Humanitarian aid

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The Commission presents its annual report on the European Union's humanitarian aid policies and their implementation in 2016.

It is prepared pursuant to Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 concerning humanitarian aid, which requires the Commission to submit an annual report to the European Parliament and to the Council with a summary of the operations financed in the course of the preceding year.

In 2016, humanitarian crises increased in number, complexity and severity. There were over 50 armed conflicts, with little or no improvement in the most severe largescale crises such as those in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan or the Lake Chad region.

Natural disasters – linked to mega-trends such as climate change, urbanisation and demographic pressures – have in recent years created humanitarian needs for an estimated 26 million people every year. Overall, more than 95 million people in 40 countries were in need of humanitarian assistance in 2016, and almost 65 million people (half of them children) were forcibly displaced – more than ever before.

Against this dramatic background, the **EU's humanitarian aid budget in 2016 was the highest ever, at EUR 1.8 billion**.

Main findings in 2016:

- **The Syria crisis**: a significant proportion of the EU's humanitarian budget in 2016 went on supporting refugees in the countries most directly affected by the crisis in Syria, as well as people inside Syria in need of humanitarian assistance. The Commission thus allocated EUR 454 million to humanitarian operations in Syria and neighbouring countries, in line with the pledges made at the London conference of February 2016. Inside Syria, almost half of the Commission's humanitarian assistance went to immediate life-saving and emergency humanitarian operations.
- In **Jordan and Lebanon**, EU humanitarian funding has contributed to cash assistance for the most vulnerable refugees, lifesaving secondary healthcare, non-formal education, shelter as well as water, hygiene and sanitation. Efforts also focused on strong advocacy at international level for unhindered humanitarian access, protection of refugees and respect for international humanitarian law.
- The EU also put in place the Facility for Refugees in **Turkey**, to help respond to the needs of the three million refugees hosted by Turkey. The EUR 1.4 billion humanitarian leg of the Facility for 2016 and 2017 is focused on supporting mainly out-of-camp refugees (who make up the vast majority of refugees in Turkey, and are also the most vulnerable). To this end, the Commission – working through the World Food Programme and the Turkish Red Crescent – launched the EU's biggest-ever humanitarian project, the **Emergency Social Safety Net** (ESSN), aiming to provide **monthly cash transfers to one million of the most vulnerable refugees via debit cards**.
- **Africa**: as in previous years, the response to humanitarian crises in Africa was another significant part of the EU's humanitarian assistance, with particular focus on the complex emergencies across the Sahel and Horn of Africa as well as the Lake Chad region, where food security crises were overlaid with a number of protracted conflicts. Overall, the Commission allocated EUR 747 million to crises in sub-Saharan Africa. The largest allocations went to Sudan and South Sudan (EUR 192 million) and to the Horn of Africa (EUR 203 million), as well as West Africa (EUR 140 million).

- **Iraq, the wider Middle East and North Africa**: the EU played a key role in providing assistance to the victims of the conflict in Iraq (EUR 159 million) and was at the forefront of international advocacy efforts. Furthermore, the EU continued to provide significant support to humanitarian operations in Yemen (EUR 70 million), as well as in Palestine (EUR 25 million).
- **Ukraine**: the EU remained one of the largest humanitarian donors in the Ukraine crisis. In total, EUR 28.4 million was mobilized for the EU's humanitarian response to the crisis.
- **Emergency Toolbox**: the EU's Emergency Toolbox for humanitarian aid is designed to respond rapidly to sudden-onset emergencies. It is composed of three funding mechanisms: for epidemics; for small-scale response; and for support to the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The financial allocation amounted to a total of EUR 11.5 million, of which EUR 3.5 million for epidemics; EUR 5 million for small-scale response and EUR 3 million for the DREF.