REPORT

on new orientations for the EU’s humanitarian action
(2021/2163(INI))

Committee on Development

Rapporteur: Norbert Neuser
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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on new orientations for the EU’s humanitarian action
(2021/2163(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to Articles 208 and 214 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
– having regard to Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union,
– having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid¹,
– having regard to the Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, Parliament and the Commission on the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid of 2008⁴,
– having regard to the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949,
– having regard to Council Decision 2003/335/JHA of 8 May 2003 on the investigation and prosecution of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes⁵,
– having regard to the Council conclusions of 26 November 2018 on strengthening global food and nutrition security,
– having regard to the EU guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law⁶,
– having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 2286 of 3 May 2016 on the protection of the wounded and sick, medical personnel and humanitarian personnel in armed

⁵ OJ L 118, 14.5.2003, p. 12.
conflict,

- having regard to the report of the UN Secretary-General of 23 August 2016 on the outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit and the commitments made by the participants at the summit,

- having regard to the Grand Bargain agreement signed on 23 May 2016, to the annual independent reports thereon, notably the 2021 report, and to the Grand Bargain 2.0 framework and annexes presented at the Grand Bargain annual meeting of 15-17 June 2021,

- having regard to the report of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees of July 2021 on the use of flexible funding in 2020, and the updates thereto,

- having regard to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction for 2015-2030 adopted at the third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held between 14 and 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Japan, and to the outcomes of the Global Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction held in Cancun in 2017 and Geneva in 2019,

- having regard to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

- having regard to the 2021 Global Humanitarian Overview of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the monthly updates thereof,


- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 March 2021 on the EU’s humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles (COM(2021)0110) and the subsequent Council conclusions of 20 May 2021,

- having regard to its resolutions on humanitarian aid, in particular those of 11 December 2013 on the EU approach to resilience and disaster risk reduction in developing countries: learning from food security crises\(^7\), of 26 November 2015 on education for children in emergency situations and protracted crises\(^8\), of 16 December 2015 on preparing for the World Humanitarian Summit: Challenges and opportunities for humanitarian assistance\(^9\), of 1 June 2017 on resilience as a strategic priority of the external action of the EU\(^10\), and of 17 April 2018 on the implementation of the Development Cooperation Instrument, the Humanitarian Aid Instrument and the European Development Fund\(^11\),

- having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,}
having regard to the report of the Committee on Development (A9-0328/2021),

A. whereas humanitarian needs are at an all-time high, with 238 million people in need of assistance in 2021, due largely to conflicts but also systemic factors such as climate change, natural disasters, environmental degradation, global population growth, food insecurity, limited water resources and failed governance; whereas the burgeoning of humanitarian needs and their increasing complexity touches upon each of the SDGs and points to a worrying lack of global progress on the 2030 Agenda;

B. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing fragilities and inequalities, amplified humanitarian needs – notably a sharp increase in hunger and a lack of food supply, with almost 300 million people at risk of becoming acutely food insecure and over 40 million facing emergency levels of food insecurity – and hampered the humanitarian response owing to border closures and other restrictions, such as those attempted by parties to armed conflicts; whereas the growth in humanitarian needs is, in part, a result of insufficient development assistance to address the drivers of fragility; whereas according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, humanitarian assistance for all fragile contexts increased by 38 % from 2015 to 2016, while programmable development aid for fragile contexts did not increase over the same period\(^\text{12}\); whereas between 2014 and 2018, humanitarian assistance accounted for the second-largest share of overseas development assistance contributions across the 29 countries in the Development Assistance Committee\(^\text{13}\);

C. whereas on the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a number of logistical obstacles for international organisations carrying out aid operations, while on the other hand, these logistical challenges have contributed to a number of changes in the way aid programmes are implemented, particularly in terms of boosting the importance of localising humanitarian aid;

D. whereas in 2018, approximately 108 million people required international humanitarian assistance as a result of storms, floods, droughts and wildfires; whereas by 2050, over 200 million people could be in need of humanitarian assistance every year as a result of climate-related disasters and the socioeconomic impact of climate change;

E. whereas women and girls are the hardest hit by emergencies; whereas adolescent girls in conflict zones are 90 % more likely to be out of school, 70 % of women in humanitarian settings are more likely to experience gender-based violence, and more than 70 % of those facing chronic hunger are women;

F. whereas the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge, which was set up in response to the transport constraints caused by the pandemic, has greatly helped to plug critical gaps in the humanitarian response by facilitating the transport of aid, emergency assistance and humanitarian staff;

G. whereas the greater frequency and intensity of climate-induced disasters is fuelling

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conflict and keeping more people trapped in protracted displacement in ways never
witnessed before, while a number of protracted crises remain unresolved;

H. whereas growing humanitarian needs have not been matched by adequate resources,
leading to a rapidly increasing funding gap: in 2020, less than half of the UN
humanitarian appeal was met, and as of August 2021, only USD 10.9 billion in funding
was available for needs amounting to USD 36.6 billion (30 % of the total); whereas in
2020, funding unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic response from the largest 20 public
donors fell below 2019 levels;

I. whereas global humanitarian funding continues to rely heavily on a very limited number
of donors, with the 10 largest accounting for around 85 % of all funding;

J. whereas humanitarian aid is a key pillar of the EU’s external action and whereas in
2020 the EU and Member States’ combined funding was 36 % of global humanitarian
assistance – the largest share in the world; whereas the level of contributions varies
within the EU, with four Member States and the Commission accounting for around
90 % of all EU humanitarian financing;

K. whereas the reaffirmed commitment by the signatories of Grand Bargain 2.0 to ensuring
that the humanitarian response is as local as possible and as international as necessary
entails undertaking to provide at least 25 % of humanitarian funding as directly as
possible to local and national actors; whereas this target is far from being met, however;

L. whereas the current gap in development funding makes it imperative to improve the
efficiency, effectiveness, visibility, risk sharing, transparency and accountability of the
humanitarian system and to ensure that more countries contribute to the humanitarian
effort so that aid meets the needs of the populations affected, as highlighted most
recently by Grand Bargain 2.0, which focuses on localisation and quality funding as key
enabling priorities;

M. whereas ‘quality funding’ comprises one of the two enabling priorities of Grand Bargain
2.0; whereas pillar two of the 2016 High-Level Political Forum on Humanitarian
Financing calls for a widening of the humanitarian resource base through partnerships
with new or emerging bilateral donors and the private sector, facilitating remittance
flows and Islamic social finance; whereas humanitarian assistance from private donors
is already on the rise, having increased by 9 % from USD 6.2 billion in 2018 to a record
USD 6.8 billion in 2019;

N. whereas the Commission has proposed launching a pilot project on blending to
significantly increase the resource base for humanitarian action and has called for the
further involvement of the private sector to this end;

O. whereas the fragmentation of humanitarian aid remains a persistent challenge with a

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14 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Financial Tracking Service, 2021 humanitarian aid
contributions.
16 High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, report for the UN Secretary-General entitled ‘Too important to
plethora of donors and aid agencies and a lack of coordination between their activities and projects;

P. whereas the use of consortium organisation is encouraged by donors in development cooperation and humanitarian aid; whereas in comparison to other methods, consortium organisation is typically characterised by larger-scale objectives and more resources;

Q. whereas addressing humanitarian crises requires not only more funding but also decisive political efforts to reduce needs by preventing and ending conflicts, protecting basic human rights, promoting sustainable development, reducing risks and vulnerabilities, countering and adapting to climate change, tackling corruption in the allocation of funds, and addressing the lack of transparency in relations with local organisations;

R. whereas basic norms and principles are being challenged around the world through regular violations of international humanitarian law, including attacks on civilians and humanitarian and medical workers, in addition to growing obstacles to the provision of humanitarian aid;

S. whereas attacks against humanitarian personnel have dramatically increased in recent years;

1. Welcomes the Commission communication on the EU’s humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles and its concrete proposals to improve the provision of humanitarian aid; calls for the swift implementation of these proposals in close consultation and cooperation with humanitarian partners to ensure that aid is predictable, not fragmented and does not duplicate other actions; reiterates that in accordance with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, the EU’s humanitarian aid must always be provided solely on the basis of well-defined and pre-assessed needs, must be fully in line with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and must pay particular attention to the challenges faced by vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, minorities and other highly marginalised people, when accessing humanitarian assistance; calls on the Commission to put the principle of ‘no one left behind’ at the heart of the new approach to humanitarian action; welcomes the Commission’s initiative of integrating education in emergencies to prevent children from dropping out of school, particularly in cases of long-lasting conflict;

2. Notes with concern the sharp increase in the humanitarian funding gap, as major donors are reducing funding at a time of growing needs; underlines the stark differences in contributions both at a global level and from within the EU; calls for the Commission to provide a robust annual budget for EU humanitarian aid to guarantee timely, predictable and flexible funding for humanitarian aid from the start of each financial year, both for addressing protracted crises and for responding to new crises, and to keep a ring-fenced envelope within the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve for humanitarian crises outside the EU to maintain the existing capacity to rapidly mobilise additional funds in the case of emerging, escalating or sudden-onset emergencies; calls for the EU to advocate for greater international responsibility-sharing and an increase in humanitarian funding; urges the Member States to lead by example and contribute a fixed share of
their gross national incomes to humanitarian aid; calls on the Commission to report annually on the amount of humanitarian funding disbursed from the EU in the global context;

3. Calls on the Commission and the European External Action Service to devise a strategy for long-term collaboration with third countries, in particular emerging donors, by leveraging the EU’s bilateral, regional and multilateral diplomacy to expand the range of donor countries which contribute to humanitarian aid on a voluntary basis; underlines that a contribution from additional donor countries would make it possible to raise the amount needed to address international humanitarian crises; notes with concern the lack of a formal arrangement in the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement regarding humanitarian aid and calls on the Commission and the Member States to work towards a formal EU-UK partnership on humanitarian aid;

4. Highlights the Commission’s commitment to leveraging private finance and further involving the private sector in EU humanitarian assistance and the launch of a pilot blending initiative from the EU’s humanitarian budget in 2021; calls on the Commission to provide Parliament with more information and a written assessment on the implementation of the pilot project for blending for humanitarian action, assessing the alignment with external action objectives; underlines the potential of blending initiatives, including humanitarian impact bonds and disaster risk insurance schemes, including making full use of the European Investment Bank and the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus for humanitarian purposes; stresses, however, that further engagement with the private sector requires an analysis of the results achieved through collaboration so far, and the exclusive promotion of partnerships which comply with the EU’s external action goals and international humanitarian principles;

5. Is alarmed at the growing number of serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law; calls for the establishment of an EU coordination mechanism in order to develop a coherent EU approach towards international humanitarian law, monitor violations and advocate for ensuring that international humanitarian law is respected, including by using the relevant political, development aid, trade and economic levers in the EU’s external action;

6. Calls on the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the Member States to closely monitor international humanitarian law violations and to include international humanitarian law violations as a criterion for listing individuals or entities in the relevant EU sanctions regimes in line with the EU guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law; notes that sanctions and restrictive measures taken in the context of the EU’s common foreign and security policy must comply with international humanitarian law and must not hinder the provision of humanitarian activities; underlines the need to consistently include humanitarian exemptions in restrictive measures regimes and to provide the necessary support and guidance to partners to apply these exemptions effectively;

7. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen international humanitarian law and to vigorously prosecute and sanction those who use starvation as a weapon of war in order to counteract the widespread violations of the right to food
during conflicts, the recurring use of starvation as a method of warfare, and the denial of humanitarian access;

8. Calls for the EU and its Member States to swiftly fulfil the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit and as part of the Grand Bargain; highlights the importance of making humanitarian aid more efficient and effective by increasing flexible funding through unearmarked, softly earmarked and multiannual funding that is tailored to local contexts, needs-based and people-centred, as well as reducing the administrative burden for humanitarian partners by harmonising and simplifying donor proposal and reporting requirements, funding national and local actors, and promoting innovative solutions, among other endeavours; recalls that protracted crises are still humanitarian contexts and calls for the EU and its Member States to envisage concrete solutions for the effective allocation of humanitarian and development funding for partners operating in these contexts; encourages the EU and its Member States to introduce measures in grant agreements with partners to ensure sufficient programme flexibility for those partners to rapidly shift from development activities to emergency response in case of a sudden emergency, including in the funding provided by the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe;

9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to maintain and foster a realistic risk-sharing dialogue between the relevant departments, with their humanitarian partners and with other stakeholders, building on recent experiences and the lessons learnt in order to continuously strive to improve existing funding regulations by making them more efficient and effective, particularly at times of highly volatile humanitarian crises; points out that risk awareness has proven to be an effective tool for risk mitigation;

10. Stresses the particular importance of supporting local actors and urges the Commission to develop an ambitious localisation policy, including fostering transparency, making use of partners’ expertise and experience, and outlining how to provide more and better support for local respondents to strengthen their capacities, enable them to make use of all the instruments available and ensure their involvement in decision-making processes, while addressing the issue of mutual accountability and risk sharing, as reinforcing local respondents is a major factor to reduce the need for international humanitarian assistance in the future; calls on the Commission to ensure that women’s equal participation and empowerment is integrated explicitly into any new mechanisms to strengthen the role of local actors in humanitarian action;

11. Stresses that in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, localisation helps to deliver a health response that is adapted to the context of developing countries in order to avoid European bias, particularly with regard to containment protocols and prevention campaigns; calls for the prevalence of a Eurocentric perspective over emergency situations to be adequately challenged through the further localisation of humanitarian action;

12. Highlights the challenges posed by climate change and welcomes the commitments to further mainstream climate change impacts and environmental factors into humanitarian action, to strengthen the climate resilience of vulnerable regions and to build the resilience of vulnerable communities to climate change through disaster preparedness
and anticipatory action via a triple nexus approach involving indigenous people and local communities, in view of the specific assistance and protection needs of populations affected by disasters and the adverse effects of climate change, in particular displaced persons and host communities; welcomes, in addition, the commitments to make the EU’s humanitarian aid more environmentally sustainable and to track climate-related spending; calls on the Commission to provide the necessary resources for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction through the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, among other tools, and to accelerate the implementation of the Sendai commitments in the EU’s external action;

13. Welcomes the concrete achievements of the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge and the idea of creating a European Humanitarian Response Capacity to plug the gaps in the EU’s humanitarian response; calls for the Member States and humanitarian partners to be regularly consulted on any new Commission initiatives, which should build on – not duplicate – existing capacities of humanitarian actors and EU mechanisms such as the Civil Protection Mechanism;

14. Underlines the fact that while humanitarian aid seeks to tackle immediate, life-threatening situations, crises are caused by drivers that require long-term solutions, as underlying fragility is a significant precursor to humanitarian crises; calls on the Commission and the European External Action Service to adopt a communication developing a clear policy on a humanitarian-development-peace nexus in order to bridge the gaps between the individual policy areas, while ensuring that the distinct legal character and principles of humanitarian aid are respected; stresses that this nexus approach should strengthen resilience and promote sustainable responses, while the SDGs should be used as a framework for such an approach, as the 2030 Agenda provides a unique opportunity to address the root causes of fragility and conflict, building on the practical experience of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), among others; calls for the EU and the Member States to swiftly implement this nexus approach, with a particular focus on tackling fragility, preventing conflicts, tackling hunger, addressing displacement related to disasters and the adverse effects of climate change, providing education and livelihood opportunities, supporting early recovery, enhancing response capacity, and forging self-reliance and resilience; calls on the Commission to publish an assessment of the operationalisation of the humanitarian-development nexus in the six pilot countries identified in 2017;

15. Calls on the Commission to assess past experiences and programmes on gender-related issues, as there is a growing need to address these given the prominent role of women as victims of conflicts and disasters; calls for more tangible elements of gender mainstreaming to be implemented in future humanitarian action, including context-specific, gender-sensitive analyses, while protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, girls and persons from the LGBTIQ+ community; supports the provision of unhindered access to free public health services and efforts to reduce mortality and morbidity, and highlights the need to strengthen preparedness for pandemics and epidemics;

16. Calls for the EU and its Member States to implement and promote the Nansen Initiative Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of
Disasters and Climate Change; highlights the importance of cooperation between humanitarian, development, disaster risk reduction and climate change actors to reduce the risk of displacement in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change and to address assistance and protection needs;

17. Calls for particular emphasis to be devoted to nutrition, as a fundamental right for all, in order to ensure food security and bolster the resilience of food systems to economic, climate and human shocks; calls for the EU action plan on nutrition to be revised to address all forms of malnutrition in humanitarian and development contexts in line with the Council conclusions of November 2018;

18. Reiterates the Commission’s commitment and ongoing efforts to promote the visibility and awareness of EU humanitarian aid among different stakeholders throughout the EU, including NGOs, and to strengthen the EU’s visibility in its external action;

19. Welcomes the announcement on the first ever EU Humanitarian Forum, which is to be held in January 2022; stresses that the forum should be inclusive, accessible, involve humanitarian implementing partners, seek to increase the visibility of the EU’s humanitarian aid and the work of its partners, promote a strategic dialogue on the EU’s humanitarian policy, raise political support and awareness about the nature of principled and needs-based EU humanitarian assistance, and advance the implementation of the key actions set out in the Commission communication;

20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the European External Action Service, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The world faces an extremely complex humanitarian scenario as the number of people suffering from humanitarian crises has dramatically increased from around 90 million in 2015 to nearly 240 million in 2021. Most drivers of this explosion in needs have been known for years – ranging from conflicts to the impact of climate change, environmental degradation, global population growth and failed governance. Yet the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the global humanitarian crisis and made the international response more complicated. This against the background of a worrying international funding gap, as the resources available are not growing at the same speed as humanitarian needs.

At the same time, the delivery of humanitarian assistance has become more complex and dangerous due to worrying regular violations of basic human principles and international humanitarian law (IHL). Additional challenges are derived from the growing length of crises (‘protracted crises’), and the fact that many crises receive inadequate public and political attention (‘forgotten crises’).

Faced with this scenario the EU and its Member States – which collectively represent the largest humanitarian donor in the world – should play a leading role in advocating for international solutions to these challenges. Principled humanitarian aid is a key pillar of the EU’s external action, clearly framed by the Treaties and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, and also an important part of the EU’s ability to project its values globally. Following from this realisation the European Commission published in March 2021 a Communication on “The EU’s humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles”.

The Communication sets out how the EU and its Member States, working with its diverse humanitarian partners and other donors, can step up to this challenge. It proposes a series of initiatives grouped in two main areas: “Addressing needs, reducing the funding gap”, and “Supporting an enabling environment for humanitarian aid”. Within each of these broad areas, concrete objectives are identified and key actions to be implemented proposed to fulfil the different objectives. The 2021 Communication represents thus a wide-ranging scoping of the complex humanitarian setting and the actions through which the EU could strengthen its response and have a leadership position in the global humanitarian community.

This own-initiative report aims to be the European Parliament’s response to the Communication, providing political steering for how to translate the ambitions of the Communication into reality. The objective of the report is to provide policy recommendations to the overall EU’s humanitarian action (both by the Commission and its Member States) and not to discuss concrete humanitarian crises, to which Parliament will continue to pay dedicated attention in the relevant activities ranging from exchanges of views to plenary resolutions.

The report comes furthermore at a timely moment in seeking to respond to the Commission communication, as well as the Council conclusions on this topic of May 2021, allowing Parliament to set its strategic priorities and policy recommendations regarding the EU’s humanitarian aid ahead of the first EU Humanitarian Forum to be organised in January 2022.
## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

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| **Result of final vote** | +: 20  
| | -: 2  
| | 0: 2  |
| **Members present for the final vote** | Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Dominique Bilde, Catherine Chabaud, Antoni Comín i Oliveres, Gianna Gancia, Charles Goerens, Mónica Silvana González, Pierrerette Herzberger-Fofana, Rasa Juknevičienė, Beata Kempa, Pierfrancesco Majorino, Norbert Neuser, Janina Ochojska, Christian Sagartz, Marc Tarabella, Tomas Tobé, Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, Bernhard Zimniok |
| **Substitutes present for the final vote** | Barry Andrews, Frances Fitzgerald, Marlene Mortler, Maria Noichl, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Caroline Roose |
## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

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Key to symbols:
- + : in favour
- - : against
- 0 : abstention