protection. With the Taliban's takeover, the number of Afghans seeking refuge in neighbouring countries is expected to increase significantly in the last months of 2021, despite the difficult situation in Iran, which is among the countries most affected by COVID-19, returns from Iran, including deportations, and were high in the first half of 2021. Many IDPs and returnees end up in need of humanitarian assistance.

In 2022, there will therefore be a continued need to support life-saving multi-sector interventions to assist conflict-affected populations, and to ensure healthcare provision. To the extent possible, DG ECHO will support coordination, safety and security measures and air services, as a pre-requisite for more effective aid delivery. Afghanistan is regularly affected by natural hazards (predominantly floods and drought) and it will be important to maintain life-saving multi-sector support capacity for affected populations. This will depend on the respect (by all actors, at all levels) for key principles of humanitarian engagement:

- independence of humanitarian assessments and operations;
- presence of female humanitarian staff, as a pre-requisite to access women and girls; and
- safety and security for humanitarian staff and infrastructures, and respect of the civilian nature of humanitarian infrastructures (healthcare and education).

⁶⁶ International Organization for Migration.

Pakistan

Pakistan continues to face multiple crises, namely:

- the 40-years Afghan refugee crisis, with Pakistan still hosting some 3 million Afghans (including 1.4 million registered refugees), many still in need of humanitarian assistance; new arrivals may be expected in the last months of 2021 and beyond;
- the impact of COVID-19, which continues to put a severe pressure on a weak health system;
- a severe malnutrition emergency and food insecurity, triggered by multi-annual drought, compounded by the consequences of the pandemic and a locust plague, and the impact of past and ongoing insurgency/counter-insurgency operations, including related internal displacement and returns; and
- one of the world's highest degrees of proneness to disaster, e.g. floods, glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), earthquakes, heat waves).

In 2022 DG ECHO's response will therefore focus on:

- the most acute humanitarian needs of Afghan refugees, including new arrivals;
- very vulnerable people still affected by COVID-19;
- people affected by drought/food security issues and malnutrition;
- Pakistanis affected by internal conflict, i.e. IDPs and returnees, for instance to tribal districts (former Federally Administered Tribal Areas-(FATAs));
- people affected by other natural hazards (e.g. flooding, GLOFs, earthquakes);
- continues EiE support for children most in need; and
- its DP strategy in Sindh to implement community management of acute malnutrition, with a model that can be mainstreamed and replicated in other districts.

Iran

Iran faces a deteriorating humanitarian situation and will continue to be severely hit by multiple crises:

- the 40-year Afghan refugee crisis, with up to 3.5 million Afghans hosted in Iran, many of them very vulnerable and dependent on humanitarian aid (especially those who are undocumented); new arrivals are expected in large numbers in the second half of 2021 and beyond;
- a health crisis, including a dramatic COVID-19 outbreak compounded by Iran's challenges in importing medical goods and its limited capacity to provide life-saving healthcare;
- an economic crisis exacerbated by the USA's stated policy of maximum pressure implemented primarily through sanctions and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, with serious consequences for people's livelihoods; and
- the impact of climate change and natural hazards, due to floods, earthquakes and locust infestation, with possible negative food/nutrition impacts.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Iran has been the country affected most in the Eastern Mediterranean region and one of the worst affected worldwide. The socio-economic impact will exacerbate humanitarian and developmental needs that are already intensified by the country's economic downturn and the impact of US policies.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to focus on the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Iranians and Afghan refugees, with particular attention to newly arrived Afghans hosted in temporary settlements, those most affected by COVID-19 (both in terms of health and limited capacity to meet their basic needs) and people with other critical health needs or affected by natural hazards. In addition, it will build on the DP pilot initiative that was launched in 2021 to improve the health and education systems' preparedness for external shocks such as epidemics and natural disasters.

Central Asia

Central Asian countries are prone to natural hazards and are often hit by floods, flash floods, droughts and earthquakes. In 2021, DG ECHO responded to several emergencies through the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). A spillover of the Afghan crisis may be expected in neighbouring countries, such as Tajikistan, where (according to the UNHCR), up to 50 000 Afghans could seek refuge, and to a lesser extent Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. DG ECHO's DIPECHO plan in Central Asia ended in 2018. Development programmes should now ensure the follow-on support.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to follow the situation in the region closely, in particular the spillover from the Afghan crisis, and will continue responding to small-scale natural hazard and human-induced disasters.

2.8.2 South and South-East Asia

Bangladesh

Following widespread military crackdowns in Myanmar's Rakhine state in August 2017, the massive influx of Rohingya refugees has worsened the humanitarian situation in Cox's Bazar, which is now home to the world's largest refugee camp (nearly 900 000 refugees). Rohingya refugees are unable to pursue education or formal employment, they remain vulnerable to exploitation and serious protection risks, live in congested camps and are entirely dependent on humanitarian aid. The 1 February 2021 military coup in Myanmar has further reduced the prospects of a voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees to the country. The 2021 Joint Response Plan (JRP) for Cox's Bazar calls for funding of USD 943 million to assist 1.36 million people, both Rohingya refugees and host communities.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to deliver basic life-saving humanitarian aid to the Rohingya refugees and the host community in Cox's Bazar, including food assistance, nutrition, WaSH services, healthcare and education, and increased protection for the most vulnerable groups. It will continue to support the response to COVID-19 in the Cox's Bazar district, while also contributing to the country's response plan with the WHO. It will also continue to focus on priority gaps, HDP nexus opportunities, coordination and pooling of resources, and contribute to global policy debates, advocacy and accountability.

Bangladesh is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, exposed to a variety of natural hazards, including cyclones, floods and earthquakes. DG ECHO will continue to help address the emergency needs generated by major disasters that overwhelm national response capacities. In parallel, it will also help to scale up preparedness measures to improve preparedness for natural hazards. It will focus on the rainy season in Cox's Bazar, which usually triggers floods, landslides, cyclones and tidal surges. In other parts of Bangladesh, it will help communities at risk from natural hazards, supporting early action in highly flood-prone areas in the north of the country, and improving DP in congested urban districts of Dhaka.

Myanmar

Following the 1 February 2021 *coup d'état*, 3 million people in Myanmar are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection services, according to the 2021 HRP and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) post-coup interim Emergency Response Plan. The interim plan focusses mainly on people in urban and peri-urban areas in Yangon and Mandalay, and those displaced or otherwise affected in Chin and Kayin states. The UNHCR estimates that more than 230 000 people had been internally displaced in south-east Myanmar by mid-2021, with regional spillover, especially into India and Thailand.

The interim plan calls for an additional USD 109 million in funding for emergency humanitarian programmes for 2021, in addition to the USD 276.5 million requested through the initial 2021 HRP.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to provide life-saving assistance to address the needs of the most vulnerable people affected by violence and conflict in Myanmar. The focus will be on Rakhine, Chin, Kachin, Shan, Kayah and Kayin States. Humanitarian access is an increasing challenge throughout the country. Most of the sectors targeted in 2021 (protection, healthcare, EiE, food assistance) and the operational arrangements will remain relevant. However, due to uncertainty as to how the situation will look like in 2022, DG ECHO's strategy will remain flexible, in order to accommodate a range of scenarios. Should 2022 still be marked by intense conflicts, a crosscutting priority will be to provide emergency humanitarian response across eligible sectors. Due to the nature of the crises in Myanmar, protection will remain in any case the entry point and the primary sector of intervention.

Myanmar is highly prone to multiple hazards, including cyclones, floods, landslides and earthquakes. DG ECHO will continue to address the emergency needs generated by major natural disasters, while developing and reinforcing measures to improve preparedness for natural hazard and/or human induced disasters, bearing in mind that the coup has severely restricted the scope for working with relevant government bodies for the foreseeable future. As a result, DG ECHO will focus on capacity-building and support for local actors as regards early warning systems and response to the impact of the crisis and conflicts in rural and urban settings, rural communities' reduced resilience to natural hazards, and IDPs. The Myanmar HDP nexus strategy has been implemented through the nexus response mechanism (NRM), of which DG ECHO became a contributing member in 2021. It is expected that the NRM will offer significant potential for links with future DG ECHO DP actions.

Regional refugee crisis

Counties in South-east Asia are experiencing two regional crises with root causes in Myanmar – these concern Rohingya refugees (Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and India) and the refugees from the Myanmar coup (Thailand and India). 120 000 people are estimated to be in need of protection and assistance, a majority whom are women and children. In addition, fighting between the Myanmar Armed Forces and ethnic armed groups has led to a growing number of refugees to India (15 000) and Thailand (7 500).

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to pursue a non-discriminatory approach aimed at supporting humanitarian interventions for the most severely affected populations in need of protection and assistance, regardless of their country of origin. The response strategy will be based on four axes: protection information management, anticipatory preparedness, protection programming and coordination and advocacy.

Philippines

The Philippines are prone to significant humanitarian crises prompted by both natural hazards and political instability, particularly in Mindanao, which has endured long-standing internal conflicts between the government armed forces and various non-state armed groups. According to UNHCR, about 135 000 people were temporarily displaced in July 2021, but this number will continue to change due to local conflicts. Low-scale tensions across Mindanao are expected to continue in the course of 2022, leading to recurrent forced displacements.

In 2022, DG ECHO's humanitarian assistance in Mindanao will aim to reach the most vulnerable conflict-affected populations and those who suffer social and cultural discrimination and/or receive little or no assistance. The most acute humanitarian needs continue to include food security, protection, early recovery, WaSH, healthcare, and education.

In view of this complex, fragile setting and high vulnerability to multiple hazards, the 2022 DP strategy for the Philippines will seek to strengthen local preparedness capacities in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao. It will do so by influencing change and supporting local authorities' ability to mainstream, replicate and independently finance risk-based anticipatory actions in their disasters preparedness plans, especially in urban areas. In this way, they will be more prepared for and respond early to risks, including both human-induced and natural hazard crises.

Nepal

Nepal is exposed to countrywide tectonic activity and is highly vulnerable to disasters, in particular to frequent flooding and landslides.

In 2022, DG ECHO will focus the DP strategy for Nepal on capitalising previous DP investments (school-based disaster risk reduction, strengthening of the early warning system, health emergency preparedness) and lessons learned from engaging in earthquake preparedness. The 2021 allocation focused on support for comprehensive planning frameworks for disaster risk management governance. In 2022, monitoring will be intensified in 2022 to measure progress, identify persisting gaps and generate evidence/lessons that will contribute to replicability and scalability, and can be taken up by development actors.

Disaster preparedness in South-East Asia

In 2022, DG ECHO will focus its regional DP strategy for South-East Asia on early action (risk-based, anticipatory approaches), including shock-responsive social protection, and preparedness in conflict and fragile settings, to be financed through dedicated investments. It aims to leverage its previous targeted DP investments and progress in these focal areas. It will address climate and environmental resilience, and urban preparedness across all programming. The regional strategy complements its Myanmar and Philippines country strategies and embeds a multi-country operational component (in Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia) in actions financed in 2021.

2.9 Latin America and the Caribbean

Central America

The Central American countries and Mexico are subject to a combination of significant exposure to natural hazards and high levels of inequality and poverty. Of the countries in the region, Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras rank highest in the 2021 INFORM index, confirming that they are substantially more exposed to natural hazards and host to vulnerable groups with a limited crisis response and risk reduction capacity. The region is also witnessing epidemic levels of organised violence, with major humanitarian impacts on individuals and communities (similar to those caused by conflicts). The total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has reached 8.3 million people in the 'northern triangle' countries (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) i.e. almost 25% of their total population. This 60% increase from early 2020 is partly a result of the impacts of Hurricanes Eta and Iota, and the COVID 19 pandemic. Successive climate shocks in recent years, exacerbated by *El Niño*-related droughts, a decrease in purchasing power and the interruption of school food programmes during the pandemic have seriously affected food security in the region. The latest 2021 figures point to 7.75 million people being acutely food-insecure, mainly in the 'dry corridor' of Central America.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to support protection and relief assistance for populations suffering from the effects of multiple crises, including the most vulnerable victims of organised violence, those requiring

food assistance and short-to-medium-term livelihood support, and disaster preparedness and resilience building, in full coordination with longer-term development actions. It will also continue to monitor and responding to epidemics. It will monitor the population movements, in particular from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, but also from outside the region, that are triggered by violence, poverty, food insecurity and social unrest, including mass mixed migration flows to Mexico and Panama, and address the related humanitarian consequences addressed based on the basis of assessed needs.

South America

The region (in particular Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Chile) continues to experience an unprecedented influx of over 4.6 million migrants/refugees from Venezuela. Most migrants live in an irregular situation, are exposed to protection threats, lack basic services (healthcare, food, water, education), and are extremely vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Response capacities in the host countries are overwhelmed, triggering appeals for international support. South America is also prone to a variety of hazards (including floods, earthquakes and forest fires) and hosts large indigenous communities that are particularly vulnerable to the above multi-dimensional threats, which are further aggravated by the impact of climate change. It has been the region affected most by COVID-19, accounting for around 35% of the deaths recorded worldwide. The socio-economic impact of the pandemic has also been dramatic.

In 2022, DG ECHO will consolidate and extend the current response to the displacement crisis, with a particular focus on protection and life-saving operations for the most vulnerable groups in remote, under-served areas. It will also place particular emphasis on the needs of traditionally secluded indigenous populations across the continent.

In parallel, DG ECHO will continue to support disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction activities to strengthen local, national and regional response and coordination capacities, while promoting a civil protection approach to state response. On the basis of achievements and lessons learned from previous interventions, it will aim to strengthen the use of best practices for ownership and institutionalisation by the authorities, and to enhance preparedness for the humanitarian challenges posed by the regional migration crisis. To this end, it will maintain close coordination with local, national and regional institutions, and pursue synergies with the UCPM.

Colombia

Some 4 years after the signing of the peace agreement between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the country continues to face multiple challenges. In 2021, at least 6.7 million people have been in need of humanitarian assistance. Wider territorial control by armed groups (particularly in isolated rural areas) has escalated the conflict and added to the existing needs, leading to increased displacement, attacks in urban areas, reduced humanitarian access and a spike in the number of confinement events. The complexity of the situation is heightened by the spillover from the crisis in Venezuela, Colombia's exposure to natural hazards and, recently, by the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19. As of June 2021, there were 1.8 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Colombia. By the end of the year, an estimated 2 million Venezuelans will be living in the country (with access to legal status under the temporary protection system approved by the authorities in 2021) and 980 000 Colombian returnees from Venezuela. The arrival and transit of millions of people have had a considerable effect on services and resources. The health and education systems have insufficient capacity to. At least 6.2 million people in Colombia are in need of food assistance.

In 2022, DG ECHO's support in Colombia will focus on the most affected and under-assisted populations, in particular recently displaced people, rural communities affected by the armed conflict and people subject to food emergencies. It will give specific attention to the most vulnerable groups: female-headed households, children, the elderly, indigenous people and Afro-Colombians. In the region, it will provide

assistance and protection to Colombians in need of international protection. The humanitarian needs of people fleeing Venezuela will be addressed in the framework of the regional response to the Venezuelan crisis, focusing on border areas, reception cities and areas of double exposure (to conflict and natural hazard-induced disasters), seeking links with longer-term economic integration programmes as appropriate.

Venezuela

The complex crisis in Venezuela continues to unfold, with severe consequences for people's living conditions, particularly in terms of access to food, healthcare and education. Malnutrition rates have exceeded the emergency threshold, and national health services have almost collapsed, with only emergency services available (largely thanks to international support). The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated every aspect of the humanitarian emergency. Food insecurity levels are expected to rise significantly beyond those of 2019, when around 9.3 million Venezuelans were food-insecure, according to the WFP CARI scale⁶⁷. Up to 70% of school-aged children are not attending schools on a regular basis. Of about 5.6 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela, around 4.7 million are hosted in other Latin American countries and the Caribbean. More than 896 000 Venezuelans have applied for asylum worldwide. At least 7.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance as a consequence of the migration crisis.

In 2022, DG ECHO will maintain its humanitarian assistance in the framework of the "EU Compact for Venezuela", according to identified needs inside the country and the wider region. Multi-sectoral interventions will focus on providing basic health services, protection, access to food and nutrition services, WaSH and shelter support for people on the move. EiE will be supported, with a set of integrated activities aimed at making schools a protective environment. In particular, action will target children under five and young people, pregnant and lactating women, elderly people, and indigenous communities in remote areas. In parallel, DG ECHO will keep supporting humanitarian coordination and leading donor coordination at country level, with a renewed effort in the framework of the Inter-Cluster Humanitarian Working Group.

Caribbean

The Caribbean is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, notably hurricanes, storms, flooding and drought (the latter intensified by the *El Niño* phenomenon since 2015 and is particularly worrying in Cuba and the Dominican Republic). The region has also been severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis, which is having a heavy impact on national economies.

DG ECHO will maintain its support for disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction and the strengthening of resilience, building on the lessons learned and achievements of previous interventions, within a wider EU HDP nexus strategy linking relief to rehabilitation and development. It will continue to cooperate with disaster management institutions at local, national and regional levels to promote institutionalisation and the sharing of best practices. It will also stand ready to provide rapid humanitarian assistance in response to new sudden-onset disasters in the region. It will seek continued synergies with UCPM interventions. It will also support needs-based relief and protection activities benefitting displaced populations, in particular refugees from Venezuela, and other groups of disaster-induced forcibly persons.

Haiti

In 2021, 4.4 million Haitians (40% of the population) are in need of humanitarian assistance. The situation has been aggravated by the impact of the 14 August 2021 earthquake, with about 800 000 people affected and an estimated 650 000 people in need of emergency humanitarian assistance. Political upheavals

⁶⁷ World Food Programme, Consolidated approach to reporting indicators of food security.

(e.g. the assassination of President Moïse in June), social tensions, violence, insecurity, prevailing food insecurity and other factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climatic hazards have contributed to the further deterioration of the coping capacities of the vulnerable population. Analyses show that around 4.4 million Haitians are facing an acute food crisis or a food emergency, in a worsening trend since 2018. The years since 2018 have seen a constant increase in the number of people affected by food insecurity, (which doubled between 2018 and 2019). Food consumption and access to the main basic services in urban areas, included for the first time in the IPC analysis, have reached alarming levels. The food and nutritional status of vulnerable Haitians is expected to deteriorate further in the coming months, in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis and of the earthquake. The nutritional situation among children under five is worsening, as shown by the latest SMART⁶⁸ survey (conducted by the Ministry of Health with UNICEF and funded by DG ECHO), with 2.5% of severe acute malnutrition prevalence in the most populated department. Moreover, the general climate of insecurity in the metropolitan areas and gang warfare in particular have forced hundreds of families to move within the country. These people had to leave their homes to save their lives and some even saw their homes burn down. More than 16 000 people have been reported as internally displaced.

In 2022, DG ECHO will continue to support food assistance for vulnerable populations in food emergency, and nutritional for under-fives and children with severe acute malnutrition. It will also continue to address the protection needs of survival migrants and forced returnees/deportees from within the region. In response to the impact of the August 2021 earthquake, DG ECHO will pay particular attention to the access of vulnerable populations to basic services, namely in terms of education. Efforts to support disaster preparedness and build local rapid response capacities will also be maintained. All interventions will be designed in full synergy with EU longer-term development actions, following the establishing of a joint humanitarian-development intervention framework in Haiti. In parallel, DG ECHO will step up its humanitarian monitoring and advocacy efforts, in the light of the worryingly deteriorating socio-economic and security situation in the country.

2.10 Response to sudden-onset emergencies

The EU response will continue to address humanitarian needs in the context of sudden-onset emergencies (e.g. epidemic outbreaks, cyclones, floods, earthquakes, landslides). Such interventions falls under the Emergency Toolbox HIP⁶⁹ and are designed to ensure rapid funding for response to a broad range of fast-onset and first-response needs. In addition, responses to such sudden-onset emergencies may be organised through the EHRC, complementing existing international and national emergency response systems.

Epidemics

Epidemics pose great risks to the health, lives and livelihoods of vulnerable people in developing countries. Communicable diseases that have appeared or reappeared in recent years have demonstrated their epidemic potential and their capacity to significantly exceed national resources and borders, causing regional or (as in case of COVID-19 pandemic) global emergencies. The burden of endemic and epidemic-prone diseases tends to increase exponentially in more complex emergencies situations involving disasters, climate change and conflict. Such crises result in increased vulnerability to infectious diseases alongside reduced national capacities to respond to public health risks, especially if health systems were already poorly resourced. Vaccination coverage in developing countries is generally low, so the risk of transmission infection increases. As health workers are particularly at risk of infection, a proper response relies on the availability of medical evacuation options. To reduce morbidity and mortality in disease outbreaks, early and effective

⁶⁸ Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions.

⁶⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/funding/hip2021/echo_drf_bud_2021_91000_v3.pdf.

action is required. Response capacity is a key factor in an effective response, but this is only possible with an appropriate degree of preparedness.

Small-scale tool⁷⁰

While affecting relatively limited numbers of people, small-scale disasters still have a serious negative impact on their lives and livelihoods. They can occur in remote or isolated areas without regular support or assistance. The objective of the ‘small-scale tool’ is to provide victims of natural hazard or human-induced disasters with rapid relief assistance where a small-scale response is sufficient to cover unmet needs and enhance preparedness.

Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT)

Large-scale sudden-onset natural hazards can have an enormous impact on the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable populations. In many countries, the effects of a disaster - when combined with high levels of vulnerability and insufficient local capacities - may be devastating and require urgent life-saving assistance. The speed with which needs are addressed within the first days is usually critical. The purpose of the ALERT is to provide an initial response to cover the immediate needs of the most vulnerable in the immediate aftermath of a large-scale natural or technological disaster.

Support to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Disaster Relief Emergency Fund and Disaster Relief Emergency Fund Forecast-based Action

In most small-scale emergencies, emergency assistance is generally provided at local or national level. National Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, supported by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), are often best placed to provide an immediate response, as they are rooted in the local community and are able to mobilise local people as volunteers. DG ECHO’s contribution to the DREF is based on the need to ensure a quick reaction capacity with minimal administrative burden for those concerned. It may go towards FbA, a new mechanism under the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). FbA is taken when a disaster is imminent (or, in the case of a slow-onset disaster, about to come to a head) and follows a pre-determined protocol setting out the action to be taken and pre-agreed triggers established on the basis of historical and current forecast analysis.

Emergency response reserve

As a complement to ALERT, the emergency response reserve aims to provide adequate resources in the event of a sudden natural and human induced crisis of large scale and to serious deterioration of on-going crises.

⁷⁰ The Small-scale Tool allows DG ECHO to provide a rapid response to disasters where a limited response is appropriate. Small-scale disasters affect a relatively limited number of people but can have a serious negative impact on the lives and livelihoods of these populations.

2.11 Complementary and thematic activities

European Humanitarian Response Capacity

The Communication on the EU's humanitarian action proposes developing an innovative tailor-made European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC), aimed at filling gaps as they arise and piloting new and innovative approaches to humanitarian aid. The EHRC would also enable the EU to take up a stronger leadership role in steering and deciding on the rapid delivery of humanitarian assistance. In parallel, the EU's visibility would be raised and its humanitarian advocacy strengthened. The EHRC should be integrated with DG ECHO's existing response mechanisms and the wider strategic framework on logistics, and strengthen the synergies between the humanitarian aid instruments (Emergency Toolbox, HIPs provisions) and the various components of the UCPM (rescEU, European Civil Protection Pool).

Capacities in the form of emergency stockpiles would provide a safety net in the first hours of disasters (or shortly beforehand) and logistical support and coordination to help bridge urgent gaps in operations, medical emergencies, and any other areas that may be identified in the course of developing the EHRC. Examples of "envisaged but still not decided" capacities include the pre-positioning of emergency stocks, a reinforced EU humanitarian air bridge (EU HAB), an EU compound, EHRC rapid response teams and the medical niche expertise for humanitarian purposes.

Humanitarian air transport operations

Safe, reliable and cost-efficient humanitarian flights enable humanitarian access, particularly in certain contexts, by:

- reaching remote locations that would otherwise be cut off from the rest of the world;
- providing common services and pooling humanitarian partners' cargo, and
- helping humanitarian partners and cargo to reach countries if transport options are scarce or disrupted.

This applies in specific protracted humanitarian contexts, but also in specific emergency response situations, such as pandemics, floods, earthquakes and tsunamis. The ECHO Flight project and similar operations provide air transport options for humanitarian partner organisations working in challenging conditions.

The focus of the DG ECHO's air transport operations is the implementation of the ECHO Flight project and the support for specific World Food Programme (WFP) UNHAS operations. DG ECHO also has a framework contract with a private logistics transport company DAMCO (Denmark), for the provision of transport and logistics services worldwide.

ECHO Flight and other WFP UNHAS operations

ECHO Flight is vital for many humanitarian partner organisations operating in some regions of Africa, as many of their humanitarian projects would be extremely difficult to implement without this transport option. ECHO Flight facilitates partners' humanitarian response and improves the quality of humanitarian operations by allowing more frequent monitoring and evaluation missions. Its agility and flexibility allows it to respond promptly to humanitarian emergencies and carry out medical evacuations and security evacuations.

ECHO Flight and other humanitarian air transport operations directly benefits the staff of implementing agencies in the regions in question and indirectly benefits the several million people in need of assistance who are targeted by humanitarian and development programmes funded by the EU and other donors. Field staff productivity is increased, because rotations can be organised to allow staff to rest and recuperate on a

regular basis. The capacity to carry out emergency evacuations by air is a prerequisite for many organisations' projects.

ECHO Flight directly supports around 200 projects in the DRC, Kenya and Mali. In most months, it transports more than 2 100 passengers and 15 tonnes of cargo per month.

Until early 2020, six planes were operating in particular countries. However, due to the COVID-19 situation and the reduction in movement requests from partners, the fleet has been reduced to three dedicated aircrafts and closer synergies have been established with WFP/UNHAS (in particular in Kenya, where we share a plane). Around 5 500 passengers and more than 100 tonnes of cargo were transported in the first half of 2021.

EU Humanitarian Air Bridge

The EU Humanitarian Air Bridge (HAB) has a key role to play in the operation of the EHRC as an innovative tool (see above), by allowing DG ECHO to deliver assistance (e.g. stockpiles or other) rapidly at any time to any place where such assistance is required.

The EU HAB was set up in 2020 around four key principles: added-value, complementarity, synergies and cost-effectiveness. It addressed temporary logistical gaps in the humanitarian response and reinforced existing humanitarian and civil protection system. In 2021, an additional criterion for deploying the EU HAB was added: to support humanitarian advocacy and support humanitarian diplomacy to uphold the 'humanitarian space' and access to people in need. The EU HAB thus became an innovative advocacy tool that puts progress on access at the centre of the operation itself.

In 2022, stockpiles pre-positioned under the EHRC could support a more systematic use of the EU HAB in complementarity with other potential EU Member States' donations via the UCPM.

In situations in which the UCPM is not activated, through complementarity the EU HAB could also deliver supplies, services or associated assistance donated by Member States. EU HAB operations could be implemented under the umbrella of the Humanitarian Air Transport HIP or under the DAMCO framework contract.

Policy Support toolbox

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

In a context of increasingly complex humanitarian challenges and scarce resources, humanitarian actors' capacity to respond to ever-growing needs is often stretched to the limit. Addressing this issue is not only a question of increasing financial resources, but also of improving tools, knowledge, coordination and preparedness, as stated in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid⁷¹.

The development and roll-out of innovative and well-informed policies also ensures that DG ECHO's operational activities meet the highest international standards in terms of quality and timeliness.

Through the policy support toolbox DG ECHO has championed numerous policy initiatives, contributed to the development and building of capacity and strengthened its partners' ability to deliver. It will continue to adapt the toolbox for maximum effectiveness.

⁷¹ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1431445468547&uri=CELEX:42008X0130\(01\), page 7.](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1431445468547&uri=CELEX:42008X0130(01), page 7.)

Visibility, information and communication

In 2022, DG ECHO aims to increase awareness, understanding of and support for humanitarian issues, especially in the EU and in third countries where the EU is funding major humanitarian operations, by organising high-impact public awareness, information and communication actions. These will also highlight its cooperation, on behalf of the Commission, with partner organisations to deliver relief assistance to people affected by humanitarian crises.

Where appropriate, DG ECHO's communication actions will contribute to the Commission's corporate communication, in particular regarding the implementation of #NextGenEU, and the themes of the European Green Deal, Team Europe and the EU in the world (the latter in collaboration with the other external policy DGs of the Commission).

DG ECHO's communication approach reflects the specificity of humanitarian aid, with a view to preserving a distinct identity for principled, needs-based humanitarian action, in line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and the Communication on the EU's Humanitarian Action.

The EU is one of the world's leading humanitarian aid donors and plays an important role in shaping the global humanitarian landscape. Providing transparent, accountable information on the impact of EU humanitarian aid and disaster response, and its underlying values, is crucial to underpinning and mobilising continued support and relief assistance. Joint communication actions with the European Commission's humanitarian partners are integral to this approach. Operational activities funded by DG ECHO will thus fully integrate this imperative, aligned with the visibility requirements of the Commission's corporate model grant agreement, and its subsequent guidance to DG ECHO's funded partners.

Communicating the EU's response to sudden-onset, ongoing and protracted crises remains at the core of communication planning, together with awareness-raising on more strategic themes, as outlined in the Communication on the EU's Humanitarian Action (preparedness and resilience in a post-COVID-19 reality, IHL, the humanitarian principles, prevention of and preparedness to climate related disasters and 'forgotten crises'). Communication channels will include, *inter alia*, traditional print media, digital and social media products, journalist's visits, audio-visual programmes and media partnerships, online and offline content promotion, and strategic actions with humanitarian partners on key campaigning issues. Various communication initiatives will also complement the stakeholder and outreach activities around the first European Humanitarian Forum (January 2022).

3 Delivery, coordination and control of humanitarian aid

3.1 Ways and means of delivering aid

Field network

The field network of 49 field offices in 41 countries is considered one of DG ECHO's key strengths and a distinctive feature of the Commission's humanitarian aid policy. Composed of both international and local experts, it contributes decisively to the EU's status as a 'reference donor', whose strong position in international forums is based on first-hand operational knowledge. The field network makes it possible to improve the quality of humanitarian aid by ensuring coordination with stakeholders, including EU Delegations, Member States and international organisations. It facilitates the development of a strengthened EU reaction capacity in situations of sudden crisis, increasingly building on the synergies with civil protection.

Its basic role is to enhance the effectiveness and appropriateness of the EU's humanitarian action by:

- helping to identify and evaluate humanitarian needs in the field, and their possible evolution;
- monitoring EU-funded humanitarian aid projects, providing technical advice on needs assessment, analysing proposals and lessons learned;
- contributing to the coherent roll-out of policy guidelines guaranteeing a consistent level of quality for EU-funded humanitarian aid projects; and
- representing the Commission in relevant humanitarian aid clusters/forums, advocating with relevant stakeholders at local/regional/global level, within the framework established by headquarters, and ensuring appropriate communication and visibility actions, while keeping office structures flexible and agile, adapted to needs and based on appropriate resource, logistics and security management arrangements that are separate from the EU Delegations.

The field network is therefore of crucially important in helping to enhance the impact of humanitarian aid and improving DG ECHO's ability, on behalf of the Commission, to determine priorities.

Relations with (international) partners

DG ECHO implements its humanitarian aid mandate by funding projects proposed by partner organisations (currently around 200). They include European humanitarian NGOs, international organisations (including UN agencies), and specialised agencies in the Member States⁷². With some of these organisations (strategic partners, who jointly account for more than half of the annual humanitarian budget, and programmatic partners) DG ECHO organises annual strategic/high-level dialogues to discuss major issues of shared interest. It will continue actively to coordinate the EU preparation for meetings of the governing bodies of those strategic UN partners for which it has the lead, also in liaison with EU Member States.

Having a diverse range of partners is important, as it allows comprehensive coverage of an ever-growing list of needs in different parts of the world and increasingly complex situations. Grants and contributions are decided on the basis of the best proposals covering the needs of those most vulnerable. Partner organisations make a commitment to highlight the origin of EU aid.

Pilot Programmatic Partnerships

At the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, the world's major humanitarian donors and aid organisations signed a 'Grand Bargain' to improve the way humanitarian aid is delivered, by making it more

⁷² https://ec.europa.eu/echo/partnerships/humanitarian-partners_en.

effective and efficient, thereby reaching more people in need. Based the shared commitments, DG ECHO launched pilot programmatic partnerships with four NGO partners⁷³ in 2020 and with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the IFRC in 2021. Jointly developed specific objectives included reducing the administrative burden, increasing the proportion of funding directly available to assist people affected by crises, and promoting greater funding predictability and more flexibility in the humanitarian response.

Enhanced dialogue both at field and headquarters levels is a key element of the programmatic partnerships, as highlighted by the first 'lessons learned' exercise undertaken with the NGO partners. Further efforts must be made to provide more flexibility to respond to new-onset crises/emergencies and respond to new needs.

In 2022, DG ECHO intends to expand the pilot phase to a limited number of other UN-agencies, based on their respective mandates and alignment with DG ECHO's own strategic priorities.

3.2 Coordination and information exchange

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

- exchange of information on overall operational strategies and on responses to specific crisis situations - this features regularly on the agendas of the Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) attended by Member States;
- crisis reports - these are shared with Member States and contribute to shared assessments and understanding of the situation on the ground and thus to the overall coordination of the EU's and Member States' humanitarian response;
- regular exchanges with partners at headquarters and in the field;
- the European Disaster Response Information System (EDRIS) – this collects data on DG ECHO and Member States' humanitarian aid activities
- the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS) – this enables information exchange, situational awareness and coordination during emergencies with the UCPM member and participating states;
- the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) - a 24/7 coordination hub enabling a coordinated and swift response to disasters by supporting humanitarian aid and civil protection activities, the ERCC:
 - facilitates a coherent EU response during emergencies, as well as supporting other EU services and the Member States in crisis situations;
 - supports the institutional crisis management process as well as other DGs. On 1 February 2020, it took over the Commission's duty system under phase 1 of the general rapid alert system (ARGUS) from the Secretariat-General, so all incoming communications concerning an ongoing or potential crisis are directed to the ERCC.
 - Acts as the 24/7 operational focal point in the context of the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) arrangements and a coherent information flow for the production and dissemination of the integrated situational awareness and analysis (ISAA) reports.
- at international level, DG ECHO continues to participate in forums and donor groups, e.g. the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Donor Support Group (DSG), the IFRC Donor Advisory Group (DAG) and the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG);
- regular exchanges of views on the EU's response to crises take place in the European Parliament (in particular in the Development Committee, but also increasingly in the Foreign Affairs Committee;

⁷³ Acted, Concern Worldwide, IRC-DE and STC-DK.

- *ad hoc* crisis coordination meetings of the Commission services and where appropriate the EEAS aimed at exchanging information (e.g. ARGUS meetings, EEAS Crisis Platform);
- regular information exchange and upstream coordination in relation to crisis response interventions under the ‘NDICI - Global Europe’ Regulation⁷⁴ to ensure optimal deployment of DG ECHO resources and coherence of interventions across EU funding instruments;
- regular geographical evaluations each with a suitable thematic/sectoral focus, with a view to covering all regions in which DG ECHO operates and all humanitarian themes and sectors every 5 years; the results are posted on DG ECHO’s website⁷⁵; and
- thematic platforms, such as the Global Network against Food Crises.

3.3 Monitoring the use of funds

Correct implementation of EU-funded operations is ensured by the Commission by several layers of checks and monitoring at internal level and by external actors. This includes appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties, including review procedures, where appropriate, as well as rules and procedures to ensure compliance of the relevant action with EU restrictive measures⁷⁶, account being taken of the relevant principles of international humanitarian law.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a key tool for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of EU initiatives. DG ECHO’s 5 year evaluation programme provides comprehensive evaluation coverage of its humanitarian aid and civil protection activities over the period.

In 2021, evaluations of the following have been or will be completed, and the reports made available on DG ECHO’s evaluation webpage⁷⁷:

- EU humanitarian assistance in Syria, 2015-2018;
- the EU’s implementation in 2014-2018 of the DG ECHO thematic policy document: *Gender: Different needs, adapted assistance*
- the EU’s humanitarian response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh, 2017-2019;
- the EU ‘aid volunteers’ initiative (*ex post evaluation*);
- the Emergency Social Safety Net programme (ESSN-2), January 2018-March 2020; and
- the EU’s humanitarian interventions in Yemen and in humanitarian access, 2015-2019.

Evaluations of the following are currently ongoing and will be completed in early 2022:

- the EU’s humanitarian interventions in the Horn of Africa, 2016-2020, and DG ECHO’s partnership with the ICRC;
- the EU’s humanitarian interventions in disaster preparedness, 2015-2020;

⁷⁴ Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009 (OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p. 1).

⁷⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/echo/>.

⁷⁶ www.sanctionsmap.eu. Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website, it is the OJ version that prevails.

⁷⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/echo/funding-evaluations/evaluations_en.

- the EU's humanitarian response to sudden-onset disasters, 2016-2020, and DG ECHO's partnership with the IFRC.

Evaluations of the following are about to start and are to be completed in the second half of 2022:

- the EU's humanitarian interventions in the Sahel and in the food assistance and nutrition sectors, 2016-2020 (combined evaluation);
- DG ECHO's humanitarian response to epidemics, and its partnership with the WHO, 2017-2021 (combined evaluation).

Controls performed by DG ECHO

In 2021, DG ECHO finalised its control strategy, a document that describes the controls put in place to ensure that its operational and control objectives are achieved.

The main aspects of DG ECHO's control environment include the following supervision and monitoring procedures and *ex ante/ex post* controls:

- strict mechanisms for the selection and quality control of NGOs and international organisations as DG ECHO partners, with explicit requirements for their financial credentials and;
- assessment of needs of crisis-affected people through a worldwide network of DG ECHO field experts;
- appraisal of project proposals and on-the-spot project monitoring through a worldwide network of DG ECHO field experts;
- regular field visits to project sites by geographical desk officers, technical experts, external auditors, and DG ECHO managers;
- obligation for partners to produce reports after the end of each operation to justify their expenses. DG ECHO's operational and financial desk officers carry out a thorough analysis of the reports, with checks on eligible expenditure; and
- external auditors contracted by DG ECHO carry out audits of the legality and regularity of expenditure claimed; sound financial management and control systems, and compliance with the requirements set in the certificate⁷⁸.

The above monitoring mechanisms should not be seen in isolation. Each one of them helps to provide assurance on the legality and regularity of transactions and their compliance with relevant rules and obligations. In the Commission, controls are also carried out by the Internal Audit Service, whose mission is to issue recommendations, opinions and advice on Commission's departments' and EU agencies' internal control system.

Additional controls

DG ECHO's operations and financial management are also the subject of external controls. The European Court of Auditors audits the EU's finances and, increasingly, the performance of its activities. Observations and recommendations are published in the Court's annual and special reports, which are transmitted to the European Parliament and the Council.

Specialised committees of the European Parliament and Council exercise control over the Commission services' financial management. In this context, the Budgetary Control Committee of the European Parliament organises annual hearings with a number of Commissioners in the framework of the procedure for the discharge of the European Commission's annual accounts.

⁷⁸ <https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/ngo/humanitarian-partnership-2021-2027/eu-humanitarian-partnership-certificate-2021-2027>.