Humanitarian aid: assessment and future of Community activities (Regulation (EC) No 1257 /96)

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PURPOSE : To present a report on Community humanitarian activities CONTENT : This report is submitted in accordance with the requirements of Article 20 of Regulation 1257/96/EC. Outside consultants were appointed to carry out two evaluations, and in broad terms, the Commission agrees with the findings. This Communication is not a substitute for the reports but rather a reading of their principal conclusions correlated with other sources. The report discusses the main factors behind ECHO's way of working which have been identified as the root of the problems experienced. The Commission comments on these findings and has produced an action plan to address the issues. The reports highlight problems at both managerial and strategic level. In response the Communication discusses a framework for both the policy direction and the management of Community humanitarian activities in the future, in terms of a performance contract between ECHO and its main stakeholders - With regard to stakeholders, the Commission will study the possible introduction of requirements to monitor the attitudes of direct beneficiaries or at least include this aspect in ex-post evaluations. It also intends to establish best practice benchmarks and overall performance targets and report to the Humanitarian Aid Committee on the targets. This latter will continue to be a key forum for policy co-ordination with Member States in the field of humanitarian aid. - ECHO provides assistance exclusively through partners. The Commission will discuss with partners additional ways to improve the joint work, and offer key multilateral agencies such as the UN and Red Cross programmed support for activities of mutual interest. It will reinforce its strategy of assisting the NGO community to build capacity through the recently introduced Grant Facility for Studies, Training and Networks. - The Commission lays out plans for a strategic management plan, with mission statement, clearly defined objectives for all Global Plans, together with measurable indicators. It will document best practice in all major humanitarian donors. It will carry out a review of the Framework Partnership Agreement, and specify the policy applying to funding decisions. Staff will undergo obligatory courses on financial management and project management if they are involved in management contracts. - A longer-term strategy review will take place on intervention in crisis situations. This will include conflict prevention/early warning, disaster preparedness, and operational emergency response. There is also a discussion as to whether the Regulation should be modified.