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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

on the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2016/369 on the provision of emergency support within the Union

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I. Introduction

In 2015 and 2016, close to 1.1 million persons, who may be in need of international protection, and irregular migrants (hereafter referred to as 'refugees and migrants') made their way to the European Union (EU) along the Eastern Mediterranean route. At the peak of the refugee crisis in summer 2015, 10 000 migrants and refugees were arriving in Greece every day. This sudden influx created a humanitarian emergency within the EU.

While the EU has already established financial instruments to assist Member States in responding to different types of internal challenges and express solidarity with disaster-stricken regions, the exceptional scale of the refugee crisis demonstrated that none of them was fully suitable to address the wide-ranging humanitarian needs in the EU. One aspect underlined in the Commission's Communication on the State of Play of Implementation the Priority Actions under the European Agenda on Migration¹ is the need for the EU to establish the capacity to provide humanitarian assistance within the EU in order to support Member States facing large numbers of refugees and migrants. A flexible financial tool with a quick response capacity based on European solidarity and the ability to mobilise existing expertise was needed.

In this context, on 19 February 2016 the European Council called the Commission to 'put in place the capacity for the EU to provide humanitarian assistance internally, in cooperation with organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to support countries facing large numbers of refugees and migrants, building on the experience of the EU Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department'.²

On 2 March 2016, the Commission adopted its Proposal for Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 on the provision of emergency support within the Union.³ The Regulation was adopted by the Council on 15 March 2016.⁴

As called for by the European Council, the Regulation builds upon the solid experience that the Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) has acquired over many years in its fields of competence, allowing it to use in the Union its know-how acquired from the actions it performs in third countries. Moreover, the Regulation aims not only to address the exceptional humanitarian challenges that have emerged from the ongoing migratory pressures at the Union's external borders, but also to cater for any type of natural or man-made disasters with a wide-ranging humanitarian impact within the EU. Therefore, the Regulation also provides that all EU-financed emergency support shall be granted and implemented in compliance with the internationally agreed fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Furthermore, in order to maximise efficiency, the Regulation foresees that the implementation of emergency response operations shall be performed by partner organisations⁵ with which the Commission has signed Framework Partnership Agreements or a Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement. At the same time, given that emergency support is provided on the territory of an EU Member State, specific requirements apply. In particular,

¹ COM(2016) 85 final, Brussels, 10.02.2016

² European Council Conclusions EUCO 1/16, Brussels, 18-19 February 2016

³ COM(2016) 115 final, Brussels, 2.03.2016

⁴ OJ L 70, 16.3.2016, p. 1

⁵ These include international organisations, non-profit non-governmental organisations, as well as specialised services of Member States

the emergency assistance must be provided 'in support of, and complementary to, the actions of the affected Member State'⁶, with which close cooperation and consultation must be ensured.

The legal base stipulates that the emergency support is activated for a period of three years to 16 March 2019 for the management of the humanitarian impact of the refugee and migration crisis.

Shortly after the adoption of the Council Regulation, the situation on the Eastern Mediterranean route changed dramatically. Since the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016⁷, irregular crossings from Turkey to Greece have decreased sharply with an average arrival of 79 persons per day until 6 March 2017⁸. However, the temporary introduction of border controls at internal borders of some Member States and external borders of some other countries along the Eastern Mediterranean route left over 62 000 persons of concern in Greece, including over 14 000 on the islands⁹. This led to significant humanitarian needs including food assistance, shelter, healthcare, water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH), non-food items (NFIs) and protection.

It should be noted that in 2016, Greece was the only Member State that met the two 'eligibility' conditions set out in the Regulation:

- the exceptional scale and impact of the disaster give rise to severe wide-ranging humanitarian consequences in one or more Member States; and
- no other instrument available to Member States and to the Union is sufficient.

As a result, all the actions funded under this Regulation to date were exclusively aimed at tackling the humanitarian situation in Greece.

In accordance with Article 8(1) of the Regulation, this report aims to provide an overview of the key impact of the Instrument for emergency support within the Union (ESI) since its activation, an analysis of the main challenges encountered, and an outline of planned future activities.

II. Benefits accruing from the Emergency Support Regulation

Based on the direction given by the Greek authorities, who remain ultimately responsible for the management of the refugee and migration crisis in Greece, the Regulation has allowed humanitarian actors to swiftly contribute to the management of the humanitarian consequences of this crisis. It has led to tangible results across all sectors for more than 45 000 beneficiaries spread across more than 30 sites on the islands and in the mainland in Greece.

The key strengths of this new tool and the main operational outputs are outlined below.

⁶ See Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369

⁷ See <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/07-eu-turkey-meeting-statement/>

⁸ Based on data provided by Greek authorities to the SRSS

⁹ Data from 28/02/2017, according to Greek authorities : <http://mindigital.gr/index.php/προσφυγικό-ζήτημα-refugee-crisis/1009-summary-statement-of-refugee-flows-03-03-2017>

1) Added value of the Instrument for emergency support within the Union

The ESI was designed to respond to severe humanitarian consequences resulting from acute crises. In 2016-2017, it enabled the Union to provide appropriate and timely support for refugees and migrants present in Greece. The inherent design features include:

a. Speed in the delivery of assistance

The ESI relies on procedures adapted and staff trained to respond to emergency situations all over the world. Following a needs assessment to determine funding priorities, the Commission announced a first allocation of EUR 83 million¹⁰ to eight partner organisations on 19 April 2016, just five weeks after the adoption of the Regulation. With immediate effect as of the signature of contracts and only few days after the budgetary authority had provided initial funding, shelter, wash, health services, protection and education were already being provided on the ground.

b. Experienced humanitarian partners addressing the needs of the affected population

Assistance is implemented by experienced humanitarian partners - United Nations agencies, international organisations and non-governmental organisations, whose skills, professional expertise and sound management in rapidly responding to humanitarian needs, have led to the signature of framework agreements with the Commission. So far fourteen partners, all already active in Greece from an early stage of the refugee crisis, have been allocated EU funding by the Commission. These partners also ensure that assistance is provided in respect of international humanitarian principles.

c. A clear focus on humanitarian assistance

While other existing EU instruments, such as the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Internal Security Fund (ISF), European Fund for the Most Deprived (FEAD) or when it comes to natural disasters, the EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF), can provide significant financial resources for assistance within Europe, they rely heavily on the administrative and operational capacities of national governments which may already be under considerable financial and economic pressure. Furthermore, these instruments are not designed to cater for the purely humanitarian needs of large groups of refugees and migrants.

Similarly, the existing European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) provides much needed support through voluntary contribution of assets from Member States, but it is not suitably equipped to address the wide-ranging structural humanitarian needs resulting from the refugee crisis.

Contrary to these instruments, the ESI can rapidly finance well-targeted humanitarian assistance in emergency situations.

d. A complement to existing capacities

In order to benefit from emergency support, affected Member States do not need to set up new structures or institutional mechanisms. The ESI rather complements the humanitarian response with the provision of additional human and financial resources. Operations in Greece have demonstrated that efficient communication channels and an effective coordination

¹⁰ See IP/16/1447, Brussels, 19.04.2016

mechanism backed up with the corresponding personnel in the responsible national authorities, are crucial to the success of the operation.

e. The availability of proven expertise and monitoring capacity

The Commission has a network of sectoral and project field experts throughout the world. Three of these experts were redeployed to monitor and coordinate the funded actions on the ground. The presence of these experts is crucial to support humanitarian partners in their work and to liaise with the Greek authorities. This prompt action was key to the rapid roll-out of EU-funded projects. In addition, some of the Commission’s global thematic experts (e.g. on health services, protection and gender issues) were also sent to Greece in order to 'kick-start' operations in their areas of expertise.

2) Outputs and results

In 2016, the main operational priorities were the provision of shelter and winterisation, of assistance through cash transfers, of protection of unaccompanied minors (UAMs), of education in emergencies and the delivery of healthcare services¹¹.

Overall, EUR 191.9 million was contracted in 2016, as follows:

Partner ¹²	Contract Amount
OXFAM-NL	6 000 000
STC-UK	7 000 000
DRC-DK	14 870 000
IRC-UK	16 500 000
UNHCR-CH	65 000 000
MDM-BE	7 000 000
ASB-DE	6 800 000
IFRC-CH	17 000 000
NRC-NO	11 000 000
IOM-CH	17 800 000
CARE-DE	3 500 000
MCE-UK	6 250 000
UNICEF-US	8 500 000
TDH-CH	4 700 000
TOTAL	191 920 000

Table: EU funding contracted per partner in 2016

¹¹ Emergency Support Financing Decision Operational Priorities, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/esop.pdf>

¹² OXFAM, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB), Save the Children (STC), Médecins du Monde (MDM), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Care International (CARE), Mercy Corps (MCE) and Terre des Hommes (TDH).

a. Provision of shelter

The Commission has allocated EUR 80 million to UNHCR, IOM, IRC, IFRC, ASB, DRC, NRC and OXFAM to provide **shelter** for over 35 000 persons of concern in Greece. In coordination with the Greek authorities, ESI-funded works have taken place in 30 temporary and permanent sites out of 49 sites identified by the Greek government in the mainland. As of 14 February 2017, those sites were hosting 11 568 residents out of a total capacity of 18 510. Activities include site development works, the provision of tents (initial stages), the installation of containers, and the winterisation and renovation of existing buildings. The response also included funding for the rehabilitation, upgrade and construction of water and sanitation services (WASH) heating and electricity systems and facilities.

b. Winterisation activities

Partner organisations have engaged in actions that contribute to winterisation and include shelter and WASH interventions and maintenance that have upgraded living conditions significantly and provide a safe shelter during the winter months. All of the 30 ESI-funded sites are winterised. Activities undertaken include improved insulation, installation of heating devices and safety upgrades to mitigate the increased risk of fire.

The UNHCR alone has been assigned the role of infrastructure development and winterisation for 14 sites in the mainland¹³ by the Greek government. The winterisation operations of UNHCR-assigned sites vary from one location to another. In some cases, the UNHCR installed prefabricated houses¹⁴, whereas in other sites the UNHCR rehabilitated existing buildings and upgraded facilities¹⁵.

Other examples include:

- IFRC has provided emergency shelter in the temporary sites of Softex and Cherso, including tents, flooring pallets, isolation, as well as heaters and kerosene.
- ASB has connected buildings to the electricity network needed for connection of lighting and heating to the spaces in Diavata and Anagnostopoulou.
- IOM is implementing reconstruction or renovation works in the following 6 sites: Agios Andreas I, Agios Andreas II, Thiva, Serres, Drama, Kavala.

As a direct winterisation measure, a number of people staying at inadequate or incomplete sites have also been transferred to hotels or apartments. As of 28 February 2017, the UNHCR alone has transferred over of 3 100 persons. The population living in these sites was exposed to adverse weather conditions and accommodated in unsuitable shelters, which exacerbated health risks. Winterisation operations implemented to date have been estimated at approximately EUR 52 million.

c. Cash assistance

The total cash assistance provided to persons of concern in Greece in 2016 was EUR 28.7 million. This amount covers a set of basic needs, replacing in-kind distribution of relief items

¹³ These sites are Alexandria, Nea Kavala, Katsikas, Filippiada, Lagadikia, Redestos, Petra Olympou, Schisto, Andravida, Eleonas, Elefsina, Kipselohori, Thermophiles and Rafina.

¹⁴ 150 in Alexandria, 180 in Lagkadikia, 100 in Filippiada, 100 in Katsikas and 180 in Schisto, 180 in Nea Kavala.

¹⁵ In Andravida, Elefsina, Thermopiles, Eleonas, Rafina.

except food aid. When sufficient kitchen facilities are ready at sites, multi-purpose grants can cover the whole of refugee households' basic needs in Greece, including food aid. By February 2017, over 35 000 people living in 55 sites in the mainland and on the islands as well as in two urban locations have received cash assistance, which is provided through pre-paid cards. Cash assistance gives dignity to refugees and migrants by enhancing their freedom of choice; having a direct economic benefit for the local host communities (where food but also non-food items are purchased) and provide a much more cost-effective solution.

d. Protection activities

Under the ESI, the Commission awarded EUR 33 million to ASB, OXFAM, IRC, UNHCR, DRC, NRC, IFRC, STC, MCE, CARE, TDH and UNICEF for protection activities in Greece. From this total, EUR 23 million has been allocated for child protection activities for over 21 000 refugee and migrant minors residing in Greece¹⁶. The activities include provision of psycho-social support, child-friendly spaces, case management systems, family tracing and 417 emergency spaces for UAMs in dedicated facilities, in alignment with Greek standards of care. Two-thirds of children residing in camps benefit from child-friendly spaces, which are dedicated safe spaces for children to gather, play and regain a sense of normality, while in parallel, allowing for the identification of at-risk children requiring specialised support by a team of professional social workers and facilitating closer contact with parents. Other activities included the protection of women, elderly and disabled persons and ensured that refugees and migrants are well informed on their status and rights.

e. Education

EUR 2.8 million has been allocated to IOM for the transport of children to schools and the distribution of school kits to some of the refugee children of school-going age (of 4-17 years) residing in Greece, in line with the strategy of the Greek Ministry of Education to give access to education for all. In parallel, EUR 7.7 million was provided to support the delivery of complementary non-formal education¹⁷ activities to over 9 000 children residing in camps and urban centres, which include basic maths and literacy lessons, and classes in Greek, English and refugee children's mother tongue language.

f. Delivery of health services

Almost EUR 15 million of emergency support provided primary health care, specialised healthcare, psycho-social support and referral to hospital to more than 38 100 persons in 26 camps in the mainland and on the islands during 2016. An average of over 10 000 medical consultations has been provided every month, in addition to vaccinations and psycho-social support. For example, as regards primary healthcare, IFRC has provided 67 994 new consultations¹⁸; ASB – 15 000 consultations; and MDM – 25 966 consultations. As regards vaccinations, 2 763 children have been vaccinated by IFRC and 1 527 by MDM, in addition to vaccinations done by the Ministry of Health. All the patients who needed referral to hospital have been transferred.

g. Provision of food, non-food items and other activities

¹⁶ Data as of 31 January 2017. [https://www.unicef.org/ceecis/General_data_January_2017_\(1\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/ceecis/General_data_January_2017_(1).pdf)

¹⁷ Non-formal education activities are taking place outside formal national systems (the latter cannot be funded by ESI). Amongst other, they allow those who have missed several years of schooling to catch up and subsequently to be integrated into the formal education system.

¹⁸ People visiting either for the first time or for a different medical reason.

EUR 18.6 million of emergency support was allocated on provision of food and non-food items. In 2016 and the first two months of 2017, UNHCR alone has provided over 820 000 core relief items (blankets, clothing, rain ponchos, hats, gloves, etc). Further EUR 6.2 million has been allocated to partner organisations and covers site management support (one partner per site), support to operations, as well as coordination actions.

III. Coordination and communication

Good cooperation at all levels is the most important factor in the delivery of meaningful results. In particular, partner organisations highlighted that successful results were achieved where good cooperation with the Greek authorities as well as local partners was ensured. On the contrary, delays in the humanitarian response took place where such cooperation was not optimal (e.g. in shelter provision, winterisation and electrification of sites, food provision, security issues).

Communication at all levels is another important factor. Improving communication with local communities and with beneficiaries of assistance is crucial for the efficiency and effectiveness of the response. External communication is necessary to ensure adequate visibility and understanding of the EU response. In 2017, the Commission will continue to work with humanitarian partners in addressing this.

1) Coordination of the response to the refugee and migration crisis at EU level

Actions under the ESI need to be implemented in full synergy and complementarity with other financial instruments, in particular with those offering different forms of emergency assistance. In 2015 and 2016, the EU was by far the largest donor of humanitarian aid addressing the refugee crisis in Greece, accounting for 77% of the total funding.¹⁹ In order to maximise impacts and to avoid duplication or gaps, a high level of coordination is essential within the Commission and with other EU institutions, agencies and bodies, and with relevant authorities of affected Members States.

2) Coordination and cooperation with the affected Member State

The Commission is required to maintain close cooperation and consultation with the affected Member State, particularly as regards the selection of partners. In addition, given that emergency assistance is provided in support of and in complementarity with the actions of the affected Member State, the Commission and its partners have to work in line with the plan defined by the Greek authorities. While the EU has significant experience from funding humanitarian assistance in third countries, this instrument provided a first opportunity to undertake humanitarian actions in an EU Member State. It needs also to be borne in mind that the Greek authorities had not experienced a humanitarian crisis of this amplitude before.

To facilitate a more structured coordination with the Ministry of Migration Policy (MoMP), as of May 2016, the Commission has been holding regular video-conference meetings with the participation of Ministry representatives and of all partner organisations. This practice ensures a full flow of information on the decisions of the national authorities and partner organisations on the ground and enables discussion of the different priorities, as well as identification of immediate solutions to contingent problems.

¹⁹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ('UN OCHA'), September 2016

Clear forward planning by the authorities of the affected Member State is an important factor for the establishment of good coordination, which is in turn a precondition for effective, efficient and coherent humanitarian action.

In terms of financial planning, much progress has been made. In February 2017, the Greek government and relevant Commission services agreed on a financial planning covering reception facilities and needs of refugees and migrants with funding from the national budget, AMIF and ESI.

Progress has been made, and coordination with national authorities who are the ones ultimately responsible for the response, remains crucial for the effective and timely delivery of aid. This will remain a priority throughout 2017, with a particular focus on better planning and operational decision-making.

3) Coordination between partner organisations

In 2016, 14 partner organisations signed contracts with the Commission for implementation of actions funded under the Regulation in Greece. These organisations in turn work with several implementing partners. Given that beneficiaries are spread across the country, in rental accommodation and formal and informal sites in the mainland and on the islands, efficient coordination is essential.

A series of thematic working groups were set up at both local and national levels and information was centralised using IT tools.²⁰ The Commission and the Greek authorities take part in these working groups, which facilitate information exchange and coordination, and actively support the authorities in coordinating the humanitarian response.

Maintaining effective coordination between all humanitarian actors, while maintaining the highest standards of response, will be a key priority for 2017.

4) Communication concerning emergency support actions in Greece

For EU citizens, the ESI is a clear demonstration of solidarity, proving that the EU can address pressing humanitarian challenges in a collective effort. In this context, the Commission is actively promoting effective communication and visibility by humanitarian partners, and has also increased its own communication activities, notably on its website and on social media.

In addition, communication needs to also target both local communities and the migrant population in Greece in order to increase their involvement and better tackle opposition from these groups to ongoing operations.

While much progress has been achieved in 2016, more efforts and results are expected from partner organisations in 2017 on outreach activities and communication with migrant and local populations.

IV. The way forward

While a lot has been achieved in terms of addressing the most urgent humanitarian needs identified in Greece, a number of gaps still need to be addressed as outlined in greater detail in the 2017 Emergency Support Operational Priorities document (ESOP)²¹. Emergency

²⁰ See <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>

²¹ See <http://ec.europa.eu/echo>

support will be implemented fully in line with the 2017 financial planning agreed between the Greek government and relevant Commission services, so as to ensure complementarity of all instruments and activities.

As regards **shelter**, refugees and migrants are hosted in different sites with varying quality standards, including both temporary and longer-term housing solutions. The priority for 2017 is to shift towards urban rental schemes with access to social services, as this provides a more dignified accommodation in cases of protracted stay.

Hot food rations have been provided daily in refugee camps in 2016 and the first months of 2017. In order to allow persons of concern to purchase and prepare their own **food**, the aim is to progressively extend the **multi-purpose cash system**, building on the cash assistance programmes for non-food items developed in 2016. This system will complement the infrastructure investments in the electricity network and communal kitchen facilities that were already made or are underway in sites.

In the field of **healthcare**, first aid capacity and emergency healthcare with appropriate referrals to national health system need to be ensured. Access to a basic package of health services should be ensured and facilitated with transportation and translation. Vaccination campaigns need to be expanded.

Water and sanitation facilities remain insufficient in many locations. Therefore, the provision of such facilities needs to continue.

Concerning **protection**, activities related to child protection in emergencies will be prioritised, such as family tracing and reunification, psycho-social needs of children affected by conflict and displacement. Interpretation services to facilitate information sharing with refugees and migrants in their own language(s) will also be financed. Beyond minors, protection needs include case management of vulnerable persons, such as people with disabilities, single mothers, etc.

As regards **education**, needs remain in the area of non-formal education to complement the Greek government's efforts to provide public education to all refugee and migrant children. Refugee and migrant youths (age 15-24) also need access to quality and inclusive learning opportunities, as well as vocational training and language courses for adults to build life skills and support a successful integration into the European society.

The provision of emergency support in Greece began immediately after the adoption of the Regulation. A year later, there are still needs on the ground and it is therefore not advisable to discontinue the provision of assistance at this stage. Nonetheless, different options for a gradual phase-out and handover of the response to the Greek authorities should be considered. In particular, towards the end of 2017, a discussion with partners should take place in order to plan an exit strategy for 2018, given that the Regulation was only activated for a three-year period.

During its first year of implementation, the benefits of actions under the Regulation are evident. The inherent flexibility in the Regulation, which for instance allowed the Commission to engage with well-established and experienced partners, facilitated addressing the humanitarian needs in Greece. The transfer of knowledge of operations in third countries to an EU Member State has also contributed to the rapid response.