

Janez Lenarčič

Crisis Management

Hearing due to be held on Wednesday 2 October at 18.30 hours.

European Parliament committee responsible: Development (DEVE).

Janez Lenarčič, born in 1967, has been Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the EU since 2016. He holds a degree in international law from Ljubljana University and entered the diplomatic service



in 1992, joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs department for multilateral relations. For a number of years from 1994, he worked in the Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the United Nations. In 2000, Lenarčič came back to Slovenia to become adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, diplomatic adviser to the Prime Minister a year later, and State Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister between 2002 and 2003. He was then named Ambassador of Slovenia to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna, and held the chair of the OSCE's Permanent Council chair during Slovenia's year in the presidency.

In 2006, Lenarčič returned to Ljubljana as State Secretary for European Affairs. In this position, he represented the Prime Minister in discussions on the reform of the EU Treaties and headed up the working group for the preparation of Slovenia's EU Council Presidency in the first part of 2008. Later in 2008 he moved again to Vienna, to take up the role of Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) until 2014. Returning once more

to Ljubljana, Lenarčič then became State Secretary for European and Foreign Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister.

This is one of a set of Briefings designed to give Members of the European Parliament an overview of major issues of interest in the context of the hearings of the Commissioners-designate. The full set of Briefings can be found at: https://epthinktank.eu/commissioner_hearings_2019

Background

As Ursula von der Leyen's mission letter to Janez Lenarčič emphasises, the EU has an increasing responsibility to protect its citizens and environment from crises of various kinds, as well as to show solidarity and to support people in need around the world (135 million in 2018). This will be the key task of the Commissioner for Crisis Management, who will be the 'European Emergency Response Coordinator' for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid, and is to work alongside the High Representative/Vice President as part of the thematic Commissioner's Group on a 'Stronger Europe in the World'.

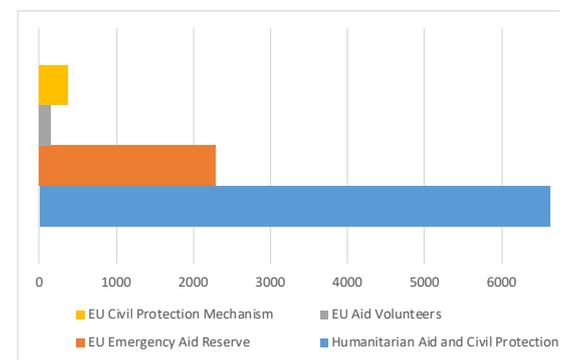
European Civil Protection assistance consists of governmental aid delivered mainly in the immediate aftermath of a natural or man-made disaster hitting a Member State or a non-EU country. While primary responsibility in this field remains with the Member States; the [Union Civil Protection Mechanism](#) strengthens cooperation between the country concerned and the EU. All the Member States — plus Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey — contribute to the mechanism. Its operational hub is the [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) (ERCC), functioning within the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and on alert to monitor emergencies around the globe. The [European Civil Protection Pool](#) brings together resources for the mechanism from 23 participating states. The financial envelope for the implementation of the mechanism for the 2014-

2020 period was €368.4 million. A further €205.6 million was added in March 2019. **Humanitarian aid** is an increasingly important tool when it comes to addressing the [migration crisis](#) the EU has been facing at its borders since 2015. EU humanitarian assistance is based on the 2007 [European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid](#), founded on the international [humanitarian principles](#) of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, as established by the 1949 fourth Geneva [Convention](#) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The EU institutions and the 28 Member States together represent the largest humanitarian aid donor in the world (United Nations [data for 2019](#)). At EU level, humanitarian assistance is provided and coordinated by ECHO, with a staff of 423 people working at its headquarters, and a field network of over [450 people](#) in 45 offices spread over almost 40 non-EU countries ([2017](#) data). ECHO does not intervene directly on the ground: it funds projects run by around [200 partners](#) with which ECHO has signed a [framework partnership agreement](#). The 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework (MFF) earmarked €6.62 billion for humanitarian aid. This budget does not include €147 million for the [EU Aid Volunteers](#) initiative. The EU has adopted a record budget of [€1.6 billion](#) for 2019. Most of the [funding](#) goes to Africa (43 % in 2018) and the Middle East (32 %). In 2018, 48 % of the aid was channelled via United Nations (UN) agencies, and NGOs implemented 42 % of the budget. The above-mentioned funding is intended to cover needs arising from protracted crises. In addition to the initial budget, the EU Emergency Aid Reserve can be called upon to respond to unforeseen events and major emergencies. The maximum budget for this [special instrument](#) amounts to €280 million per year (€300 million as of 2018).

Recent developments

In July 2014, ECHO joined the [EU Trust Funds](#) (EUTF, active in Syria, Colombia, and several parts of Africa): a flexible, proactive and adaptable tool aimed at pooling the funds of several donors and offering a fast decision-making process. The [Emergency Toolbox](#) fund, launched in 2015, is designed to respond as rapidly as possible to emergencies, provide first-line funding in the immediate aftermath of a crisis and respond to emergencies that were not anticipated. The [EU Facility for](#)

Civil protection and humanitarian aid EU budget earmarked for 2014-2020, € million



Source: ECHO

[Refugees in Turkey](#) was set up in 2015, with a total budget of €6 billion: this is the [Union's response](#) to the massive Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey. In March 2015, the EU developed [10 common principles for multi-purpose cash-based assistance](#), which were complemented by a [guidance note on the delivery of cash transfers](#). The [European Medical Corps](#), launched in February 2016, provides a framework for mobilising health experts for response and preparedness operations in or outside the EU. In May 2016 the Commission and several Member States joined the UN-led [Grand Bargain](#) initiative, which commits donors and aid providers to channelling 25 % of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020, along with increased multi-year funding.

In May 2016, ECHO issued a policy document entitled '[Humanitarian Protection: Improving protection outcomes to reduce risks for people in humanitarian crises](#)'. From June 2017 to December 2018, the EU led the [Call to action on protection from gender-based violence in emergencies](#). In November 2017 the Commission launched the first of six European Innovation Council (EIC) Horizon Prizes, on [Affordable High-Tech for Humanitarian Aid](#). The [communication](#) 'A strategic approach to resilience in the EU's external action', released in June 2017, was followed by [Council conclusions](#) on the subject on November 2017. In January 2019, ECHO published guidelines on [The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations](#).

The forest fires in 2017 and 2018 highlighted the crisis management mechanism's limits and its inability to meet all requests for assistance. In March 2019, [Decision \(EU\) 2019/420](#) upgraded the mechanism and introduced [rescEU](#): a dedicated reserve of response capacities at EU level, to be used as a last resort in the event that existing capacities at national level and those pre-committed for the mechanism – now rebranded the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP) – were not sufficient.

Priorities and challenges

Public opinion

In 2017, [Special Eurobarometer](#) results showed a continuing and strong level of support for EU action on civil protection and humanitarian aid. A large majority of EU citizens are in favour of an EU civil protection policy (87 %), think that it is important that the EU helps to coordinate the response to disasters in any of the Member States (90 %), and agree that if a disaster were to occur in their country they would expect other EU countries to help (89 %). Meanwhile 49 % do not think enough is being done at regional level or within their own countries to prevent or prepare for disasters and many are uncertain about whether enough is being done at the EU level. Citizens also strongly agree (86 %) that the EU should help any country worldwide hit by disasters in a coordinated manner, and that any EU action should be coordinated (81 %).

The Eurobarometer survey highlighted a need to make the approach to crisis management more consistent and better integrated: The EU should be better equipped to prevent and prepare for emergencies; the ERCC should be ready to cope with new and emerging threats; all Member States should have national and local disaster risk strategies. It will thus be important for the EU to enhance its disaster preparedness policy, along the lines of the June 2016 five-year [Sendai action plan](#).

On humanitarian aid, the EU institutions and Member States have been challenged in their response to refugees seeking asylum, and to the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean. There is a risk of humanitarian aid becoming [politicised](#), as it represents a tool to address the ongoing migration crisis. With the UK's expected withdrawal from the EU, the Union risks losing its primacy in the realm of humanitarian aid. Despite the scale of resources the EU devotes to humanitarian aid, worldwide demand for humanitarian aid continues to outstrip supply. A growing number of people are being displaced by conflicts, natural disasters provoke a high human cost, climate change affects on average 350 million people a year, and food insecurity is on the rise. [Humanitarian crises are affecting more people, for longer](#), with major protracted crises. Despite a significant increase in funding, the gap in coverage for UN-led humanitarian response plans hovers at about [40 %](#), and the level of humanitarian need is likely to remain extremely high. Negotiations on the next MFF will therefore be crucial for providing the maximum response to humanitarian needs and maintaining the position of the EU, together with the Member States, as lead donor.

Major long-lasting crises also make it necessary to coordinate humanitarian aid and development policy, particularly in the area of [building resilience](#) in order to prevent humanitarian crises. Several implementing partners have noted that the EU's [bureaucracy](#) remains rather heavy, though ECHO procedures are designed to be quick and flexible. The [OECD recommends](#) improving the disbursement speed and flexibility of development instruments that can deliver long-term solutions to drivers of crises. The EU is expected to play a leading role in global dialogue on humanitarian issues and actively support international humanitarian law.

European Parliament

Treaty basis and European Parliament competence

[Article 196](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) is the legal basis for civil protection. Parliament and Council, acting in co-decision, can adopt measures to help achieve civil-protection objectives, without any harmonisation of Member States' laws and regulations. The 'solidarity clause' in Article 222 refers to civil protection too. In this field, as stated in Article 6 TFEU, the EU simply supports Member States' action.

[Article 214](#) (TFEU) is the legal basis for humanitarian aid. EU operations in this field are to be conducted within the framework of the principles and objectives of the external action of the Union, as set out in Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), which recommends a high degree of cooperation 'in order to assist populations, countries and regions confronting natural or man-made disasters'. Humanitarian aid policy is subject to the ordinary legislative procedure – co-decision by Parliament and Council. Parliament has oversight powers on the European Commission's implementing measures in this field.

Parliament has regularly highlighted the need to increase funding for humanitarian aid and has insisted on closing the gap between commitments and payments. It has also sought to influence the Commission's strategic decisions and policy orientations, such as on education in emergencies, and the response to the Ebola outbreak. In 2015 Parliament adopted a resolution on the EU contribution to the [World Humanitarian Summit](#), making proposals to reduce the funding gap between donors' contributions and humanitarian needs. More specifically, MEPs have proposed to improve the link between relief and long-term assistance, advocated a new public-private partnership for innovative preparedness and delivery methods to sustain globally coordinated, timely, predictable and flexible funding; and urged Member States and donors to increase direct funding for local humanitarian actors substantially. In July 2018, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on guidelines for Member States to prevent humanitarian assistance from being criminalised. MEPs expressed concern at the unintended consequences of the [Facilitators Package](#) – the 2002 legal framework on the smuggling and facilitation of illegal migration – for citizens providing migrants with humanitarian assistance and for the social cohesion of the host society. In February 2019, Parliament adopted amendments to the revision of the [Union Civil Protection Mechanism](#).

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