



## Humanitarian aid of the European Union and United Nations: actions, responsibilities, and finances

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**Abstract.** The main purpose of the article is to analyze humanitarian aid provided by the European Union and the United Nations. The research includes a review of existing documents, reports, and studies on world humanitarian assistance. The main issues and findings analyzed in this study are the evolution of the humanitarian assistance provided by the European Union and the United Nations and the role of the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office – ECHO and the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - OCHA – as units responsible for organization and financial issues. On the basis of the history and key events, the finances, and significant projects in the field of humanitarian aid implemented by the EU and the UN are presented. Finally, the authors attempt to assess the effectiveness of assistance.

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## 1. Introduction

The world's humanitarian aid shall be any action taken by governments, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), carried out within the framework of international agreements and rules of humanitarian aid. The three leading entities, which provide the greatest relief in the world, are the European Union, the U.S. of America and the United Nations.

The Global humanitarian response in 2012 was estimated as 17.9 billion dollars, which is lower by about 8% than in 2011 (19.4 billion dollars). Still, the biggest part of the global humanitarian aid – 12.9 billion dollars – comes from governments, but in 2012 it decreased by about 6% comparing with 2011 (13.8 billion dollars). The rest of the humanitarian aid comes from Private Voluntary Contributions and amounted to 5.0 billion dollars in 2012. With smaller funds devoted to humanitarian aid, the number of people in need has decreased: in 2012 amounted to 76 million people, which is 18% less than in the previous year (93 million in need) (The Global Humanitarian Assistance: Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2012, 2013). The reason for the smaller number of people defined as needing humanitarian aid comes from determining the year 2012 as the no mega-disasters year, in contrast to previous years (2010 Haiti earthquake and 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami). The year 2012 has been also called “The Year of Recurring Disasters” due to the fact that the major events that caused the greatest need for humanitarian aid have been preceded by similar events in previous years. The economic problems of the biggest donors were also not without significance for the global humanitarian aid – Spain reduced its aid by half, Japan by 38% and the U.S. by 11% (Ferris et al., 2013).

According to the report published by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters in 2012, the number of people killed by natural disasters reached 9,655 and 124.5 million fell victims worldwide. Only in 2012, losses due to natural disasters amounted to 157 billion dollars and were caused by 357 catastrophes, which is about 10% more than the average from the last decade (143 billion dollars) (Guha-Sapir et al., 2013).

## 2. Humanitarian assistance of The United Nations

The United Nations (UN) was founded in 1945, acting on the basis of The United Nations Charter, as an organization replacing the League of Nations. From the beginning, the main objective was to promote international cooperation, achieve peace and security, and codify rules of warfare. One of the key moments of the activities of the UN in the area of humanitarian aid was signing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly in 1948. The two major entities involved in the creation of the current level of humanitarian aid in the world were the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRC) – established in 1971 – and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) – created to replace UNDRC activities. Eventually, the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was created from UNDRC United Nations – currently the most important UN body responsible for organizing humanitarian aid for the world area. Defining the objectives of the main tasks of OCHA determines the fact that it was created to integrate the humanitarian activities of international organizations and governments in order to ensure a consistent and rapid response to disasters in the world (Charter of the United Nations). Only in 2012, OCHA provided assistance to 50 countries in need of assistance through the work of more than 2,000 employees. The value of the programs and projects coordinated by OCHA's activities was estimated to be over 8.7 billion dollars, providing help for over 54 million victims of crises and destruction. The resources of the OCHA office allocated to humanitarian aid amounted to 246.5 million dollars (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: Annual Report 2012, 2013)

The tasks of the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is not only bringing direct aid to areas affected by natural disasters, but also helping donors, such as the UN Member States, in the organization of humanitarian assistance in accordance with the principles of international law and human rights. The Office has undertaken the responsibility for working to improve the awareness of those involved in the conflict or affected by disasters (Global Humanitarian Assistance. Glossary, Bilat-

eral Aid, 2013). Its impact is always public, in order to avoid accusations of bias towards the action - and the action does not interfere with any of the parties involved in the conflict. Owing to the work of OCHA, the United Nations has one of the world's largest databases of information on crises and disasters, allowing for more conscious disposition of funds and making decisions (United Nations. General Assembly Economic and Social Council A/68/x-E/2013/y/). One of the office's units, remaining at its disposal, is the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination. The team was appointed to bring immediate help to the disaster-affected place. The task of the team is to reach the area of intervention in less than 48 hours in order to provide an initial estimate of losses and needs for assessment (OCHA Annual Report 2012).

### 3. Parental role of the European Union

It has been a long time since the official definition and then the humanitarian system was established. However, the year 1970, when the evolution of humanitarian aid underwent a key change, is considered to be a breakthrough in its history. This date also important for the history of the EU, when the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) came into being (Davey et al., 2013: 12). The event had a significant impact on the subsequent formation of the European Community. Currently, activities within the area of bringing contemporary humanitarian assistance have been provided by the community for over 20 years, since its incorporation into the structure of the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) (European Commission, 1996: Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96).

A document titled "Agenda 2000: For a stronger and wider Union" developed a strong emphasis on the implementation of the tasks of the EU humanitarian aid with particular focus on security issues, peace, and sustainable development in developing countries in the world (European Commission, 1995: Agenda 2000 - For a stronger and wider Union). As it can be seen from "The EU explained: Humanitarian aid", a document created on the basis of Community documents defining the framework of humanitarian aid, the work can be divided

into five main areas: resilience-building assistance, emergency aid, food assistance, aid for refugees, and disaster risk reduction, which are split into specific, smaller actions.

The ECHO's organizational structure is based on the division into three main branches implementing the statutory objectives of the committee. ECHO.A is responsible for Strategy, Policy, and International Co-operations. ECHO.B is engaged in operations in the field of Humanitarian and Civil Protection. ECHO.C performs tasks aiming at the efficient use of available resources, establishing cooperation, and supporting operations. Each of them consists of specialized units, implementing the decisions to provide assistance in selected areas of the world. In addition to the main structure of the organization, ECHO is responsible for the development and maintenance of programs targeted at the events that require humanitarian assistance (ECHO, 2013: Organizational structure of ECHO). The LRRD (Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development) was established in order to improve the efficiency of the assistance provided by the EC. Its objective is to create unrestrained transition between phases of humanitarian aid, rehabilitation, and finally providing development assistance (European Commission, 1996: Communication From The Commission To The Council And The European Parliament On Linking Relief, Rehabilitation And Development (LRRD)). The EC pointed out that communication could be more efficient, providing an improved level of aid thanks to better cooperation between NGOs and the international implementation of "transition policy". The basis for the storage and processing of data on disasters in the world is The Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC), which is the main tool used to operate in the field of Civil Protect Mechanism (CPM). Establishing MIC has led member states to the creation of a continually operating platform, allowing them to access the data on the risks of civilian population in the community. Through the MIC, it is possible for each country to call for the help of other members of the system when in need. Concentrated actions undertaken in the MIC headquarters allow to present aid offers from donators as well as monitor the stage of aid in the whole organization process (ECHO: Operational Mechanism of Emergency Response Coordination Centre, 2013). The common Emergency and

Information system, which implements the work of the MIC, was created with the intention to facilitate communication with the Member States in case of emergency. It makes it possible to arrange messages with sent and received warnings, as well as gives access to detailed information about aid. It also facilitates reaching an agreement between the MIC and the system of national agencies responsible for the aid. The CECIS job is based on three basic principles: prevention, preparedness, response (ECHO: The Common Emergency Communication and Information System, 2013). The Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) was established to promote and coordinate a coherent response to individual EU countries in order to help them. ERCC acts as coordinator, making it possible to reduce unnecessary and costly duplication of effort. The structure of the center allows for continuous analysis of the data provided, and preparing plans for the deployment of experts individually adjusted to the needs of emergency. ERCC capacity is increased by scenarios prepared in advance, which increases responsiveness. DIPECHO, a program with special priority launched in 1996, is being implemented by ECHO (ECHO, 2013: Dipecho Allocations 1998-2011). Its roots can be reach back to the early years of ECHO operation, when it used to have high priority. The aim of the program is the best and preparation of a given country for the coming threat, within the existing organizational and financial assistance. Support and development for the DIPECHO program has grown significantly in recent years. In 2011, the target was to allocate 34.3 million for activities aiming at reducing risk and total funding over the period 1998-2011 amounted to 255.02 million €. In order to ensure high efficiency and the achievement of stated objectives, since the establishment of ECHO, the European Commission has been committed to develop a strategy for ECHO's work in order to verify its impartial approach (ECHO, 2013: Dipecho Allocations 1998-2011; Grunewald et al., 2013).

The funds from the European community for humanitarian action on behalf of ECHO come from three main sources: the EU budget, the European Development Fund (EDF), and the Emergency Aid Reserve (EAR) (Versluys, 2008). Additional funds devoted to humanitarian aid carried by ECHO mainly come from the Emergency Aid Reserve and

the transfers coming from EDF. The countries belonging to the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) play also an important role in the annual budget. In 2012, the amount of the humanitarian aid budget in the world increased to the highest level in history (ECHO, 2013: DG Echo Budget 1993 – 2012).

An analysis of the budget of DG ECHO shows that from the very beginning of ECHO activities within the EU, there has been a continuous increase of transferred funds to carry out the tasks of humanitarian aid in the world. In 2011, the assistance provided by ECHO for humanitarian aid amounted to 1.1 billion €, a year later it increased to 1.34 billion €. Although this is only a small part of the total EU budget (1%), it allowed to reach 122 million needy people in the world. Within over 20 years, the ECHO's budget has more than doubled. It is closely related to the increasing number of the world's natural disasters and destructive human activities, which is reflected in the growing number of those in need (ECHO, 2013: DG Echo Budget 1993 – 2012; ECHO, 2013: Dipecho Allocations 1998-2011).

Parallel actions taken by ECHO together with humanitarian operations are related to operational actions undertaken in order to protect civilians within areas of high risk. In order to improve the integration of the community, there was created a coherent system for all member countries: the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (EUCPM). In 2012, the procedure for the Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM) was launched 38 times, including 22 times when it concerned countries in EUCPM. The funds for the protection of civilians in 2012 were allocated in the amount of €27 million, representing 2% of the total budget allocated to humanitarian aid by ECHO (European Commission, 2013: The EU explained: Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection).

Humanitarian assistance activities by the community as part of ECHO's activities are governed by a number of laws, regulations, council conclusions, or resolutions of the European Parliament. Currently, ECHO's work is included in about 25 legal documents, setting out the boundaries of actions and imposing certain obligations. Definitions of the European legislative system characterize three types of humanitarian assistance: emergency aid,

food aid, and aid to refugees. The key assumptions concerning the provision of humanitarian aid were included at the very beginning of Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996. In addition to the steps taken by ECHO according to the European law, all humanitarian aid projects implemented within its borders must follow the principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the guidelines must favor cooperation with countries outside the EU community. Since all members of the EU are also members of the United Nations, the organization of aid has to be consistent with the documents published by the UN. The leading international law documents were included in the Charter of the United Nations, with special focus on the second article suggesting proactive attitude of the UN Member States towards the organization of humanitarian actions. An equally important set of laws relating to international humanitarian law are the Geneva Conventions and additional protocols, which include a number of international agreements on the mutual relations of countries in the world at the time of war (The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, Charter of The United Nations).

The help organized by ECHO aims at meeting the most pressing needs during disasters or conflicts. Depending on the type and nature of the intervention, it is oriented towards specific sectors of the area, which, in this analysis, were found to be the most important ones. In 2012, ECHO worked most actively in more than 10 areas, providing direct aid for people in need.

#### **4. Effectiveness of humanitarian assistance**

To begin the discussion of the effectiveness of humanitarian aid, it is necessary to distinguish between different types of assistance. Emergency assistance (also known as relief assistance) is an immediate reaction in the case of man-made or natural disasters. It covers shelters, food, medical care, and security and it focuses on satisfying the immediate basic needs of recipients by short-term, reactive interventions (Malmqvist, 2000; Kopinak, 2013).

The basic role of development (or rehabilitation) aid (R/D) is transferring knowledge and resources to

build up the capacity of the host country. The areas of mentoring and advising include: education, health, creation and support for the authorities, and improvement of assets of local communities. R/D assistance is targeted at empowering the recipients in a given community and the government to detect and satisfy the citizens' needs in order to improve the quality of their life (Malmqvist, 2000; Kopinak, 2013).

The effectiveness of humanitarian aid should be evaluated depending on the type of aid. According to Kopinak, the effectiveness of emergency aid should be determined on the basis of the results of the contribution of resources (such as financial or human ones) and short-term outcomes (which mainly consist of saving lives, relieving suffering or providing food, shelter and medicines). On the other hand, the effectiveness of aid development is determined by long-term effects, obtained by eliminating or limiting the cause of vulnerability (Kopinak, 2000). The often repeated mistake in evaluating success is to consider exclusively the amount of disbursed money, without translating it into results (Branczik, 2004).

The effectiveness of humanitarian assistance depends on a number of different conditions. The basic issue concerns the ability to access the recipients' country or its specific area. The possibility of unimpeded and secure delivery of assistance is essential and also creates the foundation of further principle-based approach, covering features such as neutrality, independence, humanity, and finally impartiality which should ensure that the population most in need will receive aid at first (DARA, 2014).

Another issue which is frequently raised in the discussion on the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance is coordination. Apart from those who are the subject of interest of this article, there are also various agencies working on this field. Good coordination must go "hand in hand" with collaboration, cooperation as well as communication. Apart from a number of tools and mechanisms developed to improve the coordination of assistance, there is still much to do, for example having target populations needs analyses or other necessary information, as well as developing closer ties by eliminating stereotypes (Kopinak, 2000; DARA, 2014).

The assessment of effectiveness of aid is often widely discussed among scholars. The impact on the industry, agriculture or infrastructure in the

host country can be measured on the basis of clear indicators, such as number of water-wells or kilometers of roads where the starting points and end points have to be well known. Health and social issues are more complex factors and more difficult to measure, mainly because of the lack of or incomplete necessary information, for example morbidity, mortality and other vital registration data. The results of assistance cannot be measured in a reliable way without baseline indicators. Therefore, effective assistance should start with collecting the existing data; however, it often must begin with designing a study to obtain the data needed (Hofmann et al., 2004; Kopinak, 2013).

It is worth mentioning an example where despite the substantial funds allocated to humanitarian action in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), only in 2013 there were 27,000 cases of cholera recorded, of which nearly 500 turned out to be fatal, and nearly 90,000 people were affected by measles. This data relates mainly to the population of displaced communities returning to their native lands (OCHA, 2014: DR Congo: Humanitarian challenges).

A significant problem for self-empowerment of the DRC is the lack of economic development strategies in the context of national product growth sought by the government, which in bold doings cooperates with international corporations. A good example of such actions are recent sales of licenses with the purpose of exploring the natural resources of the DRC, which unfortunately often end up in the hands of Western corporations. Another factor impeding effective cooperation between the DRC and the West are corrupt activities and embezzlement of available goods against legal proceedings have been pending since 2002 (New Amnesty Law, 2014, Ministry of Justice and Human Rights in the DRC). Parallel to the changes taking place in the area of government, the DRC has also a growing number of NGOs whose active work aims at supporting transnational humanitarian initiatives undertaken by the UN and at organizing actions by the western countries. As it is clear from the reports and studies on the effectiveness of the cooperation of NGOs, those activities still receive criticism mainly due to the lack of clear direction and a change in the existing mechanisms for the implementation of the planned strategy (Mowjee, 2008).

The current situation of humanitarian activities in the DRC is difficult to assess due to the dynamic changes taking place in the Congo in recent years and the political instability of this country. This factors have significant impact on the organization and the cooperation of the providers of humanitarian aid (both with each other and with the current government).

According to the data provided by government agencies in Haiti, the earthquake killed about 300,000 people and more than three million people were injured, became homeless or were otherwise affected. Help given in an organized humanitarian aid within 15 days from the date of the disaster reached the estimated value of \$528 million only to mitigate the effects of disasters; however, according to official sources, the overall aid could reach the \$4.5 billion ceiling. Yet, the international aid on an unprecedented scale for the approaching 10 million population of Haiti, did not prevent the spread of cholera, which only in the year 2010 affected more than 513,000 people, and caused the death of 277,000. A year later, the disaster that struck Haiti, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), had affected more than 3 million people, where 550,000 are still living in the conditions of temporary assistance (UN, 2014. Office of the Special Envoy for Haiti).

Despite the passage of more than four years since the tragedy that occurred in Haiti, the United Nations estimated the number of people reporting the need for humanitarian aid as more than 800,000, and 200,000 of them still reside and depend on camps' help (UN, 2014). Changes in housing and construction do not improve the statistics submitted by the institutions involved in the helping-building process. It was announced that the planned construction of 400,000 homes by 2020, due to limited financial resources would decrease the number of newly established buildings to 5000. Current reports indicate a partial transfer of responsibility for national reconstruction strategies to local authorities, but they do not guarantee continued solid financial support (UN Office, 2013).

The origins of objective assessments of organized humanitarian operations in Afghanistan (taking place there for years) have been also indicating a recommendation for all parties involved in the helping process. Going back to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, litera-

ture points out numerous problems with the beginnings of a new government, more than 5 million inhabitants' victims, and lack of access to the basic infrastructure and the prospect of escalating armed conflict over the war against terrorism. Despite the unfavorable forecasts, people saw a chance for the possibility of organizing aid to rebuild the war-damaged country (Sharp, 2002). Reports from regions of today's Afghanistan indicate that from those areas comes the highest number – this figure has reached so far 80 people. Only the year 2013, the number of people in need of medical care alone increased by 2 million people (UNRIC, 2014). The latest reports indicate that there has been a lot of neglect in the trading process of determining which organizations are the best to provide humanitarian aid and other services in Afghanistan. An example of an analysis of the allocation of funds in 2002-2013 by humanitarian actors indicated that 69.3% of \$4 billion that were spent, went into the hands of one company (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2014). The current situation of aid delivery and reinforcement of independence of the nation of Afghanistan remains fraught with considerable risk in the light of the accompanying armed incidents and natural disasters in the areas of the Middle East. At the beginning of 2014, the coordinators of aid to Afghanistan expressed concern about the fate of international humanitarian support and stated that the country was undergoing an irretrievable crisis (UN OCHA, 2014).

## 5. Conclusions

The unstable political situation in the world, particularly in the areas recognized by the UN as constantly evolving, creates an increase of the need for humanitarian assistance by developed, stable countries – both in economic and political ways. Decreasing the scale of the global financial and material assistance in recent years to the growing number of natural or man-made disasters suggests that there should be solutions for a better and more effective allocation of funds provided for humanitarian purposes.

The paper presents the issue of delivering humanitarian aid towards growing global needs. It

places emphasis on particular countries with the lowest GDP rates in the world as its main recipients, where the assistance is to guarantee long-term changes in the economy and to help provide political stability. What is worth considering is not only the matter of raising funds for humanitarian aid, but the ways in which the efficiency of the use and allocation of the aid can be improved. This can be done by taking steps such as making a qualitative assessment from the perspective of one becoming in need as an independent country, which should be covered by both development and emergency aid. The review and analysis of related activities funded by humanitarian aid in recent years takes into account the constant increase in reported needs related to obtaining humanitarian aid. It also suggests a greater focus on activities related to the emancipation of the state aid recipients in the long term rather than individual financial grants (with the goal of mitigation when facing the need of emergency assistance in cases of political conflicts). At the same time the authors do not undermine the purpose and legitimacy of bringing an organized, international aid targeted at interventions within the areas covered by a natural disaster. They also point out the increasing role of developing mechanisms of cooperation and partnership between the support carried by government, private entities, and NGO sources. In order to better assess the effectiveness of actions, there are reasonable grounds for the creation of comprehensive methods for assessing the effectiveness of the provided humanitarian assistance (Both; emergency as counteracting the effects of disasters, but also in assessing the long-term aspects concerning the demographic, economic, and political). The coordinated and comprehensive levels of providing humanitarian aid come with numerous tools for objective assessment and monitoring activities. These can be undertaken and can help assess the country's subsidized commitment. On the basis of the available materials and the available reports on the work carried out, there is no uniform method of assessing the effectiveness of transferred funds (taking into account the overall evaluation). Ad-hoc mechanism and scheduled humanitarian aid donations are not based on any proven models in the assessment of the process of the communities returning to their economic and demographic standards from before the time of disasters. In addition,

even though there are huge financial amounts transferred with the purpose of providing aid, often the countries' individual members do not receive permits to develop their own stand-alone solutions for the affected areas and their involvement and input are often minimized or not allowed in the whole rebuilding process in their communities.

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