



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
Regulatory Scrutiny Board

Brussels,  
Ares(2018)

## Opinion

### **Title: Evaluation / Comprehensive Evaluation of the European Union's Humanitarian Aid 2012-2016**

(version of 12 April 2018)\*

### **Overall opinion: POSITIVE**

#### **(A) Context**

The EU provides needs-based assistance to people affected by man-made and natural disasters. Its aim is to preserve life, prevent and alleviate suffering, and help to maintain human dignity. To these ends, EU countries and institutions have agreed to work in a coordinated and complementary manner, under United Nations coordination.

The European Commission has provided humanitarian aid since 1992, in over 110 countries. Its annual budget is about EUR 1 bn. A network of experts in over 40 countries worldwide helps to monitor crisis situations and relief operations. In partnership with UN agencies, international organisations and NGOs, the Commission helps provide food and nutrition, shelter, health care, water and sanitation and education. Assistance reportedly reaches over 120 million people every year.

This report examines how the EU has delivered humanitarian aid during 2012-2016. Over this time period, the Commission funded 3816 individual actions and spent a total of EUR 7.4 bn. The report also draws lessons for broad humanitarian aid policy. It builds on an external study, which in turn draws on a large number of more detailed evaluations.

#### **(B) Main considerations**

**The Board finds the report well structured and drafted. The evaluation is based on a comprehensive consultation and is consistent with Commission better regulation guidelines.**

**The Board gives a positive opinion, but considers that the report should be improved and complemented with respect to the following key aspects:**

**(1) The report summarises but does not adequately present key evidence and analysis underpinning its findings.**

\* Note that this opinion concerns a draft evaluation report which may differ from the one finalised.

**(2) The report does not sufficiently present and analyse main trade-offs and implementation challenges in humanitarian aid policy.**

**(3) The report does not clearly highlight the evaluation findings that translate into operationally useful lessons.**

### **(C) Further considerations and recommendations**

(1) The evaluation should present more clearly and systematically the key evidence on which its findings rest. In particular, the report should better explain the evidence base and how it balances stakeholder views against other information sources to corroborate findings and delivers robust conclusions. The report could also better distinguish 'insider' from 'outsider' stakeholders to test for possible 'group thinking'.

The report should be clearer on the benchmarks it uses to judge performance. These could include best-practice, standards or aggregate indicators. Where this is not possible, relevant case examples and indicators can illustrate the performance of humanitarian aid.

(2) The report could describe operations in ways that are more useful for policymakers. For example, it could better present and analyse the main trade-offs and implementation challenges in humanitarian aid policy over the evaluation time period. It should clarify how the needs-based approach was made operational, including how prioritisation took place. To the extent that effectiveness and efficiency place a premium on an organisation that is nimble, pragmatic and adaptable, the evaluation should show how EU aid administration has demonstrated these features. It could further analyse evidence regarding the following:

- The relationship and perceived or apparent tension between independent humanitarian aid and European interest concerning migration.
- How humanitarian support interfaces with other aid in protracted crisis situations, which involve elements of disaster risk reduction, rehabilitation, and development. This includes the appropriateness and effectiveness of demarcating humanitarian aid, civil protection, and development cooperation. The report should also justify and explain the extent to which humanitarian aid is spent within the EU (see figure 3 on page 21).
- The emergency nature of the needs-based policy vis-à-vis the advantages of further long-term and regional programming and predictability.
- The need for adaptability and flexibility in working through different channels and with different methods, while trying to consolidate relationships with 'trusted' and 'strategic' partners. This includes the rationale for channelling substantial amounts of funds through the UN system, the efficiency of this approach, and the value added of the EU when doing this.

(3) The conclusions section should better highlight those findings that merit attention from policy makers for policy action. This could be achieved by adding a short section on lessons learned.

*Some more technical comments have been transmitted directly to the author DG.*

**(D) RSB scrutiny process**

**The lead DG is advised to ensure that these recommendations are duly taken into account in the report prior to launching the interservice consultation.**

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| Full title          | Comprehensive Evaluation of the European Union's Humanitarian Aid 2012-2016 |
| Reference number    | PLAN/2017/614   |
| Date of RSB meeting | 16/05/2018  |