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Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection



Humanitarian aid and civil protection are part of the European Union's (EU) external actions (enshrined in Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU)). More specifically, under Article 21(2)(g) TEU, the EU aims to assist populations, countries and regions confronting natural or man-made disasters.

Humanitarian action, which is based on the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, is intended to provide ad hoc assistance, relief and protection for people in non-EU countries who are victims of natural or man-made disasters.

Article 214 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) is the basis for the EU's humanitarian aid operations and the creation of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps.

The rules for the provision of humanitarian aid, including its financing instruments, are set out in Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 (the Humanitarian Aid Regulation). The overall policy framework for humanitarian assistance is outlined in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2007). In March 2021, the European Commission adopted a communication on the EU's humanitarian action citing 'new challenges, same principles'. This proposes a series of actions to strengthen the EU's global humanitarian work, in order to meet the substantial rise in humanitarian needs that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The competence on civil protection is based on Article 196 (TFEU) and is governed in Decision No 1313/2013/EU forming the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). That decision was recently amended twice, in order to strengthen the EU's collective capacity to prevent, prepare for and respond to disasters and — most recently — to respond more rapidly and effectively to future crises with cross-border implications, such as the COVID-19 crisis. While EU civil protection cooperation falls under EU internal policies and actions, the UCPM is a very important external component that may also be activated in case of disasters affecting non-EU countries.

The Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) is in charge of humanitarian aid and civil protection. This Directorate-General works both as the EU humanitarian aid donor and the coordinator and facilitator of civil protection operations at the EU level through the UCPM.

- **Humanitarian Aid**
- **Civil Protection**
- **DG European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)**
- **Archived summaries**

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