Basic information

2007/2139(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
European Union and humanitarian aid **Subject** 6.50 Emergency, food, humanitarian aid, aid to refugees, Emergency Aid Reserve	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
DEVE Development	CORNILLET Thierry (ALDE)	28/02/2007

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	AGNOLETTO Vittorio (GUE/NGL)	05/06/2007
BUDG Budgets	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	17/07/2007

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
General Affairs	2808	2007-06-18

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)	MICHEL Louis

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
13/06/2007	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2007)0317	Summary
18/06/2007	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
21/06/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
03/10/2007	Vote in committee		Summary
19/10/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0372/2007	

13/11/2007	Debate in Parliament		
14/11/2007	Decision by Parliament	T6-0508/2007	Summary
14/11/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
14/11/2007	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2007/2139(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	DEVE/6/50532

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Amendments tabled in committee		PE394.014	17/09/2007	
Committee opinion	AFET	PE390.724	04/10/2007	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0372/2007	19/10/2007	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0508/2007	14/11/2007	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2007)0317	13/06/2007	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2007)0781	13/06/2007	
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2007)0782	13/06/2007	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2008)412	18/12/2007	

European Union and humanitarian aid

2007/2139(INI) - 14/11/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Thierry **CORNILLET** (ALDE, FR) on a European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid which aims to rationalising the efforts and the distribution of aid between the European Commission and the Member States. Whilst welcoming the Communication entitled 'Towards a European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid' Parliament insisted that the Consensus

needed to be clearer and more specific in order to enhance European humanitarian policy and to ensure that the EU's potential as a humanitarian donor is fully exploited. It believed that the EU's commitment to securing cohesion between humanitarian aid, rehabilitation and development assistance must be reinforced by the Consensus, while acknowledging the distinct nature of the principles applied to each of them. The Consensus should clarify how the different assets of the EC and the Member States might best be combined and coordinated, in the light of their respective comparative advantages.

The EU vision of humanitarian aid

- ***Common objectives***: the Consensus should contain a detailed definition of the objectives of EU humanitarian aid, based on Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 concerning humanitarian aid and on the principles and good practice of humanitarian donorship (GHD) endorsed in Stockholm in June 2003. Amongst these objectives particular attention should be paid to the most vulnerable groups, such as women, children, the disabled, the elderly and ethnic minorities, including refugees fleeing conflict zones. Parliament stressed that effective humanitarian action, including emergency food aid, should be situation- and needs-based, result-oriented and driven by the principle that saving livelihoods saves lives. Humanitarian aid was not a crisis management tool and should be allocated in transparent fashion solely on the basis of real needs and independently of all political considerations. Its main objective was to aim for self-development and self-sufficiency and must not be geared towards making the countries or regions to which the aid is given too dependent on further aid or external assistance.
- ***Common values, principles and good practice***: the EU's humanitarian action should be guided by the humanitarian principles enshrined by the Principles and Good Practice for Humanitarian Donorship (GHD): the principle of humanity; impartiality; neutrality and independence. In addition to which, humanitarian action should be implemented in accordance with two priorities: i) immediacy, meaning a stronger emphasis on the elimination of all unreasonable delays in the supply of humanitarian aid and on questioning any delays when appropriate; ii) effectiveness, meaning that there is a clear measurability of output against which democratic accountability can be properly directed. Parliament wanted to see the EU play a leading role in monitoring the defence and enforcement of respect for international humanitarian law in order to preserve the humanitarian space. It considered that more attention should be paid to the safety and **protection of aid workers**, who regularly ventured into dangerous areas. It deplored the fact that they were far too frequently the victims of senseless violence, imprisonment or hostage-taking, and condemned any action taken against aid workers. Parliament recognised the concept of the **'responsibility to protect'**, a UN concept in response to the increase in violations of international humanitarian law and human rights and to the powerlessness or unwillingness of governments to protect their own citizens. It believed that the EU should develop initiatives to make the concept a reality, while giving precedence to preventive action, civilian means and support for third-country governments in fulfilling their obligations to protect their populations. Coercive measures might only be used as a last resort and strictly in accordance with international law. When considering the use of force, Parliament stated that the Security Council should always take into account the five criteria of legitimacy proposed by the report of 21 March 2005 by the UN Secretary-General and supported by Parliament: seriousness of threat, proper purpose, last resort, proportional means and a reasonable chance of success. The principles relating to the use of force and its authorisation should be laid down in a resolution of the Security Council.

Translating Principles into Practice: a common framework for EU Humanitarian Aid

- ***EU coordination, coherence and complementarity***: EU coordination mechanisms must reinforce the international coordination efforts of the United Nations, particularly those of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) rather than duplicate them).
- ***Providing adequate and effective aid***: the Consensus should include a strong commitment by the EU to adequate provision of humanitarian aid as well as to adequate predictability and flexibility in funding, through adequate annual up-front budgetary provisions. The EU should prioritise those humanitarian crises which are under-funded. In emergency situations, and especially in the case of emergencies caused by natural disasters, the first 48 hours are crucial in order to save lives. Parliament felt that the EU should strengthen, on the one hand, local prevention, preparedness and response capacity and, on the other hand, improving coordination, early warning mechanisms and adequate pre-positioning of material and stocks at international level. The EU should also invest more in understanding and monitoring the vulnerability factors of the population.
- ***Diversity and quality in partnership***: the report welcomed the Commission's proposals to underline the EU's support for a plurality of implementing partners, in particular NGOs, the UN and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, and supports its proposed criteria for partner selection. The EU should develop strategies to reach out to non-traditional donors whose funding is often earmarked and/or conditional, with the aim of promoting a model of needs-based aid, the principles of IHL and the concept of partnership. Parliament stressed, however, that these new sources of funding must not result in a reduction in the funds coming from the EU Member States and the Commission.
- ***Effectiveness, quality and accountability***: accountability to disaster-affected communities as primary beneficiaries lies at the heart of any evaluation of humanitarian aid effectiveness, and the Consensus should duly reflect this principle. Parliament considered that the EU should encourage voluntary accountability initiatives carried out by NGOs. The EU should promote the use of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines and principles on humanitarian activities, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter (SPHERE).
- ***Use of civil protection and military assets and capabilities outside the territory of the EU***: these must be deployed in a way which complements and supports the work of humanitarian organisations and limited to those cases or areas where they can provide real added value, and after a thorough prior analysis of the situation. The EU should clearly define and ensure respect for the mandates of the civil protection and military actors in humanitarian operations, particularly in conflict situations where impartiality and independence are crucial to guarantee safe access to disaster victims and the efficient delivery of humanitarian aid.
- ***Promoting disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness***: faced with the growing number of natural disasters (in particular caused by climate change) and their devastating impact, Parliament called for a time-bound strategy to mainstream DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction) into all EU development and humanitarian aid. The EU is called upon to allocate at least 10% of additional new funding to humanitarian assistance budgets for reducing disaster risks and to increase resources for DRR within development aid budgets. The report insisted on the need to change in the medium and long term the approach of international humanitarian aid to a marked reinforcement of DRR.
- ***Reinforcing the link to other aid instruments***: in collaboration with the international humanitarian actors, the EU should develop guidelines aimed at reinforcing the link between emergency relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) by basing this approach on the 'do no harm' principles and the 10 'build back better' principles. The report stressed the objective of filling the gap between humanitarian aid and development assistance by making best use of the full range of EU funding instruments. The EU must prioritise staff training programmes and

clarify the relations between activities supported by the Commission via the stability instrument for crisis prevention, management and resolution (such as disarmament, demobilisation, mine clearing, reintegration of displaced populations/refugees, etc.), and the concomitant activities carried out by DG ECHO.

- *Implementation of the Consensus on Humanitarian Aid*: the report called for the inclusion in the Consensus on Humanitarian Aid of a concrete road map for its implementation, including timelines for major projects and initiatives to be undertaken by all EU donors over the next five years. Lastly, the report called for a regular assessment of the implementation and progress of the Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, involving Parliament on an equal footing with the other institutions in this exercise. There must be an appropriate interinstitutional structure and a structured dialogue with Parliament.

European Union and humanitarian aid

2007/2139(INI) - 13/06/2007 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to present a Commission communication on a European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

BACKGROUND: the main objective of humanitarian aid is to save lives and provide immediate relief for people facing severe crisis whether as a result of natural disaster or of conflict. Over the past thirty years there has been increased emphasis on principles, quality and professionalism in the provision of international humanitarian aid. The humanitarian sector, however, faces a number of specific challenges. For example, crises happen with greater frequency and the impact is often severer (possibly a result of climate change). The nature of conflict has changed and there is increased competition for access to energy and natural resources. In addition, extreme poverty, poor governance and failed states aggravate humanitarian relief work. The main victims are civilians and there is an increasing tendency for humanitarian and international law to be ignored or blatantly violated. Humanitarian aid is one of the EU's main external policies and collectively, the EU is the largest humanitarian donor in the world.

CONTENT: in developing this Communication, the European Commission reviewed lessons learnt in its responses to crises and examined the results of an intensive consultation process with humanitarian relief partners, which took place in 2006.

Values, principles and coherence

As an external action instrument, humanitarian aid is part of the continuum of EU external actions. While it actively contributes to the protection and empowerment of disaster victims, humanitarian aid is not a crisis management tool: the EU has a firm commitment to the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. This principled approach is essential to the acceptance and ability of the EU to deliver aid to the victims of crisis in often complex political and security contexts. Regrettably, global experience in recent years demonstrates a persistent lack of respect for International Law, including International Humanitarian law. The European Commission, therefore, underlines the importance of an active approach to preserving the conditions necessary for humanitarian action. Based on the above, the paper states that the EU should:

- Uphold and promote the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence;
- Advocate strongly and consistently respect for international law;
- Ensure policy coherence, complementarities and effectiveness by using its tools and influence to address the root causes of humanitarian crisis and how to prevent them.

The EU and humanitarian aid

In 2006, the EU collectively, was the largest donor of official humanitarian aid, contributing over EUR 2 billion – that is 40% of officially reported overall international humanitarian assistance. In 2006 EU humanitarian aid reached 75 countries and an estimated 100 million people helping to save many lives around the world, notably in the so-called forgotten crises. The effectiveness and impact of humanitarian aid could be enhanced further, however, by strengthening the coordination reflex and the more active sharing of experience. The aim, therefore, of an enhanced EU coordination is:

- To act in a concerted way in order to strengthen the overall humanitarian response.
- To promote and support well-organised aid delivery strategies.
- To share understanding on needs and how best to respond.
- To identify gaps and ensure strong arrangements are in place before a crisis occurs.

Good donorship

The EU should confirm its commitment to the existing "Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles and Best Practice". It should also continue to support an ambitious international approach that brings donors together and partners to review principles, standards and best practice for humanitarian actions ("Good Humanitarian Partnership".

Translating principles into practice

The paper discusses the role of appropriate and equitable aid based on needs and standards. Since the perception of a shortfall of humanitarian aid funding persists despite a commitment to higher levels of Official Development Aid (ODA), the EU should analyse both the quantity and effectiveness of its funding programme. This should be based on agreed minimum standards of assistance and protection. In addition, humanitarian aid must be transparently allocated on the basis of needs. Currently there is no single framework or agreed approach to needs-assessment. The paper also considers the role of "aid in kind". The decision on where to purchase aid must remain context specific. Other innovative modalities for aid delivery, including non-commodity based approaches (such as cash and vouchers) should also be considered. The EU should:

- Commit adequate provision of humanitarian aid, in line with its commitment to increase ODA.
- Base this on agreed minimum standards of assistance and protection.
- Seek to establish a common framework for assessment of needs and sharing of expert analysis.

- Ensure an overall balanced response with a special focus on “forgotten crises” and neglected needs and to crises facing serious funding shortfalls where need is clearly demonstrated.

Partnership

EU donors work through multiple implementing partners such as local NGO’s, the UN and the Red Cross movement, all of whom have essential and complementary roles. The EU recognises and fully supports the central role of the United Nations. Good coordination between partners and with donors particularly in the field, building upon broad participation in and flexible use of the “Cluster Approach” is essential for an effective humanitarian response. To boost the effectiveness of EU partnerships in the humanitarian field, the Commission suggests the EU should:

- Underline its intrinsic support for a plurality of implementing Partners.
- Acknowledge that each has comparative advantages in responding to certain situations or circumstances.
- Support the central coordinating role of the UN in advancing reforms aimed at improving the overall international humanitarian response.

Effectiveness, quality, accountability and the capacity to respond rapidly

Speed and quality are both critical in delivering humanitarian aid. EC experience show that it is possible and necessary to combine rapid response and efficiency in humanitarian aid with strict accountability policy, through partner accreditation systems and financial control measures. EU capabilities should be strengthened by applying a flexible, systematic operational approach in order to ensure a timely EU donor co-ordination and to provide additional resources to available capabilities, assets and expertise. Practical measures are also needed to ensure complementarities with existing emergency rosters and deployment teams. The European Commission, making full use of its permanent field presence, should facilitate a rapid quality EU co-ordinated field level humanitarian response anchored in international relief efforts.

Use of Civil Protection and Military assets and capabilities

Given that it is vital to maintain neutrality when acting in a humanitarian capacity, the paper suggests that any blurring of lines between humanitarian and military tasks should be avoided. Military forces and assets, therefore, should be used as a “last resort” in humanitarian operations in line with international guidelines. As such the EU should:

- Commit itself to supporting international efforts to map and plug gaps in capacities – in particular transport, communications, logistics and surge-arrangements for responding rapidly to disaster.
- Examine ways to strengthen its own rapid response capacity by building on comparative strengths.
- Adhering to and promoting the Military and Civil Defence assets and Oslo guidelines.
- Reaffirming that Military and Civil defence/protection capabilities must be deployed in a way which complements and supports the work of humanitarian organisations, according to need, context for specialist tasks and support.

Disaster Risk Reduction – increasing preparedness

The promotion of disaster risk reduction strategies and preparedness activities are essential. It should be done at local, regional and national level in developing countries. More recently, there has been renewed international mobilisation to develop more effective strategies for disaster risk reduction and mitigation. The EU has to recognise this and shape its aid approach accordingly: through stand-alone support for community-based preparedness activity, through mainstreaming EU humanitarian and development aid and through advocacy. Accordingly, the EU should:

- Promote international efforts within the Hyogo Framework for Action.
- Mainstream disaster risk reduction in humanitarian and development operations.
- Ensure that adequate EU funding is made available for disaster preparedness and risk reduction activities.
- Establish an overall EU policy approach to support action in this area.

Linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD)

The recovery and reconstruction of countries in the aftermath of a disaster is a major challenge, which requires structural and development action beyond immediate emergency aid. Development and humanitarian actors are increasingly present in parallel for longer periods, with the phasing out of humanitarian aid varying according to sector or region. Increasing mutual awareness of the differing modalities, instruments and approaches is critical to aid effectiveness and ensuring a smooth transition. On the basis of a collective EU experiences in dealing with countries in transitional contexts, the Commission paper argues that a case exists for developing a more systemic policy in addressing LRRD situations. In order to reinforce the link to other aid instruments, the EU should:

- Work together on a framework for advancing practical approaches to LRRD, based on experiences gained and lessons learned.
- Identify a number of LRRD pilot countries for trial implementation of case-specific joint EU approaches.
- Improve cooperation between humanitarian and development agencies and other assistance actors, particularly at field level and in complex situations where States may be fragile.

Implementation of Community humanitarian aid

EC humanitarian aid is governed by Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96, which provides a clear mandate to offer relief and protection to people facing humanitarian crises. At a Community level a number of policy areas link closely to humanitarian aid. These include: crisis management, food security, development policy, the promotion of human rights and human security and public health. The EU is committed to ensuring that policy coherence and complementarities are translated consistently into coordinated operational implementation for the delivery of aid.

A European consensus on humanitarian aid

Based on the above analysis, the Commission invites the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to:

- Adopt a joint declaration on the “European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid”, based on the principles and approaches to active donorship outlined in this Communication.
- Reaffirm the EU/UN Commitment to working together in a coordinated, coherent and complementary way to ensure that this consensus is translated effectively into practice.

On the basis of a European Consensus, the European Commission stands ready to propose a roadmap of specific implementing measures to be taken forward by the EU.

European Union and humanitarian aid

2007/2139(INI) - 18/06/2007

The Council adopted conclusions on the progress towards an EU consensus on humanitarian aid which can be summarised as follows:

- the Council highlights the importance of discussing Humanitarian Aid within the competent bodies of the Council and takes positive note of the preparatory work done by the Presidency and the European Commission towards reaching an EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid;
- the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters as well as the changing nature of conflicts and very significant changes in the international humanitarian environment necessitate a consolidated reaction of the European Union, collectively the largest provider of international humanitarian aid;
- taking into account the central coordinating role of the United Nations and the good progress made in reforms of the international humanitarian system, the initiative for an EU consensus on humanitarian aid is also essential in order to underline the need to ensure respect of International Humanitarian Law and to promote Good Humanitarian Donorship;
- the consultation organised by the European Commission in close cooperation with the Presidency in December 2006 confirms that Member States, the European Commission, the United Nations family, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and non governmental organisations share a large number of major concerns;
- the fundamental principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence are strongly supported by all humanitarian stakeholders.

Recognising the importance of this initiative, the Council encourages all parties to pursue the work with a view to reach an agreement on an EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid as soon as possible.