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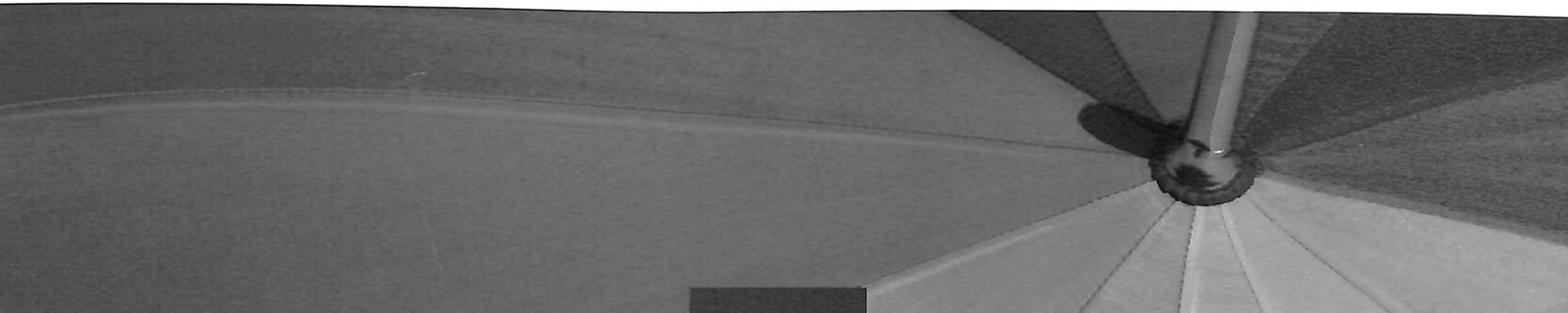
THE EUROPEAN
UNION
EXPLAINED

Helping victims
of disasters
and conflicts,
and protecting
those at risk



Humanitarian aid and civil protection

European humanitarian aid makes a real difference to all those people suffering from disasters and conflicts in the world.



THE EUROPEAN UNION EXPLAINED

This publication is part of a series that explains what the EU does in different policy areas, why the EU is involved and what the results are.

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The EU explained: Humanitarian aid and civil protection

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Manuscript updated in October 2015

Cover and page 2 picture: © Jupiterimages
16 pp. — 21 × 29.7 cm

PDF ISBN 978-92-79-52427-1
doi:10.2775/53838
NA0115819ENN

Print ISBN 978-92-79-52422-6
doi:10.2775/000211
NA0115819ENC

Luxembourg: Publications Office
of the European Union, 2015

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Why we need EU humanitarian aid and civil protection

Saving lives and preventing human suffering

Subrayar y/o marginar este libro;
en caso de devolverlo subrayado,
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The images of conflicts and disasters that fill our television screens and newspapers are the backdrop to our world's increasingly complex and vulnerable environment. As the scale of natural disasters and conflicts increases, humanitarian needs grow. The EU responds by providing emergency assistance to victims of disasters and conflicts around the world. It does this through the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO). ECHO's mission is to alleviate suffering, maintain the dignity of those affected and to save lives. This is one of the most tangible expressions of the EU's core value of solidarity.

There has been a surge in crises in recent years. In 2015, the humanitarian community has faced four 'Level 3' emergencies declared by the United Nations — the highest category on its scale. The EU delivers aid in all four of these crisis zones: Syria, South Sudan, Yemen and Iraq. It is also helping elsewhere where people need assistance, for example in Afghanistan, the Sahel region and throughout Africa, Central and South America, and south-east Asia. The EU also runs relief operations in 'forgotten' crises that benefit from little international attention and funding.

Helping the world's most vulnerable populations is a moral obligation of the international community. The EU has a longstanding commitment to help. EU-funded aid

is delivered directly to people in distress, irrespective of their nationality, religion, gender or ethnic origin.

The work of the EU goes beyond the immediate consequences of disasters. Investing in risk prevention and preparedness before a disaster strikes pays significant dividends compared to the costs of relief, recovery and reconstruction afterwards. In this way the EU ensures that its efforts cover the full disaster cycle: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

This involves combining disaster response with a vast range of activities in order to:

- reduce disaster risks, for example by employing strategies aimed at mitigating the consequences of climate change;
- improve preparedness for disasters, for instance by developing early warning systems;
- ensure a smooth transition when an emergency operation comes to an end, by linking up with development aid strategies;
- strengthen the overall resilience of populations, for example by investing in measures that help prepare them for the possibility of further disasters in their area.



The EU has been funding humanitarian aid in India since 1996

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The EU Civil Protection Mechanism helps the participating countries prevent disasters, prepare for emergencies and pool their resources which can then be made available for a coordinated and rapid response in countries hit by disasters. While the EU's humanitarian aid targets third countries, its Civil Protection Mechanism can be mobilised in case of emergencies both inside and outside the EU. The Mechanism enhances European cooperation, response and coordination and is a manifestation of European solidarity.

Making a difference together

The European Union, together with its Member States, is the **world's leading humanitarian aid donor**. Every year, humanitarian funding from the EU budget provides **assistance to more than 120 million people** around the world. The amount of more than €1 billion in aid every year goes a long way in meeting the needs of people in crisis situations. With these funds, shelter and clean drinking water were given to victims of the devastating **earthquake in Nepal** in 2015; winter clothing and blankets were provided in crisis-hit Ukraine; food and medicine were made available in Syria and its neighbouring countries and immediate health care and

treatment was provided in the Ebola-affected regions. As well as providing humanitarian aid, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism also sent specially equipped teams to help out in many of these crises. For example, when devastating floods hit Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia in 2014, equipment and experts sent via the Mechanism were successful in reaching the affected regions and providing assistance. During the Ebola epidemic, the Mechanism enabled the rapid, coordinated deployment of emergency provisions and experts supplied by the EU Member States and the medical evacuation of international health professionals working in the affected countries. In response to the Nepal earthquake, the Mechanism dispatched experts in search and rescue, first-aiders and relief supplies.

United in solidarity

A Eurobarometer survey in 2015 revealed overwhelming and increasing public support for the EU's humanitarian work and a joint approach to civil protection. Nine out of 10 citizens believe that it is important for the EU to continue to fund humanitarian aid, and eight in 10 said that a joint approach to civil protection is more effective than when countries act alone.



This previously displaced Burundian family was able to return home thanks to EU resettlement support.

Humanitarian aid is a responsibility that is shared between the EU and its Member States. EU-funded aid is delivered in cooperation with international and local humanitarian organisations. In the field of civil protection, the EU is responsible for supporting, coordinating and complementing the activities of its Member States. This coordination role has enabled the EU to set its goals higher by pooling European resources and expertise.

To manage the longer-term impact of disasters and step up prevention and preparedness, humanitarian aid and crisis response must go hand in hand with activities in other fields including development cooperation and environmental protection. This requirement makes coordination at EU level essential.

Why we need to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable people

Every year millions of people are affected by droughts, floods, landslides, cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, wildfires and other hazards. An estimated 97 % of natural disaster-related deaths occur in developing countries, and these countries bear the heaviest burden in terms of livelihoods lost. It is therefore crucial to increase the resilience of vulnerable people in the developing world so that they can better withstand and cope with disasters.

resilience-building initiatives have shown promising results. These initiatives (AGIR and SHARE respectively) seek to break the vicious cycle of drought, hunger and poverty by increasing coordination between humanitarian and development assistance. The SHARE initiative in the Horn of Africa has already mobilised around €350 million since 2012 and should be followed up by projects under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). The AGIR initiative aims to mobilise €1.5 billion from the 11th EDF for resilience-building in the Sahel between 2014 and 2020.

How is the EU helping?

As part of its response to the drought crises in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, the Commission's

The European Commission's focus on resilience will save more lives, be more cost-effective and contribute to reducing poverty — thus boosting the impact of aid and promoting sustainable development.

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A joint response in the face of growing threats

The scale and frequency of humanitarian emergencies occurring around the globe every year is on the rise. Climate change, population growth and urbanisation, industrial activities and environmental degradation combined are a major root cause of this phenomenon.

Climate-related disaster mitigation: the case of Vanuatu

The Pacific region is one of the most disaster-prone areas in the world in terms of the recurrence, severity and scope of hazards. It suffers from high exposure to cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, landslides, forest fires and volcanic eruptions, as well as epidemics.

*In the Pacific archipelago of Vanuatu, one of the world's least-developed countries, climate change has made the threat of natural disasters more severe. In March 2015, when Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu, the European Commission was among the first international donors to respond, pledging an initial **€1 million** for immediate relief for the most vulnerable families. Experts were also immediately deployed to participate in the needs assessments.*

*The EU is helping local communities deal with the effects of disasters and improve their preparedness for such events, for instance by means of threat assessments, planning for emergencies and the construction of cyclone shelters. Between 2007 and 2012 the EU gave **€4.3 million** to help with disaster preparedness and **€2.3 million** to assist communities affected by natural disasters in the western Pacific region. A **€3-million** disaster preparedness programme is currently ongoing in the Pacific region.*



In Vanuatu, children help to construct a model of the biggest threat to their lives, the volcano on Mount Gharat.

How the EU goes about it

A needs-based approach

The EU provides relief assistance based on the needs of the people affected by crises and reaches out to those who need help the most, regardless of nationality, religion, gender, ethnic origin or political affiliation.

The EU's aid is carefully tailored to match the specific characteristics of each crisis, taking into account factors such as the gender and age of those affected. The EU carries out needs assessments before making funding decisions.

The EU concentrates on crisis situations which might have moved outside the focus of international media and donor attention while needs continue to be high. In such 'forgotten crises', the EU conducts specific assessments to identify the current needs on the ground and provide relief.

Help where needed, when needed

Humanitarian aid and civil protection interventions are often carried out in extreme circumstances: help must reach victims urgently and match their specific needs while logistic and security constraints often make access to disaster-stricken areas difficult.

In addition to the workforce at its headquarters in Brussels, the EU has a worldwide network of specialised humanitarian field offices present in nearly 50 countries. In crisis situations, humanitarian experts based in the field provide technical support to EU-funded operations, monitor interventions and help locally with donor coordination. They also contribute to intervention strategies and policies.

The EU provides funding to around **210 humanitarian partner organisations**, including specialised United Nations (UN) agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), EU countries' agencies and organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies. The funding provided to these partners is based on their proposals on how to cover the needs of disaster-affected people. The EU ensures that the funds it provides are coordinated with those made available directly by its Member States and other humanitarian organisations.

The EU has launched the EU aid volunteers initiative enabling Europeans to support and contribute to humanitarian projects in countries where assistance is most needed (see the chapter entitled 'Where we go from here' for more details on this initiative).

Common core values

The EU subscribes to fundamental humanitarian principles. All of the partners that the EU funds must also endorse these principles.

- ***Humanity:** suffering must be addressed wherever it is found.*
- ***Neutrality:** aid must not favour any one group over others.*
- ***Impartiality:** aid must be provided solely on the basis of needs without discrimination.*
- ***Independence:** the sole purpose of humanitarian aid is to relieve human suffering; it cannot serve any other objectives.*

On the ground

Depending on the circumstances and specifics of a particular crisis, EU-funded humanitarian aid is delivered in different forms.

Food and nutrition assistance might include emergency rations for displaced people, including special nutritional products for acutely malnourished children in drought-affected areas and seeds and fertilisers for farmers. When the availability of food in shops and markets is insufficient, the EU helps vulnerable people get access to the food they need by providing them with **cash or vouchers**. This is often more efficient and effective than shipping sacks of rice or flour halfway across the globe. It also upholds their dignity and helps promote local markets which, in turn, benefits local farming and food supply systems.

Medical assistance includes vaccination campaigns to prevent epidemics, the treatment of injuries and the establishment of primary health clinics. Other aid services include the provision of drugs, hospital equipment, staff training and access to basic health

care, with a focus on vulnerable people such as pregnant women and children.

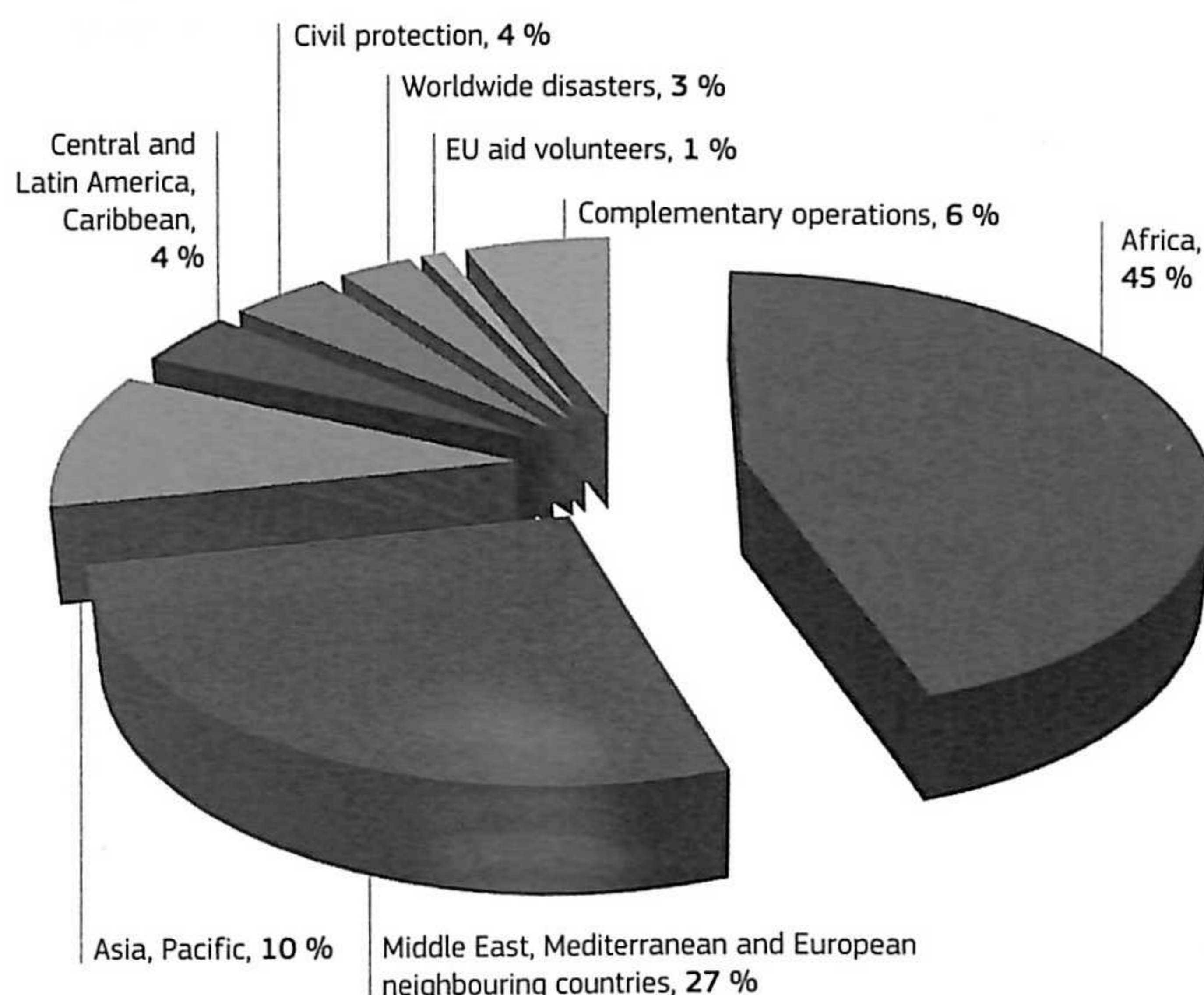
Access to clean water and sanitation is a priority in disaster zones to promote hygiene and proper sanitation and to prevent diseases from spreading. Aid activities include the creation of wells, boreholes and latrines, water piping, sewage treatment and hygiene education.

Shelter is essential for survival and is a basic form of security for people whose homes have been destroyed following a disaster. Affected people receive tents, plastic sheeting or other types of shelter. Emergency operations can also include repairs to infrastructure, demining actions, psycho-social support and education.

Many operations also prepare local residents to cope with disasters and to lessen the impact of possible future disasters on their communities.

Access to many crises by land or water can be difficult, if not impossible, due to the lack of reliable roads, ports and other infrastructure. The EU therefore funds humanitarian air services which are often the only way to get to remote areas and reach people in need. They are a lifeline for millions of vulnerable people in humanitarian crises where quick and safe access is critical to saving lives.

EU FUNDING ON HUMANITARIAN AID AND CIVIL PROTECTION IN 2014



Source: European Union, 2015.

Strengthening disaster preparedness worldwide — the Dipecho programme

Where it is impossible to foresee hazards and prevent disasters, improving the preparedness of vulnerable communities can often reduce their toll. This is what the EU's disaster preparedness programme 'Dipecho' aims to achieve.

Dipecho projects focus on training, capacity-building, awareness-raising, the establishment and improvement of local early-warning systems and contingency planning. They include simple preparatory measures which can often be implemented by the locals themselves. In most cases, they actively contribute to Dipecho activities.

The projects are carried out by European-based aid agencies and UN agencies in cooperation with local NGOs and authorities. Dipecho covers eight disaster-prone regions: the Caribbean, Central America, South America, central Asia, south Asia, south-east Asia, south-east Africa and the south-west Indian Ocean and Pacific region.

Joining forces to tackle crises globally

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism covers the entire disaster cycle from prevention and preparedness to response. It is currently made up of 33 countries, namely all 28 EU Member States plus the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway and Serbia. These countries will soon be joined by Turkey, which is currently in the process of ratifying its recently signed agreement to join the Mechanism.

When the scale of an emergency overwhelms national response capabilities, **any EU or non-EU country affected can request assistance.** The EU Civil Protection Mechanism's operational hub — the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) — communicates the need for assistance to all participating states. Disaster situations include floods, forest fires, earthquakes, storms or tsunamis as well as acts of terrorism, technological or radiological accidents and environmental disasters such as marine pollution. By pooling the civil protection resources of the participating states, the Mechanism ensures better protection of people, the environment and property.

Participating states offer expertise and material assistance. This assistance may include search and rescue teams or field hospitals, relief supplies, specialised equipment for decontamination in cases of chemical or biological incidents, fire-fighting planes and teams. The EU can also co-fund transportation of the assistance and send its own teams to the field. The ERCC is a 24/7 service.

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism also strengthens disaster preparedness in the participating states with training programmes and exercises as well as the exchange of experts between different countries. These initiatives provide learning opportunities for the civil protection personnel in the participating states. They help to improve the speed and coordination of civil protection assistance and to promote the transfer of knowledge and the creation of networks. Funding is also provided for prevention and preparedness projects. This may include encouraging research on disaster-related topics, strengthening early warning tools, or supporting awareness-raising campaigns aimed at the general public.

Over the past few years, civil protection legislation has been considerably strengthened. It now includes significant innovations such as the European Emergency Response Capacity. This supports a coordinated and quicker response to disasters both inside and outside Europe using resources from the countries participating in the European Civil Protection Mechanism, and it remains on standby for rapid deployment in case of disasters.

Preparation through simulation

EU Prometheus, a major simulation exercise, took place in Greece in 2014. It was designed to test the cooperation and response capacities of Member States through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Teams from Greece, Croatia, Italy and Cyprus participated, alongside the ERCC. The decision-making process and the role of the ERCC were also tested.

The exercise staged a twin disaster on the ground: a vast wildfire near populated areas had affected an industrial zone, resulting in an explosion. Fire-fighting and rescue operations were carried out simultaneously and the populated areas were evacuated.

Past exercises have included a forest fire caused by sparks coming from the brakes of a train and a village flooded by a broken reservoir system. Exercises of this type are organised every year with a financial contribution from the EU.



An EU civil protection exercise, Prometheus 2014, tested the cooperation and response capacities of Member States.

What the EU does

Delivering on commitments

Every year, the EU institutions provide **more than €1 billion** in emergency aid to the world's most vulnerable people. Together with funding provided by EU countries individually, **this makes the EU the leading humanitarian donor worldwide.**

Moreover, the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism delivers governmental aid in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. This may take the form of in-kind assistance, deployment of specially equipped teams, or expert assessment and coordination. Since its establishment in 2001, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism has monitored more than 300 disasters and has received more than 180 requests for assistance. Between 2010 and 2015, the mechanism was activated for almost 90 emergencies following requests for assistance inside and outside the EU. It intervened in some of the most devastating disasters of recent times including, in 2014, the floods in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, the conflict in Ukraine and the earthquake in Nepal in 2015.

Achievements cannot be measured solely in terms of response statistics: the less visible impact of disaster preparedness and prevention plays an equally important role in the EU's approach to humanitarian aid and civil protection. The existing framework allows EU countries to work together efficiently and to promote respect for, and adherence to, international humanitarian law.

The decision to launch ECHO in 1992 was taken by the EU's then 12 member countries, as the scale and diversity of humanitarian crises affecting the world in 1991 made the limitations of Europe's response capacity apparent. Large-scale disasters at that time, such as the conflict in former Yugoslavia, a cyclone in Bangladesh and a famine in Somalia called for more coordination at EU level to allow for a faster and more efficient response.

In 2007, the EU's institutions and the then 27 Member States agreed on a key policy document entitled 'European consensus on humanitarian aid'. It stressed that EU humanitarian aid is not a political tool and reaffirmed the guiding principles of humanitarian aid, namely: humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. It also clearly defined the roles of different humanitarian actors in crisis zones to strengthen the EU's capacity to help.

The Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force on 1 December 2009, introduced a legal basis for EU

humanitarian aid as well as for civil protection policies. It defines the EU's role in improving disaster protection and prevention and states that the EU should apply international humanitarian law including impartiality and non-discrimination.

A swift and efficient response

The EU has provided help to victims in the aftermath of numerous disasters around the globe. The following presents a short selection of key interventions.

- The war in former Yugoslavia left hundreds of thousands of people displaced, hungry and traumatised in 1992. The EU delivered aid including 300 000 tonnes of food, blankets, mattresses and toiletries.
- Victims fleeing their homes after the 1994 Rwandan genocide received EU aid that included medical care such as rehydration kits and vaccinations for children. Those returning to destroyed villages received resettlement kits.
- In 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami killed over 230 000 people. The EU's initial response focused on ensuring the survival of its victims. Longer-term projects included the construction of camps for the homeless, funding for health workers and the purchase of fishing boats to rebuild livelihoods.
- In 2012 the EU helped millions of people in the Sahel, one of the poorest regions in the world. Since then, the EU has increased its humanitarian aid contribution in this area to more than €507 million. Beyond the emergency help it has provided, it also works to promote the recognition of food insecurity as a structural issue by stressing its key role in the fight against poverty. Since 2010, the EU has supported more than 100 million people facing chronic hunger and food insecurity.
- Since the outbreak of civil war in **South Sudan** in 2013, more than 2 million people have fled their homes, and over half a million of them have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The EU has so far provided around one third of all humanitarian financing given to South Sudan and, together with its partners, has provided more than 2 million people with food assistance, nutrition, health, water and sanitation, shelter and protection.

- Following catastrophic floods in the Balkans in 2014, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism was activated, with 23 Member States deploying relief workers, rescue and evacuation helicopters, motor boats, generators, sandbags, tents, blankets and humanitarian aid kits.
- Since the outbreak of war in eastern Ukraine in April 2014, the EU has contributed more than €223 million in humanitarian and early recovery aid to over 1.3 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in Ukraine, to more than 900 000 refugees in neighbouring countries and to hundreds of thousands of people still living in the conflict area. Projects funded by this aid include food assistance, a cash voucher programme, medicines, mobile clinics, shelter, protection, material to help people cope with winter conditions, clothing and water.
- The Syrian conflict has triggered the world's largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. Humanitarian needs continue to rise, population displacements continue, and an entire generation of children is being exposed to war and violence, and increasingly deprived of basic services, education and protection. **The EU is leading the international response. More than €4.2 billion has been mobilised for relief and recovery assistance to Syrians in their country and to refugees and their host communities in neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt.**
- The EU responded quickly to the Ebola epidemic, the largest and most complex on record. It mobilised all political, financial and scientific resources available to help contain, control, treat and ultimately defeat Ebola. It made over €1.8 billion in financial aid available to help contain the outbreak of the disease in West Africa.

Stepping up prevention to save lives

The EU's efforts have covered actions both inside and outside of the Member States, with achievements ranging from efficient coordination at European level to the successful training of local experts in other parts of the world.

- The EU has developed various early-warning systems including the online alert platform 'Meteoalarm' and the 'Global Disaster Alerts and Coordination System', a round-the-clock data gathering and alert system. It has also invested in warning and detection systems for specific hazards such as earthquakes, floods, forest fires and tsunamis.
- EU investment in disaster prevention and mitigation technologies and close cooperation with other partners has resulted in the development of the European Forest Fire Information System and the European Flood Alert System.

CASE STUDY

Ukraine: *getting help to the people most in need*

Millions of people in Ukraine are in need of humanitarian aid as a result of the fighting between armed groups and government forces in eastern Ukraine that began in April 2014. Millions have been forced to flee their homes and have become increasingly vulnerable. In July 2015, over 1.38 million people were registered as IDPs, and more than 920 000 had fled to neighbouring countries. These people — as well as people still living in the conflict areas — still face shortages in food, health services, basic household items and shelter and are suffering psychological distress after more than 1 year of conflict. Medicines are also in alarmingly low supply.

In July 2015 the European Union and its Member States committed over €223 million in humanitarian and early recovery aid to help the most vulnerable people affected by the conflict.

Up to July 2015, ECHO alone had provided over €41 million for emergency assistance, 55 % of which was to benefit the most vulnerable people, in the

non-government controlled areas, including female-headed households, the elderly, children and the disabled. Projects implemented in 2015 from ECHO's own funding have directly helped over 460 000 Ukrainians. Almost 175 000 (38 %) of people assisted were children under 17, and over 77 000 (16 %) were over 50.

In addition to financial aid, material assistance has been mobilised through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The European Commission co-finances the transportation of humanitarian aid and relief material. In a joint humanitarian operation in January 2015, three EU-chartered cargo planes and several trucks transported to Ukraine some 85 tonnes of blankets, sleeping bags, water containers, heaters, hygiene kits and warm clothing which had been provided by a number of Member States and humanitarian organisations.

The Commission is also providing assistance to Ukrainian refugees in Belarus and Russia via the national Red Cross societies in these countries.

CASE STUDY

Syria: *the world's largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War*

Since the violent crackdown on protests in Syria in March 2011, the conflict has developed into a fully fledged war with severe humanitarian consequences in Syria and its neighbouring countries.

Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives in the conflict and half of the population has been forced to flee in order to seek protection in safer areas. More than 4 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries while 7.6 million have been displaced inside the country itself.

*The situation has continued to deteriorate, causing what is the **largest humanitarian and security crisis in the world with 12.2 million people needing assistance inside Syria**. As many as 4.8 million people are living in areas that are difficult for humanitarian workers to reach, with more than 400 000 living in besieged areas.*

Since the beginning of the crisis the EU has made over €4.2 billion available collectively in humanitarian, development, economic and stabilisation assistance, making it the world's largest donor to the Syrian crisis. The humanitarian assistance provided by the Commission addresses the most urgent needs of the most vulnerable people in Syria and neighbouring countries, particularly by delivering food assistance, safe water, emergency medical care, shelter, protection, and cash and voucher assistance.

The EU continues to lead the international response to the Syrian crisis through its sustained humanitarian presence on the ground, international coordination and advocacy efforts. The EU has repeatedly called on all parties in the conflict to respect international humanitarian law which covers the protection of civilians and the provision of unhindered access, across conflict lines as well as borders, to ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid and medical care to all those who need it.

At least three in four Syrian children have lost a close friend or relative since the conflict began.



CASE STUDY

Balkans floods: *From complex operation to European cooperation*

In May 2014 Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were hit by devastating floods, the worst in over a century. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their livelihoods and were evacuated from their homes.

The situation was complex. Cities were left without electricity or running water and with shortages of bottled water, food, medication and blankets. Key infrastructure across the region, including bridges and roads as well as health and educational facilities, was damaged in many of the affected areas. It is estimated that more than 3 million people in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia were affected by the floods, mudslides and landslides.

*The **EU Civil Protection Mechanism** was activated, resulting in offers of help from 23 Member States. In-kind assistance included rescue and evacuation*

helicopters, motor boats, generators, sandbags, tents, blankets and humanitarian aid kits, along with more than 800 relief workers who were deployed to the two countries. In addition, two EU civil protection teams were sent to the area to help with the coordination of relief efforts and assist rescue operations. More than 1 700 people were rescued in Bosnia and Herzegovina alone. The European Commission also co-financed the transportation of relief material and personnel. In addition, more than 80 satellite maps were produced to support both the affected countries and those providing assistance.

On top of the in-kind assistance provided by the EU Member States via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the EU also allocated €3 million in humanitarian aid to help the most vulnerable people in the two affected countries. This sum provided humanitarian assistance to half a million people but extensive recovery and reconstruction needs remain in both countries.



CASE STUDY

Ebola in West Africa: *the EU's response to the worst outbreak ever recorded*

West Africa is facing the largest and most complex epidemic of the Ebola virus on record. After the first case was discovered in Guinea in March 2014, the virus quickly spread to Liberia and Sierra Leone, infecting and killing thousands.

*The European Union has been active in the response to the Ebola emergency from the start. It has mobilised political, financial and scientific resources to help contain, control, treat and ultimately defeat Ebola. Together with Member States, the European Commission has given over **€1.8 billion** for humanitarian aid, longer-term development assistance and investment in research.*

As part of its coordinated response, the EU has sent experts to the affected countries, provided emergency supplies including air transport for goods, and put into place an emergency evacuation system for humanitarian aid workers. The EU Civil

Protection Mechanism enabled Member States to send critical supplies and expertise to the region and played a key role in the overall coordination of the battle against Ebola. To date there have been two deployments from the European Emergency Response Capacity, both in the context of the European response to the Ebola crisis. To that effect, and drawing from lessons learned, a reserve pool of medical teams — the so-called 'European Medical Corps' — is being developed with the Member States.

More than a year after the start of the outbreak, efforts made by the international community, the local authorities and the people themselves, have started to bear fruit, but further work is needed in order to eradicate Ebola in this area once and for all.

Looking ahead, the European Commission is now stepping up its efforts to help with the long-term recovery by financing programmes in the areas of health care, agriculture, infrastructure, education, sanitation, macroeconomic stability and transport.



To help control the largest and most complex Ebola outbreak ever recorded in West Africa, the EU sent critical supplies and expertise to the region.

Where we go from here

Meeting the needs

The EU has been at the forefront when responding to humanitarian needs worldwide, not only as a major donor but also by setting standards for the respect of international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles. It is vital that the mechanisms put in place to deal with emergencies keep pace with the challenges posed by an increasingly fragile world and the growing variety of new needs. In order to achieve this, the EU is constantly looking to adapt and improve its efforts in responding to disasters in a more effective and efficient manner.

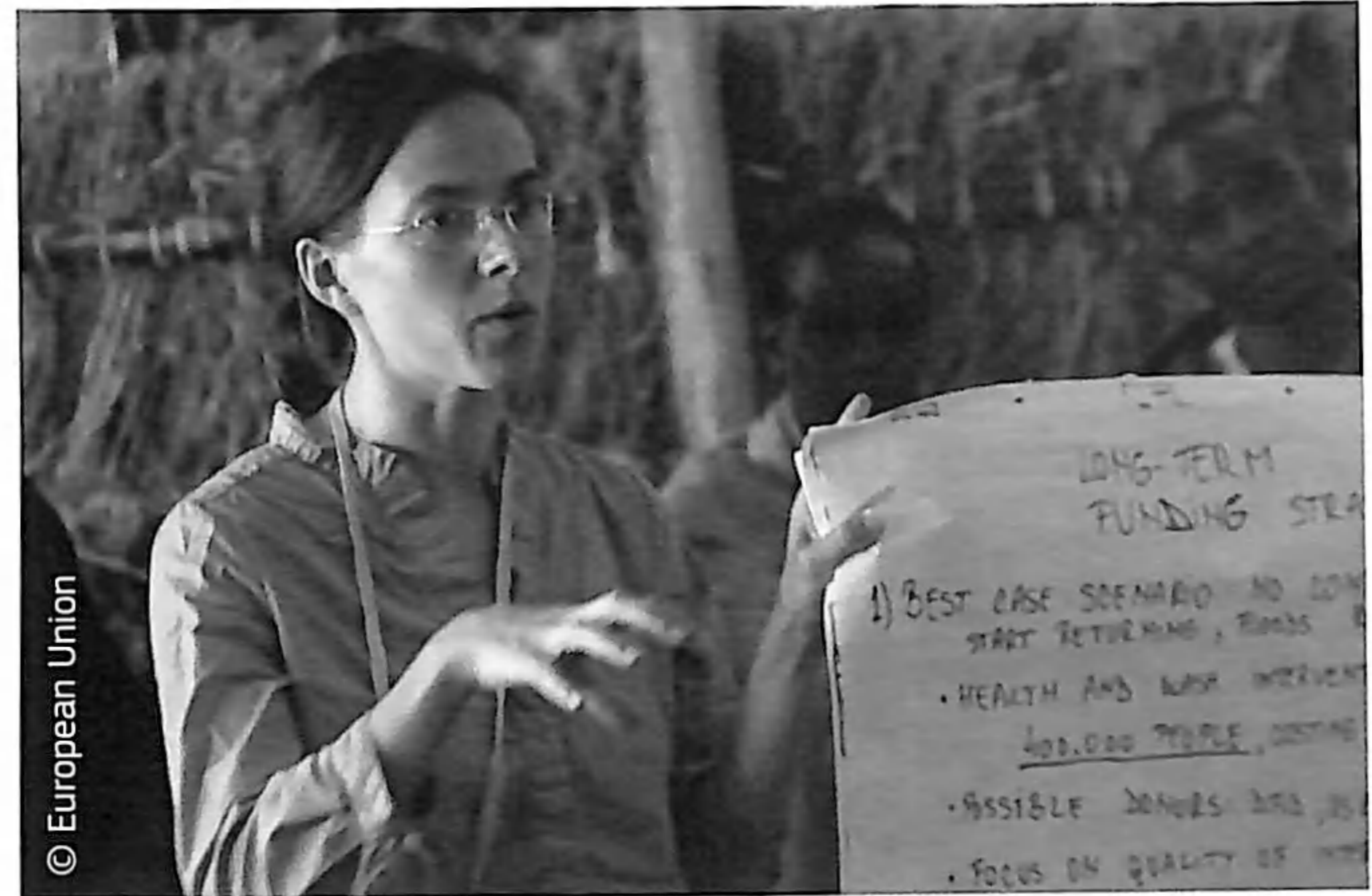
The EU believes disaster response is best served by having the appropriate resources available at the local level and to that end it is focusing on strengthening the resilience of local communities to better withstand future disasters.

The EU will be an active participant in the discussions to be held at the UN's World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 to improve the effectiveness of the international humanitarian system.

The legal basis of civil protection coordination has been the subject of an ambitious and innovative revision, leading to an expansion of its responsibilities and remit. Its main objectives are to improve prevention and preparedness and increase the efficiency, coherence, and visibility of the EU's response. The legislation introduces a number of innovative instruments such as the European Emergency Response Capacity, a pool of response capacities that Member States have pre-committed for joint EU civil protection operations and that are on constant standby. In addition, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) has been identified as the EU's operational entry point should a Member State be hit by an overwhelming disaster or terrorist act, whereby it would coordinate with other EU services and bodies in ensuring the Union's response.

EU aid volunteers

In 2012, the EU created the EU aid volunteers initiative to give citizens the opportunity to get involved in humanitarian work as envisaged by the Treaty of Lisbon. The initiative is expected to deploy 4 000 volunteers to humanitarian projects across the globe by



Diana Tonea from Romania, deployed in Haiti as member of the Voluntary Corps, describes her experience as 'challenging and fulfilling'.

2020. Furthermore, 4 400 people from local organisations in non-EU disaster-affected countries will be trained in humanitarian work and 10 000 online volunteering opportunities will be offered.

Open to Europeans who are 18 and over, the volunteer programme seeks to attract a wide range of profiles, from young people who plan to take up a career in emergency aid work to experienced humanitarian aid workers.

The volunteers are sent where their skills are most needed. To prepare them for field work, they receive training before their deployment. Keeping them safe in the field is of course a top priority.

In a series of preparatory pilot projects carried out between 2011 and 2014, around 300 volunteers from across Europe went to crisis areas in Africa, Asia and Latin America where they participated in a range of humanitarian schemes, from disaster management planning and flood risk mapping, to needs assessments and information management. Working with local organisations and communities, they contributed to projects aimed at preparing more effectively for crisis situations and being able to respond more quickly and efficiently should disaster strike in their area.

Following the pilot phase, the first deployment of EU aid volunteers will take place in 2016.

The EU Children of Peace initiative, a Nobel Peace Prize legacy

In December 2012, the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Inspired by the prize, the EU Children of Peace initiative was created to fund humanitarian projects ensuring education for children affected by conflict. Since 2012 it has continued to scale up its funding for the EU Children of Peace initiative to help the youngest victims of conflict.

Children are the most vulnerable victims of conflict. Ninety per cent of the victims of conflict are civilians and half of them are children. Seven million children are refugees and over 13 million children have been displaced within their own countries because of conflict. More than 28 million have been prevented from receiving an education. One of the priorities in helping and protecting children affected by conflict is to invest in access to schools, safe learning environments and psychosocial support to address their traumatic war experiences.

Through projects funded by the European Union and implemented by partner humanitarian organisations, the EU Children of Peace initiative has so far reached more than 270 000 girls and boys in 19 countries around the world. So far, children from Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Chad, the Central African Republic, Somalia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Niger, Sudan, Tanzania, Turkey, Cameroon and Ecuador and Syrian refugees in Iraq have benefited from the initiative.



Education helps children in conflict to remain children.

EU Children of Peace (<http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en/what/humanitarian-aid/children-of-peace>)

Find out more

- ▶ **EU Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection:** (<http://ec.europa.eu/echo>)
- ▶ **EU Aid Volunteers** (<http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en/what/humanitarian-aid/eu-aid-volunteers>)
- ▶ **EU Children of Peace** (<http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en/what/humanitarian-aid/children-of-peace>)
- ▶ <https://www.facebook.com/ec.humanitarian.aid>
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