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Answer given by Mr Lenarčič
on behalf of the European Commission
(4.5.2021)

The Commission has a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to allegations of sexual misconduct by organisations receiving EU funding.

To receive EU humanitarian funding, non-governmental organisations must undergo an ex-ante assessment of the applicable eligibility and suitability requirements¹. This assessment checks, among others, their rules and procedures, including internal control systems which are expected to ensure prevention, detection and response to all forms of abuse, among which sexual misconduct, and assesses their integrity and ethical values. International organisations that work with the Commission must undergo a pillar assessment that checks that their rules and procedures provide an adequate level of protection of EU financial interests, and that assesses their integrity and ethical values.

In conformity with the binding conditions of the grant agreements signed with the Commission, the entities should report on cases coming to their attention, take appropriate follow-up actions and inform in a timely way the Commission of the actions taken. In addition, the Commission has created a mailbox to which anyone can report situations of concern in the context of humanitarian aid operations.

The Commission is also strengthening requirements and oversight tools and mechanisms.

Failure to have adequate and functioning mechanisms or to appropriately address allegations, can lead to actions by the Commission, including suspension of implementation and/or payment, termination of grant agreements, reduction of EU contributions, and even suspension and termination of eligibility for EU funding.

¹ For more information on eligibility and suitability requirements, please refer to the ECHO partners’ website at <https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/ngo/become-a-dg-echo-partner>.