



Annual Activity Report 2022

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EUROPEAN
CIVIL PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN AID
OPERATIONS – DG ECHO

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DG ECHO IN BRIEF

The mandate of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) is to help save and preserve life, prevent and alleviate human suffering and safeguard the integrity and human dignity of populations affected by disasters and crises. Under this common overarching objective, DG ECHO acts both as the EU humanitarian aid donor and emergency responder as well as a coordinator and facilitator of civil protection operations at EU level through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). In case of major crises within the EU and if activated by the Council, emergency support can also be provided under the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI).

As a humanitarian donor, the EU - through DG ECHO - provides needs-based humanitarian assistance to people in need around the globe, based on the humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality, humanity, non-discrimination and independence. Its 2022 annual humanitarian budget amounted to over EUR 2.6 billion, enabling DG ECHO to intervene not only in large-scale humanitarian crises – including in Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan or Ethiopia – but also in forgotten crises, i.e. those of severe and protracted character that do not attract media attention, and where the level of international aid to affected populations is insufficient.

Beyond being a key donor, operating through its partner organisations (United Nations agencies, Red Cross & Red Crescent movement, and international non-governmental organisations), the EU has a leading role in steering and developing thematic policies, supporting multilateral actions, and coordinating approaches with EU Member States. DG ECHO also plays a key role as an emergency responder, offering to its humanitarian partners a number of services in the framework of the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC) and organising, amongst others, Humanitarian Air Bridge operations to deliver humanitarian goods and transport humanitarian workers, including to hard-to-reach areas where assistance could otherwise not be delivered.

As regards civil protection and more broadly crisis management, DG ECHO assumes a continuously growing role in coordinating and facilitating emergency response operations with EU Member States and Participating States to the UCPM. Through the UCPM, DG ECHO mobilises assistance on a 24/7 basis and enables rapid EU solidarity response, whenever disasters hit, or emergencies arise. DG ECHO acts with a view to improving prevention, preparedness and response to disasters as well as to fostering consistency in international civil protection work. It notably develops, maintains, and mobilises rescEU, the EU's strategic reserve of emergency response capacities, and seeks new partnerships and innovations in emergency management that can match the changing risk landscape in the world. To fulfil these objectives, the 2022 budget for the UCPM amounted to over EUR 1.6 billion.

DG ECHO has more than 550 staff working in headquarters and a strong presence in the field with more than 460 staff deployed. This field presence provides valuable information about the situation on the ground and supports operations in DG ECHO's 51 field offices located in 41 third countries across continents.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual activity report is a management report of the Director-General of DG ECHO to the College of Commissioners. Annual activity reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the Commission and constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties¹.

A. Key results and progress towards achieving the Commission's general objectives and department's specific objectives

The year 2022 was largely marked by **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**, which caused a humanitarian catastrophe not seen in decades on European soil. It triggered not only a major humanitarian aid operation but also the largest, longest and most complex civil protection response operation since the creation of the UCPM. It has been a **significant turning point** in the way humanitarian aid and civil protection responses intertwine, triggering an **unprecedented response from the EU and its Member States**, and having deep consequences in the EU action in Ukraine and in other crises around the world, as it exacerbated notably food insecurity worldwide to unprecedented levels. In 2022, DG ECHO allocated EUR 485 million to address immediate humanitarian needs on the ground in Ukraine, including winterisation, cash assistance, protection, healthcare, and education. Through DG ECHO's humanitarian partners, EU humanitarian assistance has contributed to reaching approximately 13.9 million people across Ukraine. In response to 126 requests for assistance from Ukraine, under the UCPM, more than 80 000 tonnes of in-kind assistance were delivered, 1 700 Ukrainian patients evacuated to 20 European hospitals and 28 shipments of life-saving assistance from the rescEU strategic reserve dispatched. This involved working across different sectors, ensuring that linkages and synergies are established between different key actors involved, including in the area of health, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN), energy or demining. DG ECHO has been at the frontline of the EU response, by quickly mobilising available tools, resources, and capacities to address the unprecedented circumstances, providing assistance to populations in record time, both through its civil protection and humanitarian aid mechanisms.

In 2022, the **humanitarian situation continued to drastically deteriorate** in many parts of the world, due to persistent conflict and insecurity, the impact of climate change, failed governance, the persisting impact of COVID-19 and other epidemiological outbreaks, as well as the indirect impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, resulting in **unprecedented levels of humanitarian needs**. According to the UN OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2022, updated in December 2022², 326 million people were estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance and protection in 2022, an increase of 30.4% compared to 2021. The further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, Ethiopia or Sudan as well as large-scale disasters that occurred during the

¹Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

²Global Humanitarian Overview 2022, October Update (Snapshot as of 31 October 2022) - World | ReliefWeb , update 31/10/2022

summer months, such as the devastating floods in Pakistan, Chad, Honduras or Burkina Faso, are only a few of many visible examples of sustained increase in humanitarian needs.



As humanitarian needs have reached an all-time high level, the gap between needs and resources available has significantly increased. In addition, growing violations of International Humanitarian Law and access impediments made the delivery of humanitarian aid even more difficult and dangerous. Despite these **challenges**, DG ECHO **successfully managed to reach its objectives**, in line with the priorities and key actions outlined in the Commission Communication on the EU’s Humanitarian Action ‘*New challenges, same principles*’ (later referred to as “the Communication”) adopted in March 2021³. In 2022, the EU **remained a key global humanitarian donor**, providing humanitarian assistance in 83 countries, teamed up and engaged with Member States to deliver effective and adequate humanitarian assistance and advocated for preserving humanitarian space and respecting International Humanitarian Law. A tangible example was the swift and decisive response to the **global food crisis**. DG ECHO managed to increase its humanitarian food and nutrition assistance in 2022 to around EUR 950 million, i.e. 60% more than in 2021, and was instrumental in setting up and facilitating a comprehensive Team Europe response adopted by the Council in June 2022⁴.

As regards civil protection, DG ECHO **strengthened further the EU-wide UCPM response**, by ensuring full implementation of the revised legislation⁵ – in force since May 2021. Work

³COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on the EU’s humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles COM(2021) 110 final.

⁴Team Europe response to global food insecurity – Council conclusions (20 June 2022)

⁵Regulation (EU) 2021/836 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

advanced in particular on two new strands for enhanced prevention and preparedness under the UCPM, notably on the **Union Disaster Resilience Goals (DRGs)** and the **disaster scenario-building at Union level**. These work strands are closely interlinked and will provide a more systematic approach to evidence-based decision-making for UCPM prevention and preparedness measures. A Commission Recommendation⁶ and an accompanying Communication⁷ on the DRGs were adopted in early 2023. During 2022, DG ECHO also successfully negotiated the **enlargement of the UCPM** to two new Participating States: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania.



EU mobilised 6 rescEU firefighting airplanes from Greece, Sweden and Italy to fight wildfires in France during summer.
© European Union, 2022.

Moreover, DG ECHO ensured an efficient use of the available budget through the further development of **rescEU capacities**. The negotiations, jointly undertaken by the EU and its Member States, for the procurement of a **fully-fledged aerial firefighting fleet (AFF)** at European level advanced well. In addition and following the President's announcement at her State of the Union (SOTEU) address to double the seasonal rescEU transition fleet, DG ECHO swiftly coordinated and agreed with Member States to contract 10 additional light

aircraft and several helicopters under rescEU for the forest fire season in 2023. The work on rescEU capacities continued in other priority areas as well, such as medical and CBRN. New strands, such as multi-purpose transport, mobile laboratories, shelter and energy supply capacities, were also added and will be further implemented, to better equip the EU to respond to on-going and future emergencies. Available resources under the UCPM were reinforced in 2022 by EUR 275 million, to address disasters and **enhance preparedness to respond to wildfires**. Wildfires raging through Europe in 2022 resulted in the second-largest area of burnt soil on record⁸, severely affecting areas across Europe. This is a further indication of the impact of climate change and of the need to step-up prevention work. For this reason, DG ECHO developed in 2022 a **wildfire prevention action plan** aimed at bringing together tools available under the UCPM to support Member States in preventing the occurrence of wildfires in Europe.

In relation to the wider discussions on **EU crisis management structures**, a priority in 2022 was to optimise DG ECHO's role in contributing to enhance the overall European resilience to future crises. Special attention was paid to further consolidating and expanding the central role of the **Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)** as a 24/7 single operational hub managing and facilitating the EU's swift and effective response to a broad

⁶Commission Recommendation of 8/2/ 2023 on Union disaster resilience goals 2023/C 56/01 (OJ C 56, 15.2.2023, p. 1–11)

⁷ COM(2023) 61 final (COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS European Union Disaster Resilience Goals: Acting together to deal with future emergencies)

⁸ Forest Fires in Europe, Middle East and North Africa 2021, JRC.

range of cross-sectoral crises at home and around the world, as well as improving the ERCC’s anticipatory planning and foresight capacities and capabilities. The role of the ERCC in coordinating and facilitating the swift and targeted cross-sectoral response was successfully proved, for example, in the context of the EU’s response to the Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine.

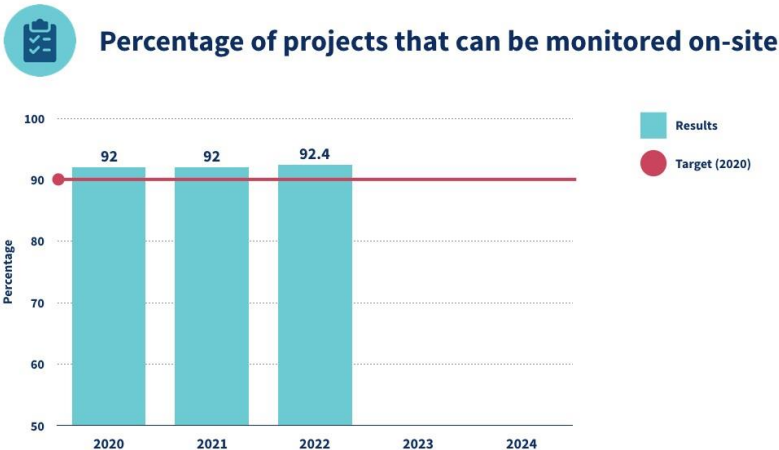
The first edition of the **European Humanitarian Forum** (co-organised with the French Presidency of the Council of the EU in March 2022) and the **7th European Civil Protection Forum** were two occasions to re-affirm the EU leadership and engagement on humanitarian aid and civil protection respectively. Both events offered a unique platform to promote dialogue on humanitarian and civil protection policy issues and raise media and public attention to major policy deliverables.

In this very challenging context, with the help of all tools at its disposal, DG ECHO contributed again to showcase with concrete examples the **EU solidarity in action** inside the EU and around the world.

B. Key performance indicators

1. Percentage of projects that can be monitored on-site - DG ECHO objective 1: General objective 4: A Stronger Europe in the World - Specific objective 2: Humanitarian space is preserved and respect for International Humanitarian Law is ensured.

92.4% of projects that finished in 2022 were “monitored on-site”. This figure includes cases where physical visits in the end were not possible due to access restrictions (COVID-19 or other unanticipated restrictions), and mitigating measures – such as telematic or desk monitoring – were put in place. The rate remains stable compared to previous years.



2. Percentage of humanitarian aid funding targeting actions in forgotten crisis - DG ECHO objective 1: General objective 4: A Stronger Europe in the World - Specific objective 3: The EU remains a global humanitarian donor by providing an adequate and effective humanitarian assistance in countries affected by humanitarian crises.

15.3% of the initial commitments for the 2022 budget for humanitarian aid amounting to EUR 227 million were allocated to forgotten crises, in line with the political commitments of 15% set for this key performance indicator (KPI). Final allocations provided in 2022 to forgotten crises amounted to EUR 910 million and represented 36.8% of total final allocations, compared to 30% in 2021. This increase is due to the important reinforcements allocated to Ukraine in 2022 as a consequence of Russia’s war of aggression.



Forgotten crises identified for 2022 and funds initially allocated to such crises by geographic area.
© European Union, 2022.

3. Response time of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism to a request of assistance

- DG ECHO objective 3: General objective 5: Promoting our European way of life - Specific objective 1: The needs of the most vulnerable people in times of crises are met.

This indicator measures the time elapsed between the moment when the Commission receives a request for assistance and when it gets the first offer of assistance from Member States and Participating States (PS). As civil protection is only a support competence, the Union can support and coordinate Member States and UCPM Participating States’ action in civil protection, but it is up to these states to offer concrete assistance. There are no cases where assistance was not delivered or was delayed due to a failure of the UCPM.

The amount and types of assistance requested through the UCPM broke all records in 2022, mainly due to the high number of emergencies both inside and outside Europe, their long duration as well the complexity of the emergency environment. This entailed coordination and mobilisation of public authorities and private entities across many different sectors, which naturally required more time. As a result, the average response time increased in general from 8 to 37 hours for assistance between Member States, and from 68 to 142 hours for activations outside Europe.

Indicator	Inside Europe	Outside Europe
Response time	37 hours	142 hours

4. **Adequacy of response of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism** - DG ECHO objective 3: General objective 5: Promoting our European way of life - Specific objective 1: The needs of the most vulnerable people in times of crises are met

This indicator measures the percentage of requests for assistance received that have been partially or completely fulfilled with the voluntary offers for assistance made by Member States and Participating States, including rescEU.

2022 was another challenging year, with a further increase in the number of requests for assistance under the UCPM. Bearing in mind that UCPM requests referred to significant quantities of in-kind items of varied nature, ranging from vaccine doses to autotransformers, the **UCPM response was very effective**, addressing on average around 95% of all requests received. A record number of 232 requests were received during 2022 (compared to 114 in 2021, or 102 in 2020), including 126 requests submitted by Ukraine. In total, 222 requests (95%) were responded to, of which 27 responses (out of 30 requests, i.e. 90%) related to assistance inside Europe, and 195 (out of 202, i.e. 96%) for assistance outside Europe.

This was made possible by the improved preparedness achieved through the rescEU stockpile, established in March 2020 and further developed throughout 2021 and 2022, the swift establishment in 2022 of three UCPM logistics hubs in Poland, Slovakia and Romania which facilitated the pooling of assistance for Ukraine, as well as incentivised offers from Member States/Participating States through co-financing transport operations up to 100%.

Indicator	Inside Europe	Outside Europe
Adequacy of Response	90%	96%

C. Key conclusions on financial management and internal control

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework, DG ECHO has assessed its internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective, and that the components and principles are present and functioning well overall. Some minor improvements are called for, as minor deficiencies were identified. Please refer to Section 2.1.3 for further details.

In addition, DG ECHO has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, including those for supervising entities to which it has entrusted budget implementation tasks, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the internal auditor and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to

determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer to Section 2.1 for further details.

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated. Minor improvements are necessary concerning staff awareness and knowledge of procedures. Targeted awareness-raising and training sessions for DG ECHO staff will continue to be organised in this respect. The Director-General, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

D. Provision of information to the Commissioner(s)

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between DG ECHO and the Commissioner on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Lenarčič, responsible for Crisis Management.

1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE COMMISSION'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT

DG ECHO manages the Commission's programmes on humanitarian aid and civil protection through which its activities have been funded. Information on DG ECHO's 2022 achievements is also reflected on the 2022 programme statements for the humanitarian aid and civil protection programmes.

External communication and visibility

DG ECHO developed a mix of communication activities that aimed at maintaining a high level of public support and political backing of EU humanitarian aid and civil protection, based on the narrative of EU solidarity. Due to the war in Ukraine, efforts were stepped up to show the EU's humanitarian and civil protection work. Aside from the unprecedented operations in Ukraine, DG ECHO also gave further visibility to the activities of the Commission in other crisis contexts, including the global food insecurity, the EU response to the tropical cyclone in Madagascar, the floods in Pakistan, or the extremely heavy wildfire season across Europe.

In terms of **traditional press work**, in 2022 the Commission spokespersons' service published 50 press releases and 8 press statements announcing the main operations and achievements by the Commissioner and DG ECHO. In addition, DG ECHO co-published a series of local press releases in collaboration with its humanitarian aid partners. In 2022, despite the need to revise or postpone some initially planned communication actions in the current context, DG ECHO could resume its successful series of field visits with European journalists, with press trips to Chad, Türkiye (twice), Jordan, Bangladesh, Colombia, Uganda, and Moldova, as well as trips for journalists accompanying the Commissioner to Central America and Ukraine. Concerning **digital media**, the number of page views of DG ECHO's website increased considerably by 46% to over 1.9 million views in 2022. With over 634 000 followers, social media keeps growing in importance, and the publication of audio-visual productions, such as photos and videos, proved to be particularly effective. DG ECHO ran several **awareness-raising campaigns** in 2022. A first campaign ("Climate Connect") showing the humanitarian impact of climate change ran in ten Member States and reached more than 36 million youngsters via social media, online platforms, influencers, posterage, and partnerships with relevant media outlets, schools, and festivals. A second large-scale campaign ("Together we stand ready to protect Europe") about civil protection response in medical crises reached almost 35 million people in six countries. Throughout the year, various **topical campaigns and podcast projects** were also running, coordinated directly by DG ECHO or by DG ECHO funded partners as part of their visibility obligations. Finally, DG ECHO's communication channels also supported, among others, the first European Humanitarian Forum and, the European Civil Protection Forum in 2022.

DG ECHO objective 1: General objective 4: A Stronger Europe in the World

Specific objective 1: The EU remains a lead humanitarian donor by providing adequate and effective humanitarian assistance to populations affected by humanitarian crises

DG ECHO contributed significantly also in 2022 to the **EU's global leadership role in emergency response, providing relief and support to the most vulnerable people** suffering from conflicts and disasters across the world, by mobilising both humanitarian aid and European civil protection assistance.

Despite progress in dealing with humanitarian crises globally, many aspects have remained challenging for adapting to the evolving situation and leading needs-based response to affected populations. For instance, a contested multilateral order and the challenges derived from climate change are exacerbating tensions and fuelling existing regional conflicts and protracted crises. Other factors, such as failed governance and the long-lasting consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, contribute to the current outlook. In addition, continued widespread violations of International Humanitarian Law and humanitarian access impediments make the delivery of humanitarian aid even more difficult and dangerous.

In order to **champion multilateralism and a rules-based global order** through a more active role and a stronger voice for the EU in the world, DG ECHO participated actively in shaping humanitarian advocacy and policy development at the European and global levels. In 2022, DG ECHO continued to work on the priorities defined in the Communication on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles⁹, with a focus on **addressing the ever-increasing humanitarian needs**. Significant progress was made on the implementation of commitments taken under the **Grand Bargain**¹⁰, notably on quality funding, joint and impartial needs assessment, and simplification of reporting, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian response. In 2022, DG ECHO continued to contribute to **Country-Based Pooled Funds**¹¹, to further promote **localization** and less earmarked funding. Furthermore, DG ECHO increased its advocacy and outreach for a substantially enhanced humanitarian financing effort and a better sharing of responsibility among donors, including Member States, and further strengthened the longer-term **Programmatic Partnerships**¹² with selected UN and International Organisations, to test more efficient and effective ways of working, while preparing for the roll out of the model in 2023.

The **Humanitarian Logistics Policy**¹³ was launched in February 2022, with the primary objective of saving lives through greater efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of

⁹ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles COM(2021) 110 final.

¹⁰ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain>

¹¹ Afghanistan, South Sudan and Venezuela

¹² Programmatic Partnerships

¹³ DG ECHO thematic policy document: Humanitarian logistics policy <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2795/009117>

humanitarian operations. Training of humanitarian partners and promotion of good practices, high-level awareness-raising, and operational guidance were all implemented in 2022. The ambition was to enable a paradigm shift in this area through DG ECHO's advocacy and funding, triggering a multiplying effect.



Humanitarian aid items being shipped to Afghanistan via one of the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge operations.
© European Union, 2022.

As part of this policy, the **European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC)**¹⁴ was launched in March 2022. It contains a set of operational tools designed to provide rapid but temporary support to partners to fill gaps in the humanitarian response, while ensuring greater effectiveness and cost efficiency in the delivery of aid. The different instruments include the provision of **common logistics services** to humanitarian partners in the form of international and in-country transport operations (across various modes of transport including the **EU Humanitarian Air Bridge** and **Humanitarian Aid Flight**), **warehousing capacities**, **emergency stockpiles**, and other logistical support and coordination, as well as **medical expertise**. Deployments of EHRC services are coordinated with civil protection stakeholders while respecting the overall coordinating role of

the UN, building upon the added values of each of the sectors and fostering synergies.

In 2022 the Commission deployed 9 EHRC operations in Madagascar (twice), Ukraine, Moldova, Somalia, Afghanistan, Mozambique, Uganda, and Burkina Faso. In addition, the Humanitarian Aid Flight operations continued in Kenya, DR Congo, and Mali. 60 EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flights were organised, supporting 24 partners in 4 countries (Afghanistan, Somalia, Madagascar, and Moldova), transporting 842 tonnes of humanitarian material. Finally, in Ukraine and Moldova, common logistics services were offered free of charge to all humanitarian partners: 660 road transport operations were organised in Ukraine, mainly last mile deliveries close to the frontline; 3 warehouses with temperature control for medical items and kitting services were opened and supported 49 humanitarian partners (both international and local NGOs).

DG ECHO continued to use the full potential of its **Emergency Toolbox**, composed of ALERT (Acute Large Emergency Response Tool), Epidemics tool, Small-scale tool and DREF (Disaster Response Emergency Fund), and provided the first line of emergency humanitarian assistance to sudden-onset crises that could not be foreseen in its humanitarian implementation plans. In 2022 such examples included the allocation of funds from the small-scale tool and subsequently ALERT for immediate response to the floods which

¹⁴ DG ECHO: European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC) Factsheet

affected Pakistan; the activation of ALERT for the tropical cyclones in the Philippines, Madagascar, Mozambique, Cuba, but also the earthquakes in Afghanistan and the Philippines, among others; support for the response to the Ebola virus disease in Uganda via the Epidemics tool, as well as response to Cholera in Lebanon, Syria, Haiti, Nigeria, and Malawi. DG ECHO replenished IFRC's (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) 67 DREF operations in 52 countries, including in relation to the hunger crisis in Africa and floods and earthquakes in Southeast Asia and South America.

Thematic policy priorities

Over the years, DG ECHO has developed a number of policies and guidance that outline the Commission's position on key issues and provide concrete recommendations to its implementing partners. The overall objective is to ensure quality, coherence, and accountability of EU funded humanitarian operations. In 2022, DG ECHO continued to ensure the application of these policies, as well as their further development when and where necessary to ensure that its humanitarian assistance continued to be fit for purpose. This notably entailed focusing on new sectors such as the **digitalisation** of humanitarian assistance and the use of **innovative technologies**, which help make aid more effective, cost-efficient, and accountable.

Food assistance, nutrition, and famine prevention

Global food insecurity reached a historical maximum in 2022, with 220 million people in need of food assistance – an increase of over 40% compared to the previous year. An estimated 45 million children under 5 years of age suffer from wasting and 149 million have stunted growth and development due to chronic lack of nutritious food in their diets. The ripple effects of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine further exacerbated the global food and nutrition crises that have been unfolding in the last few years. DG ECHO reacted to these crises by significantly increasing humanitarian food and nutrition assistance to an estimated EUR 950 million (i.e. over 60% more than in 2021), and by helping develop a Team Europe Response strategy adopted by the EU and its Member States in June 2022. Reporting under the Nutrition for Growth Accountability Framework¹⁵ will confirm that DG ECHO and the EU are on track to fulfil the 2021 Team Europe pledge of supporting nutrition objectives with a budget of at least EUR 4.2 billion until 2024.

¹⁵ 2022 Global Nutrition Report - Global Nutrition Report



In 2022, DG ECHO chaired, on behalf of the EU, the Food Assistance Convention (FAC). Furthermore, DG ECHO finalised a combined evaluation of the food assistance and nutrition sectors, which will inform its strategic positioning and response to food and nutrition crises, including the update of its guiding policy documents.

Protection and focus on the most vulnerable

The continued breaches of International Humanitarian Law and the widespread risks and instances of violence, deprivation and abuse in today's crises have made humanitarian protection a key concern. In 2022, DG ECHO continued making **protection** a priority across all sectors of humanitarian assistance. Among others, DG ECHO actively engaged with the Global Protection Cluster¹⁶ on the topic of 'Access for Protection'.

Humanitarian crises have a different impact on women, girls, boys and men, whose needs have to be addressed accordingly. DG ECHO continued **mainstreaming gender and age across all sectors of intervention**, outlining the approach to gender and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises in the Staff Working Document '*Gender: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance*¹⁷ and addressing all types of violence against children. DG ECHO remained an active member of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies¹⁸ and reported concerning the commitments made to the Road map 2021-2025¹⁹. Furthermore, DG ECHO increased its focus on conflict-related sexual violence in response to observations in several recent and ongoing crises. In line with the 2021 Strategy

¹⁶Global Protection Cluster

¹⁷https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_thematic_policy_document_en.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/>

¹⁹ <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/what-we-do>

on the Rights of the Child²⁰, DG ECHO strengthened its activities for child protection, including with advocacy activities.

In order to address the protection needs of **persons with disabilities**, DG ECHO ensured the implementation of the Operational Guidance on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations²¹ and the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030²².



Helping displaced children go back to school in Sudan.
© Mathilde Vu, NRC.

Education in Emergencies

Over 222 million crisis-affected children²³ and young people around the world are in urgent need of educational support. They are out of school or do not learn minimum literacy and numeracy skills. They are exposed to violence, physical and psychological suffering, and social injustice, and to the risk of living in poverty. In 2022, DG ECHO continued to place emphasis on

education in emergency contexts,

maintaining investment in education at the ambitious level of 10% of the annual initial EU humanitarian aid budget, which meant a funding of over EUR 220 million, aiming to **reach over 6 million children** with direct or indirect education support.

Cash as delivery modality

DG ECHO published its policy on **humanitarian cash transfers**²⁴ in March 2022 and disseminated it widely with the objective of enhancing the quality and efficiency of cash programmes and of humanitarian aid. This policy marks a step-change in linking cash transfers and social protection and enables synergies with key developments in the field of digitalisation and greening of humanitarian assistance.

Together with the United States (Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration) DG ECHO represented the Donor Cash Forum in the caucus on cash coordination under the Grand Bargain 2.0. The new model was endorsed by the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC), representing a major step in the humanitarian coordination architecture, including a strong participation from local actors.

²⁰ COM(2021) 142 final.

²¹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/system/files/2019-06/dg_op_guidance_inclusion_gb_liens_hr.pdf

²² COM(2021) 101 final.

²³ Education Cannot Wait, Global Estimates: Number of crisis-affected children and adolescents in need of education support, June 2022

²⁴ DG ECHO Thematic Policy Document No 3: Cash Transfers

Health, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) priorities in relation to increasing public health emergencies

Health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) assistance remained a core sector of DG ECHO's humanitarian aid interventions in 2022. Health needs increased dramatically; at least half of the world's population could obtain essential health services. Assistance was provided as support to existing health systems or in the form of parallel additional healthcare. **Mental health and psychosocial support** (MHPSS) were systematically integrated into general health and protection activities. This cross-sectoral approach was also promoted through the organisation of a webinar series on MHPSS in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, in a Team Europe approach with the Netherlands and Germany.

In 2022, DG ECHO's WASH policy continued to focus on improving access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services for people affected by humanitarian crises, along with supporting the coordination and management capacity of the sector. Besides integrating environmental considerations into humanitarian WASH interventions, DG ECHO's work on WASH places the human right to water and sanitation at its core. As one of the largest humanitarian donors of WASH assistance worldwide, DG ECHO participated in the 9th World Water Forum (Dakar, Senegal) in 2022. The main outcome of the Forum, which laid the groundwork for the UN 2023 Water Conference, was a declaration, adopted also by the EU, called the «Blue Deal»²⁵. The declaration advocates for universal access to water and sanitation, adequate finance, and inclusive governance, as well as increased cooperation in the water sector. Furthermore, it calls for the application of International Humanitarian Law to protect water supply and sanitation systems that are considered vital in times of conflict.

In 2022, DG ECHO conducted an evaluation of the health sector, focusing on two components: the EU humanitarian response to epidemics and the WHO partnership. The evaluation, covering the period 2017-2021, will help assess the different instruments used and will provide a strategic perspective on DG ECHO future role within the broader global response to epidemics and the health security agenda²⁶.

Other thematic priorities

Forced displacement remained an important thematic policy priority in 2022, with the publication in July 2022 of a **Commission Staff Working Document on disaster and climate-related displacement**²⁷, and the start of an 18-month **EU tenure as Chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD)** (July 2022 – December 2023) jointly coordinated by DG ECHO and DG INTPA. During the first 6 months of its mandate as Chair, DG ECHO supported and directly contributed to the organisation of a number of dialogues

²⁵ A "Blue Deal" for water security and sanitation for peace and development.

²⁶ While guided by Better Regulation, it is not an evaluation in the *Better Regulation* sense.

²⁷ COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT: Addressing displacement and migration related to disasters, climate change and environmental degradation
https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/swd_2022_displacement_and_migration_related_to_disasters_climate_change_and_environmental_degradation.pdf

and information and knowledge sharing activities of the PDD, in Geneva as well as in the framework of the COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Specific objective 2: Humanitarian space is preserved and respect for International Humanitarian Law is ensured

In today's armed conflicts, **International Humanitarian Law violations** are widespread, systematic and on the rise, causing significant harm to civilian populations, destroying key civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools, putting at risk the life of humanitarian and medical personnel, and heavily impacting the EU's humanitarian objectives. Although the EU is not part of the Geneva Conventions and their additional Protocols (as only states can be), key priorities for DG ECHO are the support for a better enabling environment to deliver **principled humanitarian aid**, the focus on **addressing the increasing violations of International Humanitarian Law** and growing impediments to access and delivery as well as the promotion of **compliance to International Humanitarian Law**.

In 2022, DG ECHO pursued its **systematic public advocacy** through public statements and interventions on IHL in multilateral fora and high-level events. During the first European Humanitarian Forum taking place in Brussels in March 2022, a ministerial session on improving compliance with IHL to safeguard humanitarian space was held, reaffirming the EU's support at the highest levels. DG ECHO also co-organised a high-level side event in the margins of the UN General Assembly Ministerial Week on promoting accountability for IHL violations, especially sexual and gender-based violence. DG ECHO continued to support and advocate for the protection of humanitarian and healthcare workers and education from attacks and stepped-up actions for children associated with armed conflict. On behalf of the Commission, DG ECHO contributed extensively to the preparations of the fifth annual report on the implementation of the EU Guidelines on IHL covering activities which took place in 2021²⁸. In line with the 2021 Communication's²⁹ key action on the establishment of an EU-level coordination mechanism on IHL, DG ECHO facilitated the coordination of relevant EU actors, notably through the Interservice Group on IHL, and supported stronger EU humanitarian diplomacy. DG ECHO also made funding available to IHL-related projects. It notably supported the programme for the Prevention of IHL violations of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) through its first thematic Programmatic Partnership. DG ECHO also continued discussions on improving the monitoring of IHL violations. Moreover, it contributed to the preparation of the **EU human rights due diligence policy** to ensure that EU security sector support, including in the context of Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations, complies with human rights law and International Humanitarian Law.

DG ECHO continued to promote and support the **compliance of EU restrictive measures with International Humanitarian Law**. To that effect, DG ECHO appropriately promoted the consistent inclusion of **humanitarian exceptions** in EU sanctions regimes (e.g. Ukraine sanctions regimes include humanitarian exemptions) and supported the setup of **effective**

²⁸ Report on the EU guidelines on promoting compliance with International Humanitarian Law

²⁹ COM(2021) 110 final (COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles)

frameworks for the use of such exceptions by humanitarian organisations. DG ECHO continued **promoting dialogue** between donors, regulators, humanitarian operators and the private sector in order to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all those in need, for instance through the Bank De-risking panel at the European Humanitarian Forum 2022, the EU Round table on sanctions in Geneva and the Good Humanitarian Donorship session on sanctions in Geneva.

Specific objective 3: The EU remains a global humanitarian donor by providing adequate and effective humanitarian assistance in countries affected by humanitarian crises

DG ECHO provides humanitarian relief throughout the world in a principled and needs-based manner. It aims to **ensure that funding is available to assist as many people in need in the greatest number of countries** as possible, and that a swift, efficient, and comprehensive response is provided.

Providing rapid and flexible assistance **both in major crises and in the so-called forgotten crises** has become a hallmark of the EU's profile as a donor. DG ECHO continued to put particular emphasis on devoting a sizeable part of funding to address needs in areas of difficult access, and on providing a rapid response in areas or sectors underfunded by other donors. In 2022, DG ECHO identified 16 countries or regions as 'forgotten crises' and allocated more than 15% of its initial budget (over EUR 227 million) to help the most vulnerable people affected by these crises³⁰.

In line with the internal strategy approved in 2021 on the use of External Assigned Revenues and in complementarity with the ongoing cooperation with Member States, DG ECHO received from Member States External Assigned Revenues amounting to more than EUR 6 million.

Humanitarian-development-peace nexus

Given the protracted nature of most humanitarian crises, improving and strengthening the link between humanitarian and development aid and, where relevant, peace actions is necessary to better connect urgent relief and longer-term solutions, while fully respecting the mandates and regulatory frameworks of each action. In line with the 2021 Communication, in 2022 DG ECHO continued to undertake **systematic EU joint analyses** of the risks, needs, vulnerabilities and structural drivers of crises, and contributed to conflict analysis screenings mandated by the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI – Global Europe). This has led to more efficient responses.

For example, the joint analysis in Nigeria has provided the basis of joint planning, and agreement on locations to focus on in the North-East of the country. In Sudan, the joint conflict analysis allowed to better address the peace dimension of the nexus in EU cooperation projects. Likewise, the conflict analysis screening process in Iraq contributed to identifying conflict-sensitive action and peacebuilding opportunities. The comprehensive

³⁰Final allocations provided in 2022 to forgotten crises, amounted to EUR 910 million and represented a 36.8% of final allocations, please refer to section B of the Executive Summary for more information.

analysis of humanitarian needs, political economy, gender, and conflict drivers in the Nexus Response Mechanism in Myanmar informed project design and adaptation across the nexus.

Examples of humanitarian crises to which DG ECHO responded in 2022



This transformer, worth more than €2 million, was offered to Ukraine by Litgrid and is part of the biggest logistics operation ever coordinated under the UCPM.
© Litgrid, 2023. All rights reserved.

Since 24 February 2022, Russia's war of aggression against **Ukraine** had a devastating impact on millions of Ukrainian citizens. The war continues to result in civilian deaths and suffering, massive displacement, and large-scale destruction of critical infrastructure, and causes unprecedented humanitarian needs. More than 17.7 million³¹ people in the country needed humanitarian support in 2022. While the whole of Ukraine is critically affected by the war, the

situation in areas closer to front lines and those under Russia's and Russian proxies' military control remain extremely volatile. In 2022, with an allocation of EUR 485 million, DG ECHO provided life-saving assistance mainly through cash transfers and humanitarian protection to populations directly exposed to war and displacement. Since the start of Russia's war of aggression almost 750 000 Ukrainian refugees fled to Moldova. In response, DG ECHO made available EUR 38 million in emergency assistance for Moldova, including cash assistance and protection services, to address the needs of refugees and their host communities.

DG ECHO continued to address the needs of the population in **Syria**, as well as the needs of Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in neighbouring countries (Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq). Inside Syria, 15.3 million people needed humanitarian assistance³² in 2022. DG ECHO maintained its focus on multi-sectoral life-saving actions (emergency response and preparedness, protection, health interventions and the promotion of International Humanitarian Law). In **Lebanon** and **Jordan**, more than 4.8 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance³³ DG ECHO activities focused on protection, basic needs assistance, Education in Emergencies, disaster preparedness and health for the most vulnerable refugees, while also addressing vulnerable host communities.

In **Türkiye**, around 4 million refugees are in need of humanitarian support³⁴. This includes nearly 3.7 million Syrians and over 322 000 registered refugees mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and Somalia³⁵. In 2022, EU action in Türkiye focused on protection, health and Education in Emergencies for vulnerable refugees. One of the priorities continued to be the

³¹ OCHA Ukraine Flash Appeal (March to December 2022)

³² <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2023-humanitarian-needs-overview-december-2022>

³³ Revised Emergency Response Plan for Lebanon (UNOCHA, June 2022) and for Jordan: Statistics for Registered Persons of Concern (UNHCR, November 2022).

³⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/unhcr-turkey-operational-update-october-2021-entr>

³⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/unhcr-turkey-operational-update-october-2021-entr>

transition of the two major programmes, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) and the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) from humanitarian to development funding under DG NEAR. CCTE successfully transitioned in October 2022 and ESSN is due to transition in 2023.

Yemen remains one of the largest humanitarian crises worldwide. In 2022 over 23,4 million people³⁶ needed humanitarian assistance and protection (75% of the Yemeni population). Food insecurity remained widespread and acute, with 17 million people³⁷ (over half of the population) experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity in December 2022. The situation continues to deteriorate due to the combined impact of armed violence, economic crisis and disrupted public services.

In **Afghanistan**, the humanitarian situation worsened since the Taliban takeover in August 2021. In 2022, the number of people in need increased from 24.4 to 28.3 million³⁸, requiring mainly support in food, WASH, Protection and Education. The main drivers of the crisis remain droughts, insecurity and violence, restrictions for women to participate in society, food insecurity, global and local economic shocks as well as the deterioration of basic services. DG ECHO also supported the five million people affected by the floods in Pakistan³⁹. DG ECHO contributed to the UN OCHA Country Based Pool Funding (CBPF), to support the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF). In 2022, DG ECHO funded Humanitarian Air Bridge (HAB) flights, delivering 497 tonnes of life-saving medical relief items for humanitarian organisations in Afghanistan.

The overall humanitarian situation in the **Horn of Africa** region deteriorated in 2022, with over 32 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia. Conflicts and the worst drought in 40 years are the drivers of humanitarian needs across the region, triggering internal displacement and cross-border flows. Some areas in Somalia and Ethiopia suffer from famine-like conditions. Multi-sectoral humanitarian action prevented outcomes from being even worse in the affected areas. In order to mobilise the international community, in April 2022 Commissioner Janez Lenarčič, together with the UN's Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths, co-hosted a flagship event on the hunger crisis in the Horn. Pledges of nearly EUR 1.3 billion were made, out of which EUR 633 million was pledged by the EU in a Team Europe approach. In addition, DG ECHO mobilised additional top-up funding with a focus on food security and helped aid agencies to scale up their multi-sectoral response.



Children in Somalia are screened for malnutrition.
© European Union, 2022

³⁶ Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022

³⁷ Yemen: IPC Acute Food Insecurity Snapshot | October - December 2022 [EN/AR] - Yemen | ReliefWeb

³⁸ Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023 (January 2023) - Afghanistan | ReliefWeb

³⁹ Pakistan: 2022 Monsoon Floods - Situation Report No. 13 (As of 6 January 2023) - Pakistan | ReliefWeb

Ethiopia saw an exponential increase in humanitarian needs. In addition to the drought, the conflicts in northern Ethiopia and in other parts of the country generated increased humanitarian needs. In 2022, DG ECHO focused on addressing the most urgent needs of people, with an emphasis on protection, as well as supporting the enablers of the humanitarian response, the main emergency pipelines, and supplies. Throughout 2022, DG ECHO continued with its high-level advocacy on unhindered humanitarian access in northern Ethiopia, International Humanitarian Law obligations, protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs), while also drawing attention to the drought- and conflict- affected areas. As part of this advocacy, the Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič visited Tigray and the Somali region in June 2022.

The situation in **Sahel**, which further deteriorated in 2022, remains very worrying due to a conjunction of crises (political, security, humanitarian, economic, social), whose intensity varies across the region. As a result, humanitarian needs are growing at an alarming pace for 38.3⁴⁰ million people, with unprecedented levels of forced displacement and food and nutrition crises driven by insecurity and conflict compounded by climate change. In 2022, DG ECHO responded to the most urgent needs of conflict-affected populations in multiple sectors, such as humanitarian protection/ prevention and response to violence, food, health, WASH, shelters and settlements, Education in Emergencies, and disaster preparedness.

Venezuela's socio-economic and political crisis continued in 2022 despite some timid hopes of improvement, with severe humanitarian consequences for 19.7 million people⁴¹, aggravated by COVID-19 and the impact of the war in Ukraine, while more than 7.1 million people have left the country⁴² since the beginning of the crisis. In 2022, DG ECHO provided integrated protection and humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable groups, inside Venezuela and in the region, across all relevant sectors (Health, Nutrition, Education in Emergencies, Protection and Shelter, WASH, and Food Security). It also remained engaged in giving more visibility to this crisis and in improving the access and operating conditions for humanitarian organisations in Venezuela through, among others, donor coordination and the International Contact Group for Venezuela humanitarian aid working group, which is facilitated by DG ECHO.

⁴⁰ Global Humanitarian Overview 2022 | Global Humanitarian Overview (unocha.org) and internal data for Mauritania

⁴¹ Condiciones-de-vida-Hoja-infografica-Marzo-2022.pdf (humvenezuela.com)

⁴² [Refugees and migrants from Venezuela](#)



The EU works with partners to set up learning centres and provide essential education continuity for Rohingya children.
© Imrul Islam/NRC.

In **Southeast Asia**, two regional crises have root causes in Myanmar: the Rohingya regional refugee crisis (mainly in Bangladesh, but also Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and India) and the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar itself following the military coup and the widespread conflict. The Cox's Bazar district, in Bangladesh, is home to the world's largest refugee camp, hosting almost 1 million Rohingya refugees, who are entirely dependent on humanitarian aid. In Myanmar⁴³, 17.6 million people

needed humanitarian assistance, of which 1.5 million are internally displaced persons⁴⁴. In 2022, DG ECHO delivered basic life-saving humanitarian aid to the Rohingya refugees and the host community, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable people affected by the violence and conflict.

Haiti continues to suffer from a large-scale food crisis, compounded by the consequences of widespread violence and the socio-political crisis. As a result, around 5.2 million⁴⁵ people were in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022 and 4.7 million Haitians were reported to be suffering from a large-scale food crisis⁴⁶. In 2022, demonstrations, gang violence and blockage of access to the main oil terminal further aggravated the situation. Cholera re-appeared in October (after three years without a case), and for the first time ever, close to 20 000 people in the capital's neighbourhood of Cité Soleil were assessed to be in famine. DG ECHO helped respond to the cholera epidemic and address the most urgent food and nutrition needs of the most vulnerable households, with specific attention to children under five. Other sectors of intervention include protection, general health, and education.

COVID 19 response in external action

In response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, DG ECHO continued contributing to the Team Europe approach initiated in 2020. Vulnerable populations, such as refugees, internally displaced persons, people living in conflict zones or in areas seriously affected by climate change, women, children, older people, and people with disabilities are the most affected by the health and socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, DG ECHO followed up on interventions launched in 2021 with the additional humanitarian funding provided to the **COVAX Humanitarian Buffer**⁴⁷ and with the support to the vaccination roll out in Africa.

⁴³ <https://data.unhcr.org/es/documents/details/98261>

⁴⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-needs-overview-2023-january-2023>

⁴⁵ Global Humanitarian Overview 2023 | OCHA (unocha.org)

⁴⁶ Haiti - Response Overview October 2022 - Haiti | ReliefWeb

⁴⁷ GAVI: COVAX Humanitarian Buffer



Specific objective 4: Adequate and effective civil protection response and preparedness is provided to people in need

The UCPM, through its external dimension, is an instrument enabling tangible EU solidarity in the world. It is growing in importance, as evidenced by the **number**

of activation requests from third countries (76 out of 106). DG ECHO continued to foster this type of cooperation to support third countries in the aftermath of disasters and to contribute to building more resilient disaster management structures. Based on the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2022 DG ECHO pursued work to strengthen the international cooperation aspects of the UCPM. Thanks to its unique infrastructure, the established network of contacts, its know-how and experience, the **ERCC** effectively acted as a **central hub for cross-sectoral operational** coordination. Moreover, DG ECHO further increased the ERCC's access to scientific, analytical, monitoring, and information management and communication capacities to **better support operations and cross-sectoral coordination, and inform decision-making**, including anticipatory planning. A specific focus was put on security-related policy areas (e.g. CBRN, Critical Entities Resilience (CER), NATO cooperation, hybrid and cyber threats).

The UCPM relies on state-of-the-art **technical and scientific knowledge and tools to provide fast advice** to have more efficient and effective emergency response operations. DG ECHO also worked closely with other Commission services, the European External Action Service and decentralised agencies (EU Satellite Centre, Frontex, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control - ECDC) but also with scientific partners (e.g. with expertise in natural hazards or radiological/nuclear risks) to provide situational awareness and analysis for emergency operations.

Lessons and good practices identified under the **UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme**⁴⁸ provide the basis for learning and improving. In this light, the lessons and good practices identified in 2022 from the UCPM operations in Ukraine and other emergencies indicated the need for the response to be adapted to the circumstances and the context, as well as for anticipatory actions to plan ahead to further enhance the EU's early warning and information systems. They also showed the need to continue **delivering prevention and preparedness activities**. Bringing all these strands together, in 2022 DG ECHO launched the UCPM evaluation, as provided for in Article 34 of Decision No 1313/2013, covering activities carried out between January 2017 and December 2022.

⁴⁸ <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/ucpm-lessons-learnt-programme>

Experts and response capacities are thoroughly prepared to respond to any kind of disaster thanks to comprehensive **training and exercises programmes**. The training programmes enhance the individual competences of experts and key personnel, as well as the coordination and interoperability of modules, Technical Assistance Support Teams, other response capacities and experts with other actors involved during an international deployment. In 2022, 50 training courses took place with almost 1 000 course places offered to experts at introduction, operational and management level. In addition, 14 online modules were maintained as part of the training offer, 13 module exercises and 4 full-scale exercises were organised, and 298 experts attended 15 exchanges hosted by 10 civil protection authorities under the **Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network**.

DG ECHO also tapped into **European scientific expertise on natural hazards and human induced disasters**. The European Anthropogenic Hazard Scientific Partnership (EAHSP) was established in the first half of 2022, ensuring ERCC's access to analytical and scientific information about nuclear and radiological risks, especially necessary due to the aggravating situation in Ukraine. It produced 125 monitoring reports. In addition, the enhanced European Natural Hazard Scientific Partnership (ENHSP) was reinforced, enabling now the possibility of seconding staff to the ERCC during a disaster, in addition to the monitoring, reporting and on-call advice. In 2022, the ENHSP produced 50 emergency reports and 156 monitoring reports. DG ECHO's activities are also embedded in the **larger EU response to crises**.

DG ECHO objective 2: General objective 1: A European Green Deal

Specific Objective 1: People and communities at risk of disasters are resilient and prepared

DG ECHO continued to contribute to complete and efficient delivery of the Green Deal's objectives through both its internal and external dimensions⁴⁹.

Internal Dimension

In the framework of the UCPM, DG ECHO continued to promote a better understanding of disaster risks and analysed the latest summaries of risk assessments and capability assessments submitted by Member States and Participating States. The first progress report on **disaster risk management** under the prevention pillar of UCPM (Article 6 report) based on this analysis will be published in 2023. DG ECHO further pursued **mainstreaming disaster risk reduction across EU policies**, with a special focus on mobilising long-term investments in disaster risk management from cohesion, agricultural and research policy funding, and linking with the EU climate and environmental policies. It actively participated in the preparation of the 2021-2027 programming period Common Agricultural Policy strategic plans, Cohesion funds programming) pursuing the objective of increasing the resilience of the EU. Work has also advanced on two new strands for enhanced prevention and preparedness under the UCPM: **Union Disaster Resilience Goals (DRGs)**, and **Disaster Scenario-building at Union level**. These will point to five strategic areas where Member States and the Commission need to work together in order to strengthen the

⁴⁹[Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face](#)

collective capacity to withstand future disasters, to protect citizens, and to safeguard livelihoods, as well as the environment. They will also reinforce linkages with resilience efforts in other areas, such as in security, environment, and climate change. A Commission Recommendation and accompanying Commission Communication on the DRGs were adopted by the College in early 2023. These work strands aim to reach a comprehensive and integrated approach to disaster risk management to strengthen resilience of people and communities.

In 2022, DG ECHO also contributed to a number of actions to implement the EU Forest 2030 strategy⁵⁰, Adaptation and sustainable finance⁵¹, as well as the Renovation Wave and Zero Pollution action plans. DG ECHO notably supported the development of a harmonised EU monitoring system of forest fires and contributed to the Adaptation Strategy through improved collection of data on climate-related losses, improving the understanding of the economics of disaster prevention, preparedness, and the cost of adaptation.

In addition, DG ECHO financed 23 prevention and preparedness projects, including cross-border projects and the support to national disaster risk management authorities, with the aim of **strengthening prevention and preparedness in EU Member States and UCPM Participating States**. Furthermore, one **peer review on disaster risk management** was conducted in Romania, providing a concrete opportunity to identify areas for improvements and highlight good practices within the disaster risk management system in Romania.

External Dimension

The civil protection external cooperation was significantly boosted by the **signature of Administrative Agreements (AAs) with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania** which became new UCPM participating states. The **revision of existing UCPM AAs** with Western Balkans countries and Türkiye were also initiated with the signature of a revised AA with Serbia in December 2022 and the remaining ones to follow in early 2023.

As regards the UCPM regional cooperation, the signature of a series of new flagship initiatives (worth EUR 20 million) was also completed in 2022; these include for example new regional programmes in the Mediterranean (PPRD Med 2023-2025 under NDICI) and in the Western Balkans and Türkiye (IPA CARE 2023-2028), as well as the launch of an innovative on-site technical assistance facility in both regions. A multi-country gap and hazards analysis action covering the Enlargement and Neighbourhood partners has also been prepared and signed to support the future external UCPM cooperation strategy.

Furthermore, the UCPM Administrative Arrangement on civil protection cooperation with the US's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was renewed in November 2022 and discussions on a similar agreement started with Canada. The Administrative agreement with FEMA contributes to two long-term objectives, strengthening the readiness for catastrophic disasters and improving climate resilience and disaster risk reduction.

⁵⁰ COM(2021) 572 final.

⁵¹ COM(2021) 82 final.

In 2022, DG ECHO further strengthened its support to disaster preparedness⁵², which promotes **multi-hazard preparedness and anticipatory action**. In this regard, DG ECHO worked and will continue to work on gradually increasing funding to scale up anticipatory action in line with the Communication on Humanitarian Aid.

DG ECHO continued to encourage partners to include preparedness measures and climate, environmental and conflict risk considerations into all the humanitarian actions it funds, to help ensure that impacts, including those related to climate, were accounted for in all sectorial interventions, including those related to displacement. The **Resilience Marker**⁵³ is a tool that supports partners in doing so throughout the design of their interventions by ensuring that they do consider and address these risks.

In order to increase the sustainability of its operations and further promote resilience, in 2022 DG ECHO continued and will continue to apply a nexus approach, **promoting complementarities and linkages between the disaster preparedness actions it funds and related development interventions**. This implies, for instance, encouraging DG INTPA and DG NEAR to include preparedness aspects in development programming under the NDICI. It further implies that DG ECHO's preparedness actions should include, whenever possible, an exit strategy that addresses the issues of scaling up and reinforcing ongoing and/or planned longer-term risk reduction and development interventions.

Specific objective 2: The environmental impact of humanitarian aid and civil protection operations is reduced

As the climate and environmental crisis deepens, humanitarian actors are faced with a collective responsibility to ensure that their work does not further contribute to deteriorating the environment. This calls for taking all necessary **measures to reduce the climate and environmental footprint of humanitarian aid**, in line with the 2007 European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and the “do not harm” principle.

In order to reduce the carbon footprint and the environmental damage of humanitarian aid, Minimum Environmental Requirements and associated guidance were published in 2022⁵⁴. Technical assistance and support were provided to partners and DG ECHO's staff in order to **integrate environmental considerations in DG ECHO's humanitarian aid operations and those of its partners**. DG ECHO worked with its partners throughout 2021 to develop these requirements in priority areas and 2022 was considered a pilot year, where partners were encouraged to start applying the Minimum Environmental Requirements in their projects, giving them time to adapt to them. From 2023, the Minimum Environmental Requirements will become mandatory for partners.

⁵² Implementing the approach adopted in 2021 (DG ECHO Guidance Note on Disaster Preparedness)

⁵³ DG ECHO: Resilience Marker <https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/ngo/action-proposal/fill-in-the-single-form/8-resilience-marker>

⁵⁴ [guidance_on_the_operationalisation_of_the_mers_for_eu-funded_humanitarian_aid_operations.pdf](#) (europa.eu)

In February 2022, the Council invited the Commission⁵⁵ to make civil protection operations greener and more sustainable in all phases of the disaster management cycle and promote research, innovation, and knowledge sharing. Recommendations from a DG ECHO initiated study investigating how the UCPM can green its operations and how it can support Member States in their own greening efforts were presented in February 2023.

DG ECHO objective 3: General objective 5: Promoting our European way of life

Specific Objective 1: The needs of the most vulnerable people in times of crises are met

2022 was characterised by a **high number of UCPM activations**, notably linked to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the intense European wildfire season. To facilitate deliveries and to allow for pooling of assistance from Member States to Ukraine, the Commission financed three UCPM logistical hubs in Poland, Slovakia, and Romania. The ERCC also worked with Member States and other services to better prepare for next summer's wildfire season by prepositioning firefighting capacities in several European countries (a call for expression of interested was published in 2022 with deadline in January 2023).

With the new UCPM legal base in place, the **rescEU framework** was further strengthened in 2022. The legislative provisions on establishing **Union-wide scenario building** and **disaster risk management** planning were taken forward with Member States. DG ECHO developed with Member States' experts **Union disaster resilience goals** to steer the work in disaster prevention and preparedness. These goals will point to five strategic areas where Member States and the Commission need to work together in order to strengthen our collective capacity to withstand future disasters, to protect citizens, and to safeguard livelihoods, as well as the environment. They will also reinforce linkages with resilience efforts in other areas, such as in security, environment, and climate change. At the end of 2022, a Commission Recommendation and accompanying Commission Communication on the Union disaster resilience goals were ready for adoption by the College in early 2023.

Concerning **aerial firefighting capacities**, and in response to increasingly intense forest fire seasons, the priority for 2022 was to make significant advancements in the negotiations and the development of a fully-fledged European aerial firefighting fleet. In parallel, the focus was put on reinforcing the **rescEU transition arrangement** in light of the increasing wildfire threat across the EU, with additional funds to increase the number of available capacities, notably through the leasing of additional light planes which could also serve Central Europe.

Concerning **Emergency Medical Teams** (EMTs), DG ECHO worked closely with the EMT consortium on the preparation of a rescEU grant for the establishment of a European EMT2 with specialised care teams. Moreover, the **Medical Evacuation Capacity (MEDEVAC) for**

⁵⁵ Council conclusions on civil protection work in view of climate change

highly infectious patients became operational in 2022, and a successful MEDEVAC operation with two such patients, via rescEU, was completed in the context of the war in Ukraine. As a result, in case of large-scale disasters, more people could be assisted with specialised medical care, and evacuated from the disaster scene to health facilities and hospitals.

DG ECHO also financed a **medical evacuation hub in Poland** for the medical evacuation of Ukrainian citizens or other persons located in Ukraine suffering from severe illness, war injuries and life-threatening conditions, requiring urgent, specialised, or long-term medical care. The hub opened in September 2022 and has continued to operate as the needs have not subsided.

The rescEU medical stockpiles comprise medical countermeasures, devices, and personal protective equipment. Currently, there are 11 stockpiles hosted by 10 Member States. The agreements with two of these countries (Croatia and Greece) were signed in 2022.

As regards **shelter** and in response to urgent **winterisation needs** in the context of the war in Ukraine, DG ECHO contracted rescEU grants for temporary shelter with Romania and Sweden. Substantial parts of these shelter units became available during the year and have been either deployed to Ukraine, pre-positioned in Member States, or kept in stock for potential future needs. An additional call for rescEU grants for medium-term shelter capacities was published and evaluated in 2022. Dedicated **transport and logistics capacities** under rescEU were also contracted at the end of 2022 with Poland.

Following continued massive bombardments of critical infrastructure in Ukraine, the resulting humanitarian needs, and the increasing threats of blackouts in the EU, DG ECHO urgently contracted two rescEU grant agreements for several thousands of **emergency generators** with Germany and Poland. Part of the generators have been deployed to Ukraine.

The **Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear** reserves include stockpiles of medical countermeasures and response equipment (CBRN stockpile), decontamination equipment and specialised expert teams, mobile laboratories, as well as CBRN detection, sampling, identification and monitoring capacities (DSIM). In 2022, DG ECHO awarded four grant agreements for rescEU CBRN stockpiles and three grants for decontamination capacities. As for DSIM capacities, a call was launched in 2022.

In complementarity with the development of rescEU capacities, the focus continued to be on the development the **European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP)**, which consolidates pre-committed and certified resources from Member States and UCPM Participating States, ready for deployment to a disaster zone at short notice. Whenever a disaster strikes and a request for assistance via the UCPM is received, assistance is drawn in priority from the Pool. As the key UCPM pillar for deploying capacities, DG ECHO dedicated efforts throughout 2022 to further strengthening the ECPP, by engaging with Member and Participating States so that they commit more capacities where gaps exist, and by certifying already committed capacities.

Under the umbrella of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network (UCPKN), the UCPM continued to **enhance the level of preparedness of emergency response operations** managed by DG ECHO. In 2022, along with the UCPM training and lessons learnt programmes, a range of exercises and exchanges of civil protection experts took place. In addition, the UCPKN adopted the terms of reference for establishing the capacity-development and science pillars working groups, continued to develop its dedicated IT online platform and fostered the building of partnership and knowledge sharing through projects, communication outreach and events, including a dedicated 2-day seminar on Youth in Civil Protection and Disaster Risk Management in October 2022, organised in the framework of the European Year of the Youth.

The **Emergency Support Instrument** for the COVID-19 response (ESI) and its **“mobility package”** programme formally came to an end on 31 January 2022, and therefore all the strands related to the transfer of patients and medical teams are closed. The only remaining activity is the ongoing evaluation of the programme as part of the broader Logistics Evaluation Programme of DG ECHO, started in the second half of 2022.

2. MODERN AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION AND INTERNAL CONTROL

2.1. Financial management and internal control

Assurance is provided on the basis of an objective examination of evidence of the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. This examination is carried out by management, who monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis, and by internal and external auditors. The results are explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General. The following reports/ documentation have been considered:

- the reports from Authorising Officers by Sub-delegation (AOSDs) managing DG ECHO's budget appropriations;
- the reports and/or management declarations from the organisations managing grants under indirect management, as well as the results of the DG's supervisory controls on the activities of these bodies;
- the latest Annual Financial Statements of the UN agencies and international organisations receiving payments from DG ECHO during the reporting year;
- the contribution by the Director in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control, including the results of internal control monitoring at the DG level;
- the reports on recorded exceptions, non-compliance events and any cases of 'confirmation of instructions' (Art 92.3 of Financial Regulation);
- the reports on ex-post supervision and audit results;
- the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control, and the observations and recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service (IAS);
- the observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors (ECA).

The systematic analysis of the available evidence provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in the full coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of DG ECHO.

This section covers the control results and other relevant elements that support management's assurance. It is structured into 2.1.1 Control results, 2.1.2 Audit observations and recommendations, 2.1.3 Effectiveness of internal control systems, and resulting in 2.1.4 Conclusions on the assurance.

2.1.1 Control results

This section reports and assesses the elements identified by management which support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives (ICO)⁵⁶. The DG's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in AAR Annex 5. The AAR Annex 6 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

DG ECHO's actions are implemented through Direct Management and Indirect Management. Humanitarian aid uses both management modes, while civil protection is implemented essentially under Direct Management⁵⁷. The inherent risks of DG ECHO are associated with the nature of its operations, which are delivered in difficult environments characterised by unpredictability, volatility, insecurity, and restricted access to crisis-affected people, which poses a significant challenge to the implementation of actions. DG ECHO seeks to contain and reduce the risks to an acceptable level, inter alia through its **control systems**⁵⁸, security policy and guidance. DG ECHO's control systems (Annex 6) are adapted to the specific risks of each control segment and ensure a proper implementation through several layers of checks and controls at the various stages of the project cycle. These controls should not be seen in isolation, as they contribute together to providing the overall reasonable assurance on the legality and regularity of transactions. DG ECHO puts emphasis on the balance between the achievements of its policy objectives and the need for an effective and efficient financial and operational control of its activities.

DG ECHO's 2022 budget has been the highest ever, amounting to EUR 4 270 million. Commitment appropriations originating from the MFF strand amounted to EUR 2 877.27 million, of which EUR 2 490 million were allocated to humanitarian aid operations, EUR 377.1 million⁵⁹ to civil protection and EUR 10.17 million for other prerogatives and support and administrative expenditure. Additionally, DG ECHO had at its disposal EUR 1 242.82 million for civil protection coming from NGEU funds, including the amount carried over from 2021. Finally, DG ECHO received a transfer in 2022 from the EDF amounting to EUR 145.5 million for humanitarian aid operations and EUR 4.5 million for support expenditure.

The level of payments amounted to EUR 3 127.6 million in 2022. 81.7% of all payments related to humanitarian aid operations (EUR 2 556.5 million⁶⁰, of which EUR 122.84 million came from the EDF⁶¹). Under the UCPM, payments made in 2022 amounted to EUR 546.72

⁵⁶1) Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; 2) reliability of reporting; 3) safeguarding of assets and information; 4) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and 5) adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

⁵⁷ Further to advice from central services, DG ECHO has changed its way of reporting in this report compared to previous years, providing information now by main programmes/control segments (humanitarian aid direct and indirect management, and civil protection direct management) instead of reporting by management mode (direct and indirect).

⁵⁸ Annex 6 provides a detailed description of DG ECHO's control systems for budget implementation (RCSs).

⁵⁹ Includes co-delegation from Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), please see Annex 3 Table 1.

⁶⁰ In 2022 payments amounted to EUR 985.66 million for humanitarian aid direct management and EUR 1 572.45 million for humanitarian aid indirect management.

⁶¹ Payments were made as forecasted and announced to Member States. The remaining payment appropriations will be used in the following years, as the budgetary principle of annuality does not apply to the EDF budget

million for civil protection programmes implemented under direct management. No contributions were made in 2022 to the EUTF.

Despite the challenging circumstances related to the management of the humanitarian aid and civil protection budget, DG ECHO maintained particularly good implementation rates as regards commitment and payment appropriations, achieving consumption of 99.9% for budgetary commitments and 98% for payments appropriations under the MFF strand. For the NGEU budget, the contracted amount stands at 65% of the budget available in 2022. The remaining budget will be used in 2023, as the budget annuality does not apply.

The outstanding budgetary commitments not yet consumed (RAL) amounted to EUR 1.4 billion⁶² at the end of 2022.

Reporting Requirements

In line with the 2018 Financial Regulation, DG ECHO's assessment for the new reporting requirement is as follows:

- had zero Financial Framework Partnerships beyond 4 years (FR art 130.4)⁶³;
- applied for derogations from the principle of non-retroactivity of grants (608⁶⁴ in 2022) when the AOSD considered that, for the purposes of humanitarian aid, emergency support operations, civil protection operations or crisis management aid and/or other exceptional and duly substantiated emergencies, an early intervention by the Union was of major importance (FR 193.2);
- did not register any case of confirmation of: instructions (FR art 92.3); financing not linked to costs (FR art 125.3); flat rates >7% for indirect costs (FR art 181.6).

1. Effectiveness of controls

a) Legality and regularity of the transactions

DG ECHO uses internal control processes to ensure sound management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions it is responsible for, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes and the nature of the payments concerned.

DG ECHO's portfolio consists of three main control segments (humanitarian aid implemented through direct and indirect management, and civil protection implemented through direct

⁶² Annex 3, table 5bis

⁶³ Article 130(4)(c) FR only covers FFPAs under which grants are being awarded, meaning FFPAs with NGOs. FFPAs with NGOs ended on 31.12.2020 and were replaced by certification as of 2021.

⁶⁴ In line with article 191.2 of the FR, reporting includes (1) grants with reimbursement of costs incurred before the submission of the application, and (2) grants for which the action started before the signature of the grant agreement.

management), with relatively low error rates. This is, respectively, thanks to the inherent risk profile of the programmes and the performance of the related control systems.

DG ECHO has put in place procedures to ensure ex-ante legality and regularity of expenditures, including those referring to operations implemented under Exceptional Extreme Operational Constraints and Remote Management under Direct or Indirect Management⁶⁵. The overall control objective is to ensure that the residual error rate does not exceed the materiality threshold of 2%.

Ex-post controls are performed on the basis of the **2021-2027 audit strategy** with the objective of assessing the legality and regularity of financial transactions implemented by the DG (financial HQ audits), addressing specific DG ECHO risks through risk-based audits and assessing Partners’ compliance with eligibility rules, such as ECHO 2021 Certificate.

The implementation of DG ECHO’s audit activities in 2022 was almost completed according to plan. COVID 19 had no major impact on audit activities, but the difficult security situation in several implementing countries (Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan), resulted in cancellation of two 2021 HQ audits. Nevertheless, auditors could obtain sufficient evidence from the financial HQ audits completed in 2022 to draw conclusions in line with the auditing standards.

In 2022, DG ECHO finalised audits of 68 randomly selected humanitarian aid projects implemented by 23 partner organisations. The total value of transactions tested amounted to EUR 259 million, of which EUR 1.28 million was identified as ineligible expenditure. Based on these audit findings, the **average detected error rate** amounts to respectively 0.0037% and 1.42% for projects implemented through indirect management and direct management mode. As in previous years, DG ECHO continued to apply a multi-annual approach for the calculation of these error rates, as humanitarian aid activities have an overall stable set-up in terms of targeted beneficiaries, eligibility criteria, management and control modalities. However, the 2022 audit results for humanitarian aid actions implemented through direct management show an increased level of ineligible expenditure (2.94% of the total amount tested, compared to 0,74% in 2021). DG ECHO will keep on closely monitoring the evolution and stands ready to review relevant control mechanisms if necessary. As regards civil protection, randomly selected audits for 7 projects were finalised. Auditors tested transactions worth EUR 9.6 million, of which EUR 91 546 was identified as ineligible, representing an average annual⁶⁶ detected error rate of 0.95% in 2022.

In addition, DG ECHO applies an effective mechanism for correcting errors, through ex-ante and ex-post controls, resulting in preventive and corrective measures, respectively. During the reporting year the executed corrective capacity amounted in total to EUR 3.3 million.

	Preventive Measures (m EUR)	Corrective measures (m EUR)
Implemented by the Commission		
of which from Member States controls		

⁶⁵ These procedures include clear requirements for partners applying to all stages of the process, i.e. before and during the implementation of operations and at the final reporting stage.

⁶⁶ Civil protection agreements are on average shorter than 12 months.

of which from EU controls	2.1	1.2
DG ECHO total	2.1	1.2

Based on all the above, DG ECHO presents in the following Table X an estimation of the risk at payment and risk at closure for the expenditure managed during the reporting year:

Table X: Estimated risk at payment and at closure (amounts in EUR million)

The full detailed version of the table is provided in Annex 9.

DG ECHO	Payments made	Relevant expenditure	Estimated risk (error rate %) at payment		Estimated future corrections and deductions		Estimated risk (error rate %) at closure	
	m EUR	m EUR	m EUR	%	m EUR	%	m EUR	%
HUMA Direct	984.58	800.96	11.38	1.42	1.42	0.18	9.96	1.24
HUMA Indirect	1,571.88	611.62	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00
Civil Protection	546.72	80.84	0.77	0.95	0.10	0.12	0.67	0.83
Other	24.42	24.19	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DG ECHO total	3 127.6	1 517.61	12.17	0.80	1.52	0.10	10.66	0.70
Of which EDF	122.84	32.8	0.26	0.80	0.03	0.10	0.23	0.70

The estimated overall risk at payment for 2022 expenditure amounts to EUR 12.2 million, representing 0.80% of the DG's total relevant expenditure (EUR 1.52 billion) for 2022⁶⁷. This is the AOD's best, conservative estimate of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year, not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made. This expenditure will subsequently be subject to ex-post controls and a proportion of the underlying errors will be detected and corrected in subsequent years. The conservatively estimated future corrections for 2022 expenditure amount to EUR 1.52 million. The difference between those two amounts results in the estimated overall risk at closure of EUR 10.66 million, representing 0.70%⁶⁸ of the DG's total relevant expenditure for 2022.

The control results for 2022 show that the **Residual Error Rate** (RER) related to humanitarian aid programmes implemented through indirect and direct management modes amounts respectively to 0% and 1.33 %. For civil protection implemented through direct management, the RER amounts to 0.92%. The analysis of the audit work does not show any significant weaknesses that would have a material impact on the legality and regularity of the financial operations and, hence, on the achievement of the control objective.

⁶⁷Risk at payment increases compared to last year, as 2021 rate was influenced by a high amount of expenditure for indirect management (due to important clearings made during the year) with low error rate.

⁶⁸ The risk at closure compared to last year increases mainly due to a decrease of the estimated future corrections.

For an overview at Commission level, the DG's estimated overall risk at payment, estimated future corrections and risk at closure are consolidated in the AMPR.

Complementary Pillar Assessment

Following the entry into force of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 (the Financial Regulation), the Commission requested all entities to be entrusted with EU budget implementation to complete the complementary pillar assessments (ex-ante checks on management and control systems) by 31 December 2021. The pillar assessments were completed throughout the year 2022, with the exception of one that was completed in February 2023 due to prolonged contradictory procedure by the UN organisation and subsequent process on reaching agreement on the supervisory measures. This had no impact on the assurance considering the limited share of funds granted to this organisation and as transitory supervisory measures agreed at EC level were introduced in the agreement signed in December 2022. For seven partners, where issues have been identified, specific supervisory measures to ensure compliance of the affected control systems, rules, and procedures with EU requirements, have been incorporated in the contribution agreements.

b) Fraud prevention, detection and correction

DG ECHO developed and has been implementing its own **anti-fraud strategy** since 2013, based on the methodology provided by OLAF. The strategy is updated every 4 years and whenever necessary. It was last updated in October 2021 (ECHO Anti-Fraud Strategy 2021-2024). Its implementation is being monitored and reported on a regular basis to the Director in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control (DRMIC). All necessary actions have been implemented, except the internal fraud risk analysis, linked to objective 1 of the anti-fraud strategy, which is in progress. Its completion is expected for the first quarter of 2023.

DG ECHO contributed to the Commission anti-fraud strategy (CAFS), in particular to the implementation of action 29 of the CAFS on the *evaluation of fraud risks and vulnerabilities with regard to spending in emergency situations*, which was finalised in October 2022.

Furthermore, DG ECHO followed up on OLAF's financial recommendations with the following results: 50% of the financial recommendations issued in 2018-2022 were fully implemented, 12.5% partly implemented, 12.5% not implemented, and 25% related to recommendations issued in the last quarter of 2022 are still under analysis. The main reason for non-implementation was that DG ECHO took additional information from the partner and its auditors into account, leading to the conclusion that no financial correction is required.

The results achieved during the year thanks to the anti-fraud measures in place can be summarised as follows:

- DG ECHO has ensured an initial assessment of fraud allegations received in the dedicated functional mailbox. In 2022, 118 allegations were reported and assessed (compared to 115 in 2021).

- 57 allegations of fraud received in DG ECHO were transmitted to OLAF in 2022. Out of these allegations, 2 resulted in OLAF investigations; 4 are still under OLAF's assessment; and 51 were dismissed.
- Two awareness-raising sessions on fraud prevention and how to act if confronted with fraud allegations took place. One session was targeted at Headquarters staff who have joined DG ECHO in the past year and another session was organised for staff of DG ECHO Directorate D, based at the headquarters and in the field offices. In addition to these sessions, the information on how to report fraud allegations has been presented to civil protection grant beneficiaries.
- DG ECHO representatives regularly attended the Fraud Prevention and Detection Net events chaired by OLAF and participated actively in the external relations subgroup's meetings organised by OLAF for close cooperation and discussion of common anti-fraud issues between the EU external relations services.
- To ensure coordination and to exchange best practices in fraud prevention, detection and response, meetings with other donors including the United States Agency for International Development - Office of Inspector General have taken place.
- DG ECHO's Thematic Policy Documents on Humanitarian Logistics and on Cash Transfers mention the fraud risks specific to the respective policies and how to mitigate them.
- DG ECHO has taken all the necessary measures to protect the financial interests of the EU, through the analysis of financial, operational and reputational risks – and, when required – by suspending operations, contracting and payments, in close liaison with field experts, partners and, where relevant, with competent authorities.

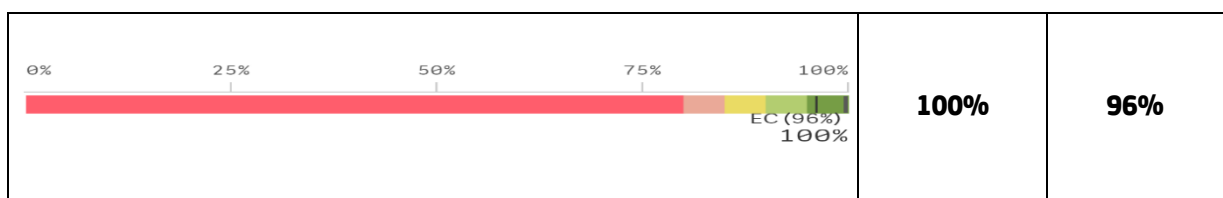
On the basis of the available information, DG ECHO has reasonable assurance that the anti-fraud measures in place are effective.

2. *Efficiency of controls*

DG ECHO BUDGET - Timely Payments	ECHO Score	EC Score
	97%	98%

The result of 97% achieved by DG ECHO is an excellent result taking into consideration the significant increase in the overall volume of activity in 2022 as well as the complexity of DG ECHO projects.

EDF Budget - Timely Payments	ECHO Score	EC Score



The result of 100% achieved by DG ECHO is an excellent result taking into consideration the significant increase in the overall volume of activity in 2022 as well as the complexity of DG ECHO projects.

Time-to-grant: For civil protection e-grants, the average time-to-grant was 194 days compared to the legal deadline of 275 days. DG ECHO was within the legal deadlines.⁶⁹

Time-to-inform: For civil protection e-grants, the average time-to-inform was 129 days compared to the legal deadline of 183 days. DG ECHO was widely within the legal deadlines.⁷⁰

Additional indicators taken into account to measure the control efficiency in DG ECHO are reported in Annex 4 and Annex 7.

In 2022, DG ECHO continued the implementation of the new contractual frameworks (Model Grant Agreements (MGA) and Humanitarian Aid Contribution Agreements (HACA)) in the IT tool HOPE. Due to the technical limitations of the system and other priorities of the IT team, a significant part of all humanitarian aid contracts and amendments still need manual adaptations, leading to increased risks of errors and oversights.

The overall level of efficiency indicators remained satisfactory and stable compared to the previous year. DG ECHO continues to work on improving the efficiency of its control systems.

3. *Economy of controls*

The estimated cost of controls is calculated from the Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs) allocated to the control activities functions both at HQ and the Field Offices, and the cost of (ex-post) external audits. The total cost of controls of DG ECHO is estimated at EUR 9.2 million.

The average cost of audits in 2022 (including ex-post audits/UN verifications) was EUR 12 716. The total cost of audit assignments undertaken by audit firms for outsourced audits amounted to EUR 1 220 782.

The estimated cost of the control strategy represents 0.33% of the 2022 humanitarian aid payments and 0.16% of the civil protection payments. The overall estimated cost of the control strategy represents 0.29% of the total payments, compared to 0.31% in 2021. Thus, the costs of controls for DG ECHO in 2022 are below the benchmark of 0.35% of the total

⁶⁹ Time-to-grant is calculated for 10 Preparedness and prevention projects granted for the 2022 Call for Proposals. Humanitarian and other Civil Protection grants fall under Art. 195(a) FR.

⁷⁰ Time-to-inform is calculated for 19 Preparedness and prevention projects granted for the 2022 Call for Proposals. Humanitarian and other Civil Protection grants fall under Art. 195(a) FR.

payments in 2022, and they are to be considered proportionate to the inherent risks of the activities performed by DG ECHO.

4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results, DG ECHO has assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of its control system and reached a positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of the controls for which it is responsible.

In terms of **effectiveness**, the ex-ante controls and the ex-post audits resulting from the implementation of the control strategy have allowed DG ECHO to detect non-eligible expenditure amounting EUR 1.15 million for the civil protection and EUR 2.04 million for humanitarian aid, i.e. EUR 3.2 million in total. In 2021, the total amount of financial corrections and recovery orders was much higher (EUR 12.2 million), mainly due to a few corrections of very high amounts. As a result, the ratio measuring the **economy** (comparing the estimated cost of controls to the quantifiable benefits) decreased from 151% in 2021 to 34.3% in 2022.

In terms of **efficiency**, to have a fair and full picture of the impact of the control systems, the above figures should be read in combination with other benefits which are equally important, i.e.:

- The preventive effect of limiting operations to those organisations that, after being duly assessed, have qualified to become a partner organisation⁷¹.
- DG ECHO's ex-post audits, in addition to detecting non-eligible expenditure, give assurance on the partners internal controls as well as on their compliance with the contractual requirements, including non-financial aspects such as compliance with humanitarian aid principles, detection and management of misconduct, whether relating to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, or fraud.
- In addition to ex-post audits, DG ECHO carries out field audits of ongoing projects that contribute to partners' awareness and knowledge of the eligibility rules of claimed expenditure. The follow-up of fraud allegations is both qualitative (deterrent effect and assessment of partners' capacity to investigate) and quantitative (recovery of amounts affected by fraud).
- The deterrent effect of the implementation of both ex-ante controls and ex-post controls, leading to a limitation of the occurrence of non-eligible items and, more generally, to the promotion of sound financial management.

Technical Assistants working in the DG ECHO Field Offices contribute to the assurance-building process by supporting budget implementation through both the needs assessment used for the allocation of funding and the ensuring quality monitoring of the actions funded on the ground.

⁷¹ See Annex 7 for the status of complementary pillar assessments.

2.1.2 Audit observations and recommendations

This section sets out the observations, opinions and conclusions reported by auditors – including the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control. Summaries of the management measures taken in response to the audit recommendations are also included, together with an assessment of the likely material impact of the findings on the achievement of the internal control objectives, and therefore on management's assurance.

Internal Audit Service

The IAS audit on the *Control strategy for grant management under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism*, finalised in January 2022 - issued one very important recommendation related to the grant award procedure and the use of exceptions. The IAS recommended i) For the selection criteria for direct award to include, in the UCPM work programme, the criteria for selecting beneficiaries for the exceptions covered by Article 195 (a), (b), (c) and (f) of the financial regulation (FR) (direct award of grants), ii) For the justification in the direct award decisions, to reassess the justification to be used to apply exceptions to the use of calls for proposal for all ECHO prevention and preparedness grant award procedures and in particular the applicability of Article 195(a) for these actions. Moreover, when an exception to the call of proposals is used, based on Article 195 (c) and (f) of the FR, to include an appropriate justification for the use of direct award in the award decision.

DG ECHO has accepted the recommendations and established an action plan to ensure their timely implementation. The actions include establishing the criteria for selecting beneficiaries for the exceptions covered by Article 195 (a), (b), (c) and (f) of the FR in the UCPM work programme which is set to be implemented with its adoption in 2024. Moreover, to clarify the use of these exceptions, in particular Articles 195 (c) and (f), in an updated version of the related guidance document by the end of June 2023.

In its contribution to the 2022 Annual Activity Report process, the IAS concluded that the internal control systems in place in DG ECHO for the audited processes are effective, except for the observation giving rise to the very important recommendation.

European Court of Auditors (ECA)

The ECA's Annual Report for the 2021 financial year - published in October 2022 – did not address any specific recommendations to DG ECHO. Furthermore, the ECA carried out a review on DG ECHO's 2021 Annual Activity Report, which is done every three years, without any negative remarks. Lastly, the ECA concluded that the recommendations from previous Annual Reports had been implemented, most notably on revising the calculation of the corrective capacity and establishing a procedure for the DG ECHO Partners delivering humanitarian aid on how to apply shared cost allocation. The ECA report on the performance of the EU budget in 2021 did not highlight any issues linked to DG ECHO. For the financial year 2022, the ECA's Statement of Assurance audits are currently being conducted.

In late 2022, the ECA launched a follow-up audit on their Special Report 27/2018: *The Facility for Refugees in Turkey: helpful support, but improvements needed to deliver more value for money*. The purpose of the follow-up audit is to assess whether the recommendations have been implemented. The exercise is currently ongoing.

Conclusions

On the basis of the information on IAS and ECA audits, including the conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control in DG ECHO, the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective, except for the process where the IAS issued a very important observation. DG ECHO has taken action to mitigate the risks and the established action plan will ensure the timely implementation of the recommendations.

2.1.3 Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on international good practice, to ensure the achievement of its policy and management objectives. Compliance with the internal control framework is a compulsory requirement.

DG ECHO uses the organisational structure and internal control systems suited to achieving its policy and internal control objectives in accordance with internal control principles and has due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

The internal control team monitors and assesses on a continuous basis the proper and effective functioning of the internal control principles in DG ECHO. The assessment of the internal control systems, performed in accordance with the applicable corporate guidance was carried out between September 2022 and February 2023 and was based on the following elements:

- Evaluation of DG ECHO 2022 Internal Control Monitoring Criteria (ICMC). The assessment was based on a set of 44 ICMC covering all Internal Control Principles.
- Analysis of the registers for exceptions and non-compliance events recorded during the reporting period.
- Results of the risk assessment exercises 2022 and 2023.
- Results of audits and follow-up engagements performed by IAS in 2022.
- Recommendations of the Court of Auditors.
- Relevant audit results.
- Analysis of OLAF reports/recommendations.
- Collection of the AOSD reports submitted by each Directorate.

Moreover, the findings from previous years were considered as well, to ensure the continuity of the internal control activities and the identification of tendencies (weaknesses and/or improvements).

The results of a dedicated **survey** conducted in December 2022 with representatives of all staff levels for the evaluation of the ICMC were also considered. Overall, results of the survey were positive, with all but one question scoring above the set targets. One minor suggestion

was made to further improve the level of knowledge of staff on the procedures required to report deviations.

During 2022, four non-compliance events and four exceptions were reported, following the dedicated procedures. Three (3) of the non-compliance events referred to the Financial Regulation (article 111 “Expenditure operations” and article 114 “Time limits for commitments”), while one was related to the correct application of Financial Circuits. Regarding the exceptions requested, two of them were associated with the eligibility of the expenditures incurred and the financing decisions (Articles 110 and 186 of the Financial Regulation), while in two other cases the adoption of an exceptional approach, not in line with the existing Grant Agreement and the Administrative Agreements, was considered necessary. DG ECHO thoroughly assessed all reported **deviations**, considering the exceptional circumstances that made them indispensable and concluded that none of those affected the effectiveness of the internal control system.

DG ECHO’s risk assessment performed in the last quarter of 2022 confirmed the two **critical risks** on ‘access restrictions on DG ECHO’s activities and controls’ and ‘security of DG ECHO staff’, both inherent to DG ECHO’s activities. Indeed, access restrictions continued to be high in a number of ongoing crisis theatres such as Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Myanmar, Yemen, Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan or even Haiti or Cameroon, affecting not only the humanitarian needs assessment and the delivery of aid, but also the field monitoring of the actions funded. Deployment of the EHRC, diplomatic advocacy and outreach, or continued engagement in civil-military coordination are only a few examples of mitigating measures put in place to reduce the risk. As regards field monitoring, DG ECHO implemented alternative monitoring modes whenever such field monitoring could not be performed. Regarding the security of DG ECHO’s field network and staff on missions, several HEAT (Hostile Environment Awareness Training) sessions were implemented at Regional Offices’ level as part of DG ECHO Security Training Policy. Also, DG ECHO took the necessary steps to re-deploy staff whenever necessary, while taking appropriate security and Rest and Recuperation measures allowing it to deliver on a safe and secured manner.

The DG ECHO has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective, and the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies were identified. In particular, two principles (Principle 10⁷² and Principle 12⁷³), relating to the “Control Activities” component are present and functioning, but some improvements are needed due to the nature and significance of the deficiencies detected. The deficiencies are associated with the grant award procedure and the use of exceptions under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, as well as with staff awareness and knowledge of procedures which have a rather low impact in the overall effectiveness of the control system. The improvements and/or remedial measures implemented or envisaged include the implementation of targeted awareness-raising sessions and training activities. DG ECHO will ensure the timely implementation of

⁷² Principle 10. The Commission selects and develops control activities that contribute to the mitigation of risks to the achievement of objectives to acceptable levels.

⁷³ Principle 12. The Commission deploys control activities through corporate policies that establish what is expected and in procedures that put policies into action.

the recommendations made by IAS on the UCPM control strategy. Additional information on the outcome of the assessment of the Internal Control Systems is provided in Annex 8.

2.1.4 Conclusions on the assurance

The information reported in Section 2.1 stems from the results of management monitoring and auditors' opinion contained in the reports listed. These reports result from a systematic analysis of the evidence available. This approach provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in a comprehensive coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of DG ECHO.

DG ECHO faces several inherent risks due to the nature of its operations, which can hinder the achievement of its objectives. The control architecture of DG ECHO aims to ensure that risks are mitigated to an acceptable level in a cost-effective manner. Taking into account the information reported in sub-sections 2.1.1-2.1.3, including the various reports from the internal and external control bodies, there is evidence that the internal control system in its entirety is implemented effectively in DG ECHO. The procedures put in place ensure the control of the main risks and in doing so provide reasonable assurance that the financial information in this report represents a true and fair view of DG ECHO's operations. Resources are used for their intended purpose and the AOD has managed them on the basis of the principles supporting sound financial management. Furthermore, the materiality criteria set for legality and regularity of the financial operations are respected, no significant information has been omitted, assets and information have been properly safeguarded, and measures were put in place to ensure prevention, detection and correction of fraud and irregularities. Additional activities might be implemented by means of awareness-raising activities and targeted training sessions with the view of enhancing the knowledge of the staff on the procedures relating to deviations, planning, and reporting. Moreover, an action plan has been established for the review of the grant award procedure and the use of exceptions under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

In conclusion, based on the elements reported above, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director-General, in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

2.1.5 Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned,

Director-General of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view⁷⁴.

State that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of the self-assessment, ex-post controls, the work of the Internal Audit Service and the lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

Confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of the institution.

Brussels, 31 March 2023

Maciej POPOWSKI

⁷⁴True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG.

2.2. Modern and efficient administration – other aspects

2.2.1. Human resources management

DG ECHO employs a **competent and engaged workforce** that continues to deliver effectively on the Commission's objectives, priorities and core business while responding to major unforeseen crises such as, for 2022, the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. To reach such objectives, DG ECHO relies on an extensive field network, employing 168 field experts and 299 agents under national law, working in DG ECHO field offices on 31 December 2022. DG ECHO 2021 Staff Survey results and **staff engagement index** (72%, fully in line with EC's index of 72%) at headquarters show that the DG continued to score high in key areas and significantly improved its score in other important areas with an increase of five points compared to 2018 (67%).

To ensure effective HR management, DG ECHO continued to implement its **local HR strategy**, to inform staff on its state-of-play and to monitor new developments at corporate level and within DG ECHO to ensure that the strategy was still fit for purpose. The implementation of DG ECHO's **equality mainstreaming work plan** is also ongoing, including its revision in 2022, and is regularly monitored by the Equality Working Group. The plan was updated in autumn 2022, reflecting the latest developments.

In particular, concerning **gender diversity in leadership** and **female representation** in middle management, DG ECHO stayed committed to encouraging better representation. By the end of 2022, DG ECHO had 7 female middle managers out of 17 occupied posts, while two additional female middle managers were appointed in December 2022⁷⁵. Moreover, two out of five senior management posts were occupied by female senior managers, and 1 female was further acting on a vacant senior management post.

Workload assessment and resource allocation remained a crucial issue for DG ECHO, as the workforce at headquarters relies on temporary resource allocations for some officials, and on a high number of non-permanent staff, which entails a high turnover and the risk of loss of knowledge⁷⁶. Therefore, DG ECHO continuously seeks opportunities for efficiency gains. The human resources allocation was reviewed regularly against new needs and priorities – i.e. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine or the impact of the high inflation rate – also taking into account temporary posts being phased out when the projects are executed.

During 2022, DG ECHO actively promoted **talent management and career development** activities at all levels⁷⁷. In addition, DG ECHO continued to support the Female Talent management programme, which has proven very effective as it led to the selection of

⁷⁵ With effective entry into function in February 2023.

⁷⁶ Human resources at headquarters at the end of 2022 totalled 564 staff: 51% official, 26,5% contractual, 15% external staff and 7,5% service providers. DG ECHO is also present in the field with a network of 466 humanitarian staff (168 field experts and 299 agents under national law) spread over 52 field offices in 42 countries.

⁷⁷ Such as the Junior Professionals Programme, the External Management Development Opportunities for Commission Managers, the European Diplomatic Programme, the EU Fellowship programme and the EPSAS Young talents.

two former participants as future heads of unit in the DG. DG ECHO also launched a 360° feedback evaluation for its eligible managers.

In the aftermath of COVID-19, and following the introduction of new ways of working, **nurturing team spirit and ensuring an efficient onboarding of newcomers** is key. DG ECHO implemented and promoted numerous actions in that regard, including a welcome package to all newcomers, a newcomer corner on the intranet, intra-unit mentoring, “Coffee roulette”, induction sessions, online coffee with the Director-General, team events or targeted management debriefings. DG ECHO also held its first physical Town Hall meeting to discuss key issues of the implementation of the local HR strategy and internal communication, in light of the staff survey results as well as main staff concerns. The My ECHO group was also revitalised to contribute to shaping the DG’s working environment and organisational culture on topics of importance for staff.

The **Management Charter**, which is a key commitment to the shared values on which DG ECHO is built, was signed by all newly recruited managers in 2022.

DG ECHO paid particular attention to its **internal communication** and updated staff and management in a timely manner with articles about important information, main achievements, HR communications, bringing colleagues to the light, etc. on DG ECHO’s intranet.

2.2.2. Digital transformation and information management

Data, information, and knowledge are strategic assets, and DG ECHO is paying particular attention to improving the way these assets are managed and used. Reporting and analytics have become an increasingly important area in DG ECHO, with enhanced analytics capabilities being expanded to cover the various “business” areas of both humanitarian aid and civil protection. In 2022, DG ECHO rationalised and further developed its existing **data warehouse** and associated **reporting tools**, in order to combine data from various sources, ensure their availability and quality, enable their compilation / aggregation at different levels, and use them for evidence-based policymaking. **Data quality reports** have been developed for the management of the field network to help data owners and data stewards comply with the data policy. The development of a first prototype producing a first set of high-level indicators has also contributed to increasing the quality of data.

In the area of civil protection activities, DG ECHO developed a proof of concept with the objective of facilitating access to quality data in a secured way to all civil protection units and avoiding duplication of information/data. This is done with the support of DIGIT in the context of the EC Data Platform through the introduction of **new dashboards** (Civil Protection Data Repository project) with appropriate data governance. The proof of concept demonstrated the feasibility of the solution and has been turned in a pilot project for the production of a first set of reports in 2023, fully aligned with the dual pillar approach, reusing existing solutions as well as with the data policy, by identifying the needed data, not replicating data and making use of the data platform among others.

DG ECHO has finalised the development of the **prototype of Security Awareness Information Dashboard** (SecAID). The product will be used in a broader tool in the context of ERCC 2.0, being the **Global Situation System** (GSS).

On the way forward to **digitalisation**, in line with the new dual pillar approach, DG ECHO has drafted a Business Case aiming at digitally managing the high number of mission security clearances to High-Risk Countries and Areas (HRC).

On information and IT security, DG ECHO has updated its last outdated **IT security plans** following a risk-centric approach and applying the IT security risk management methodology, mitigating the most likely and severe risks. Regarding compliance with the IT security policies and standards as defined in Commission Decision 2017/46 and its implementation rules, DG ECHO completed the assessment of the priority controls for all its information systems in 2022 using the **Governance Risk and Compliance (GRC) tool**, which supports the process.

DG ECHO organised with the support of DIGIT S **security awareness sessions** addressed at specific target populations at headquarters and in the field. Three thematic sessions were organised in the field to cover the full field population, and follow-up material was produced and provided to the staff who could not attend the sessions. Two sessions were organised at headquarters, one for managers and one for staff. DG ECHO continued its **collaboration** with the DGs of the External Relations family, sharing for the first-time real-time information in a structured format allowing, among others, the automation of the OECD reporting. In particular, DG ECHO (together with DG INTPA and DG NEAR) also followed the discussions led by the JRC on the country knowledge project and is ready to contribute with information on beneficiary countries.

DG ECHO is involved in the **International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)**. This initiative has resulted in the definition of a data standard for exchanging structured, open and reusable data around development and humanitarian aid activities. This is also fully in line with the data strategy of the Commission, as it contributes to data operability, access, using and sharing principles. In 2022 DG ECHO continued working closely with Member States on the **European Emergency Disaster Response Information System (EDRIS)** project to increase the number of Member States using the EDRIS IATI data feed, and with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) to maximise efficiency in sharing experiences and ways of addressing the publication issues. Three Member States are currently testing the platform for IATI data transfer.

On **document management**, DG ECHO promotes the on-line administration internally and externally. In recent years, several internal processes were automated, and staff was encouraged to use digital options instead of paper. DG ECHO is currently modernising the archiving procedures of its field offices.

As far as **collaborative working** is concerned, DG ECHO fully exploits the possibilities offered by Microsoft 365 in order to harmonise as much as possible its **ECHO Field ICT architecture** to the Commission ICT architecture, with a view to facilitating the online collaboration with its field offices spread around the world. Security and data protection being

an important aspect of the architecture set-up, DG ECHO, in cooperation with CERT-EU, conducted a security assessment of the ECHOFIELD Microsoft 365 environment, focussing on email security, identity, SharePoint online and Microsoft Teams to optimise its security posture.

Under the EU Data Protection Regulation (EUDPR), entered into force in December 2018, DG ECHO has the legal obligation to integrate the principles of **data protection** into all aspects of its procedures and business activities. Accordingly, DG ECHO continued working on the implementation of the EC's Data Protection Action Plan (C(2020) 7625) and built up its efforts to train all its staff by 2024. To that effect in 2022 seven sessions were held, during which around 180 staff members (i.e., 32% of DG ECHO staff) were reached. As follow-up to the implementing activities carried out so far, DG ECHO continued reviewing existing and creating new **records** (13) and **privacy statements**. DG ECHO has followed relevant legal and procedural developments and updated its Data Protection Corner on its Intranet.

DG ECHO's **external website** is currently in transition to Drupal 8 to be aligned to the look and feel of the Commission Information website. As a result, ECHO's website will be more coherent in terms of thematic structure, clear navigation, common layout and a cost-effective approach (standardised functionalities, components, and IT solutions). It will be a more user-friendly, responsive portal with a better experience on mobile devices.

2.2.3. Sound environmental management

The Communication on the **European Green Deal** stipulates that the Commission, as an institution and employer, aims to be climate neutral by 2030. During 2022 DG ECHO contributed to achieving this target by complying with **EMAS** requirements and advice. The "greening" of humanitarian aid also continued as part of DG ECHO's commitment to sound environmental management. Furthermore, in June 2022 DG ECHO launched an external study to green the UCPM, whose results will be published at the beginning of 2023.

In 2022, DG ECHO endeavoured to further reduce its energy consumption by following the recommendations laid out in the **Energy performance of buildings (EPB)** issued by the Belgian Authorities. These recommendations included the follow-up of EMAS action plans, temporary measures to reduce energy consumption, actions to raise staff awareness on consumption and actions to reduce it.

The technical projects related to buildings' operation, energy efficiency, waste management, catering and biodiversity are managed by the EMAS Site Coordinators teams in the Commission's Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels (OIB). For 2022 DG ECHO undertook the following actions:

Energy saving actions: The proposal to close buildings or floors during the end of the year or in summer was put forward to management. Nevertheless, due to DG ECHO's mandate and 24/7 activities (through the ERCC), this proposal could not be approved. However, several tips and tricks to save energy at work and home on an individual basis were shared through

the intranet such as: [tips to save energy](#) at home and work; [phone apps for a greener life](#); [digital waste](#).

Paper consumption actions: Even though paper consumption has already decreased significantly according to the [latest data available](#), an article was shared on the intranet to [cancel newspaper subscriptions in the office](#).

Waste management actions: Waste sorting stations are installed in ECHO buildings. In [L-130](#), individual paper and trash bins have been withdrawn. A similar action for L-86 is currently not possible since there are no additional waste sorting stations to replace these individual bins. A [plogging action](#) was carried out on 12 May with ECHO colleagues in the context of the EMAS spring campaign. [The collection of old textile and electronic appliances](#) for charity was organised together with DG MARE from December 2022 to mid-February 2023 in Joseph II 79 building.

Regarding **missions and business travels** of staff and experts, DG ECHO has not yet pledged to reduced travel emissions following the [communication on greening the Commission](#), awaiting the appointment of the new Director-General. At the end of 2022, data was gathered from MIPS to analyse the greenhouse gas emissions related to ECHO's business travels. An analysis of these data will be carried out in 2023.

In terms of **commuting**, a vast majority of ECHO staff is using soft mobility or public transport to come to the office. Nevertheless, actions to further promote soft mobility were carried out, such as: [The Maelbeek Eco-Mobility Hub](#); [Velomai challenge](#) (which saw a slight increase in staff participation and kilometres ridden in comparison to 2021); a [challenge](#) to ride from Brussels to Hallerbos during the spring season; [bike commuting tips](#); and a [training to ride your bike in Brussels](#).

The **digitalisation of our way of working** is consistently increasing our energy consumption. An [article](#) raising staff awareness on digital waste and sobriety was published.

Staff awareness and participation were key to reach the abovementioned measures. In addition to the above articles shared by ECHO EMAS correspondent, other activities and campaigns launched by EMAS were shared on the intranet such: the [interinstitutional EMAS day](#); [the EMAS spring campaign](#); [Velomai challenge](#); EMAS "[Greening the Commission](#)" [learning challenge](#); [EMAS basics training for all staff](#); [less waste more action](#).

2.2.4. Initiatives to improve economy and efficiency of financial and non-financial activities

In order to test new ways of delivering humanitarian aid - and in line with its World Humanitarian Summit/Grand Bargain commitments - DG ECHO continued drawing the lessons from the **Pilot Programmatic Partnerships** with international NGOs, UN agencies and other International Organisations launched in 2020, 2021 and 2022. The main feature of the new approach is a more strategic support to shared objectives (e.g. prevention of IHL violations with the ICRC, response to severe acute malnutrition in the Horn of Africa with

UNICEF, anticipatory action to reduce the impact of natural disasters in South East Asia with the FAO, capacity building and support to local actors – in health, disaster risk reduction (DRR), forced displacement, protection and the CASH sectors - through the IFRC in 24 countries and coordination with OCHA in 22 countries), and a more efficient and effective way of delivering assistance notably through a multi-annual perspective and more predictability of funding, simplified reporting accompanied by more transparency and trust on both sides, joint monitoring and enhanced dialogue at both field and headquarters level. DG ECHO continued to encourage coordination between partners to foster joint approaches, synergies and, hence, efficiency gains. This was promoted notably through statements, on behalf of the EU and/or on behalf of the EU and its Member States, during meetings of governing bodies of UN strategic partners, and through Strategic Dialogues and High-level Dialogues held annually with some of the main UN/International Organisation partners (World Food Programme, UNICEF, UNHCR, World Health Organization, International Organization for Migration, International Committee of the Red Cross and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies).