

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4033/05
by Pierre Schapira (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Improvements to relations between the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department and NGOs working in the humanitarian sphere

Bodies working in the humanitarian sphere have no choice but to liaise with the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO). However, improvements to the liaison arrangements would greatly facilitate the work of NGOs in this sphere, given that those NGOs vary in size and culture and in the degrees of progress they have made towards professionalisation.

Fewer than 150 non-governmental associations have been approved by ECHO as partners, making them eligible for funding. However, the rules governing the implementation of the new framework partnership contract today reflect a culture ever more closely based on scrutiny and auditing, with the following results: NGOs are required to carry out frequent audits which often lead to payments being suspended, pending submission of the findings, and create a substantial administrative workload for NGOs not covered by European funding schemes; the implementation of the financial rules may be subject to interpretation, no clear explanation having yet been provided by the Commission to NGOs working in the humanitarian sphere. Although, as in every sector, frequent investigations are clearly needed with a view to establishing that operations, and in particular financial transactions, are above board, no-one wishes to see a culture of suspicion emerge in the Commission, blocking the flow of funding to humanitarian projects.

Could the Commission state precisely how it interprets the rules governing the implementation of the financial provisions applicable in the humanitarian sphere, how it intends to involve its partners which are NGOs working in that sphere in the efforts to improve the rules governing cooperation with its Humanitarian Aid Department, and, finally, how it intends to win the loyalty of its partners, who, given the cumbersome nature of the administrative and financial processes imposed on them by the Commission, may find it easier to secure funding from other international sources?