EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN AID OPERATIONS (DG ECHO)
DG ECHO.E – Resources
**E/4 – Field Network**

# GENERAL INFORMATION ON ENTITLEMENTS AND BENEFITS FOR DG ECHO TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS IN HUMANITARIAN AID

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**This brochure is intended solely for information and general guidance of candidates for the position of DG ECHO technical assistants in Humanitarian Aid. This document provides a general overview of the possible benefits and entitlements of DG ECHO technical assistants. Please note that all benefits and entitlements are linked to the individual contractual status of the technical assistant. This document is not binding for the European Commission in any way.**

# Contents

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background

As laid down in Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 and in Article 72 of the Cotonou Agreement, the mandate of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO) is the management and financing of the European Union's humanitarian aid. Therefore, DG ECHO recruits technical assistants (TAs) **experienced in the implementation of humanitarian aid.**

The European Commission carries out its civil protection and humanitarian aid operations with the help of DG ECHO **global network of over 50 field offices** in 41 countries, staffed with technical assistants and national staff. This network provides **up-to-date information and analysis** on needs in a given country or region and contributes to the **development of humanitarian intervention strategies**. DG ECHO technical assistants give **technical support and monitor the implementation of EU- funded humanitarian projects.** The field offices also ensure vital contact and coordination with humanitarian organisations and humanitarian donors in the field.

## 1.2. DG ECHO Field Staff

One of the European Union's key strengths in responding to humanitarian emergencies is its global network of field offices, staffed by humanitarian technical assistants and national staff members. In fact, DG ECHO has some 460 field employees working on the ground (approximately the same number of staff who is based in headquarters in Brussels).

A high degree of **flexibility** is crucial for the efficient functioning of the field network. This means that offices can quickly open in new location or close down as crisis situations develop and new needs emerge. It also means being able to ensure a rapid 'surge' response by deploying Surge Response Experts or Rapid Response Coordinator and/or redeploying staff between offices or regions for longer or shorter periods. DG ECHO's overall field architecture is subject to regular reviews to ensure the presence of staff close to evolving humanitarian situations, to balance the global presence and maintain the ability to respond rapidly to new crises world-wide.

DG ECHO technical assistants may also support operations with a specific thematic expertise in areas such as food and livelihood assistance, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, shelter, disaster preparedness, gender issues, protection and education in emergencies etc. Others provide security, administrative and logistics support to operations. In addition to their operational responsibilities, EU humanitarian technical assistants also make sure that the latest develops on the ground are taken into account in the development and implementation of the Commission's humanitarian policies, and support DG ECHO's advocacy and coordination efforts with partners on the ground.

## 1.3. DG ECHO Field Offices

The field network is composed of different types of offices at regional (multi-country), national and sub-national level. **Country offices** are located in crisis zones where EU-funded relief aid is being delivered. For very large countries, and when humanitarian actions are necessary in a specific area, additional **Sub-country offices** may be opened. **Regional Offices (RO)** provide thematic expertise, technical and administrative support to the other offices in their region and to DG ECHO headquarters. They also coordinate operations that are funded on a regional basis and arrange for rapid deployments of humanitarian experts when there is a new emergency. There are also smaller, temporary offices called **Antennas**, which are run by national staff. Staff in these offices monitor operations and provide logistical and administrative support.

# 2. RECRUITMENT AND TYPES OF CONTRACTS

## 2.1. Recruitment of technical assistants (TAs)

Selection of candidates to DG ECHO technical assistants posts is based on the "*Call for applications from individual experts for technical assistance to third countries in the area of humanitarian aid*" (OJ 2008/C112/13).

Interested candidates must complete the application form in the *Field Staff Management (FSM) database* used by DG ECHO to identify, register and select technical assistants: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/echo/fsm/

When a vacancy notice is published on DG ECHO internet, candidates need to apply within the deadline. Only shortlisted candidates are called for interviews.

Once recruited and before deployment to the country of posting, TAs need to undertake the following administrative and operational requirements:

- **Induction week in Brussels**: The first week of the contract is spent in Brussels for administrative and operational onboarding. This includes briefings, security and duty of care modules, and completion of the initial medical check and laissez-passer application.
- **Medical check**: As part of its duty of care obligations, DG ECHO ensures that all technical assistants are fit to carry out their assignments, both prior to and during their deployment. For this reason, technical assistants must hold a valid medical certificate issued in accordance with DG ECHO's instructions and keep it up to date throughout their contract. Non-compliance with this requirement may result in suspension of the contract under Article 9 of the General Rules and may lead to termination. The initial medical examination is organised by DG ECHO during the first briefing week in Brussels. Appointments will be arranged by DG ECHO.
- **Laissez-passer (LP)**: The laissez-passer issued by the European Union is a secure e-travel document, recognised by EU Member States and certain third countries. All Technical assistants must hold a valid LP throughout their contract, regardless of their country of posting. A LP may also be required for expatriate dependents in certain countries (e.g. currently in the

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan) or for certain postings (category 2 offices). The application for the LP is made during the induction week in Brussels at the start of the contract. LPs are valid for up to six years. It is the responsibility of the technical assistant to monitor the validity and condition of their LP and to initiate renewal procedures in due time (approximately six months before expiry or when blank pages run low).

- **Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT) or similar**: This advanced security training is mandatory for technical assistants posted or undertaking missions in high-risk or unstable environments. It is designed to ensure appropriate preparedness for fieldwork in challenging operational contexts and is an essential component of DG ECHO's duty of care.

## 2.2. Code of Conduct

The Commission expects irreproachable conduct from its staff at all times.
The technical assistants employed by DG ECHO sign a Code of Conduct. This code forms an integral part of the employment contract and for that reason is fully binding. According to this code, staff members shall refrain from any action or behaviour which might reflect adversely upon their position. This obligation is intended to preserve the integrity and reputation of the European Commission and its staff. It therefore goes beyond the actual exercise of his function and extends to conduct in their private life.

The particularly high level of conduct demanded from staff justifies the sanctioning of behaviour likely to be perceived, both inside and outside the Commission, to be inappropriate on the part of staff of the Commission. Technical assistants have to show loyalty, impartiality and independence as they carry out their duties. They have to take all the necessary precautions to avoid possible conflicts of interest, respect any law and practice applicable to them, and even after leaving DG ECHO, they must behave with integrity and discretion.

For more information, you can access the code of conduct here: https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2018-02/dg_echo_code_of_conduct.pdf

## 2.3. Types of contracts

The assignment of a post to newly recruited technical assistant gives rise to an employment contract between the European Commission and the TA. The contracts of technical assistants are governed by Belgian (employment) Law. Specific dispositions called "General Rules governing the employment contracts of technical assistants working in European Union humanitarian-aid operations in non-member countries" (General Rules) have been adopted in accordance with Belgian law.

### 2.3.1. Fixed-term contracts of maximum 12 months (Short-term contracts)

Short-term contracts cover missions of max 12 months. These contracts cover the need for additional support in emerging crisis or ad-hoc needs in case longer term technical assistants are temporarily unavailable.

Short-term contracts are governed by the same "General Rules" mentioned above and by Belgian (employment) law. However, some provisions are different considering the short-term character of the mission. Therefore, some benefits and entitlements for technical assistants do not fully apply to a short-term contract.

Remuneration for a short-term contract shall not comprise the installation, annual leave and end-of-contract allowances. All accommodation in the framework of a short-term contract will be organised and paid by DG ECHO.

Short-term contracts will have an initial duration and can be extended if needed and according to Belgian law. The total maximum duration of such contracts for one mission cannot exceed 18 months.

Short-term contracts are considered as "non-family postings" and the candidate selected should be expatriated alone.

### 2.3.2. Fixed-term contracts of minimum 12 months

Fixed-term contracts are usually offered to new experts or in specific situations. In general, new technical assistants will receive a contract of 1 year which may, if necessary, be renewed once for a fixed period of 1 year.

### 2.3.3. Open-ended contracts

Technical assistants can also be contracted under open-ended contracts. Such contracts of indefinite duration can be offered to a technical assistant upon completion of a fixed-term contract, or to technical assistants who have recently worked in the field of humanitarian aid for the Commission with the same profile.

As a result of a rotation system and the maximum duration set for each posting, such contracts may cover several consecutive places of posting. Open-ended contracts are equally governed by the "General Rules governing the employment contracts of technical assistants" mentioned above and by Belgian (employment) law.

### 2.3.4. Internal mobility of DG ECHO technical assistants

To ensure that technical assistants can broaden their professional experience and have the opportunity to regularly change their working environment in terms of humanitarian context, stakeholders and DG ECHO teams and living conditions, a rotation exercise is organised annually to facilitate their mobility at the end of their assignment, ranging from 2 to 4 years, depending on the living and working conditions. The rotation is a competitive process. It is open not only to TAs whose assignments are coming to an end but also to former TAs who have worked with DG ECHO within the last five years. This facilitates a comprehensive pool of qualified candidates with diverse expertise and skills. The annual rotation process is launched in mid-July (Rotation N-1) and completed by the end of February of the following year (N). The official rotation date – when the newly assigned TAs will take up their new positions - is set as 1 August.

# 3. PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT AND SECURITY

Technical assistants will be employed in countries outside the European Union, where the European Union funds humanitarian projects. Regardless of the assigned place of employment, the technical assistant can be asked to undertake duty travel elsewhere, at DG ECHO's request.

For the places of assignment, the Commission uses three categories of offices:

- Category 1 offices: offices with a living conditions allowance – LCA – 0-30% of the reference amount
- Category 2 and 2* offices: offices with a living conditions allowance – LCA – 35-40% of the reference amount. Staff posted in Category 2* offices are entitled to **hardship leave**: 5 working days, 3 times per calendar year
- Category 3 offices: offices which are classified as "hardship-postings" where no family is allowed –LCA 45-50% of the reference amount. Staff posted in Category 3 offices are entitled to R**est and Recuperation (R&R)**: 5 working days, 5 times per calendar year.

This classification is based on the current living conditions of the place of posting, the risk level and the security context. The standard duration of posting 4 years in a category 1 office, 3 years in category 2 and 2* offices, and 2 years in a category 3 office.

Before departure, technical assistants will receive a full security briefing on the security situation and considerations related to their place of assignment. Technical assistants are obliged to fully comply with security instructions and restrictions.

# 4. SALARIES

Remuneration is composed of a basic salary and several allowances (see next section), expressed in euro.

The main criterion for determining the basic salary, specified in the contract of employment, are years of relevant professional experience.

Guidance brackets for basic pay per month:

- 3-5 years professional experience: EUR 6 762.01 to EUR 7 170.79
- 6-10 years professional experience: EUR 7 375.20 to EUR 8 192.76
- 11-20 years professional experience: EUR 8 397.15 to EUR 10 236.69
- over 20 years professional experience: EUR 10 441.07 to EUR 13 813.57

The technical assistant has to comply with the tax law and practices in their country of employment and with any other fiscal legislation applicable. The TA bears sole responsibility for ensuring that they are properly informed of these matters and acts in accordance with the law.
Every year, the TA signs a declaration on honour confirming that they complied with their fiscal obligations towards the competent countries.

# 5. ALLOWANCES AND INSURANCES

On top of the basic salary, the following allowances may be provided: an allowance for living conditions, installation allowance, an end-of-contract allowance, annual travel allowance, and travel allowance at the start and end of the posting. Depending on the personal situation, a head of household allowance, an allowance for each dependent child, a function allowance[1] can be granted.

The basic salary may for instance be increased by:

- 15 to 40% of a reference amount according to living conditions (LCA) prevailing in the country to which the technical assistant is posted.
- 5% of net amount shall be paid to "heads of household".
- a fixed allowance per month for each dependent child contingent on the age of the child (in 2025: EUR 408.77 for children less than six years old, EUR 817.58 for children of six years and older), which may partially cover school fees.

The precise financial conditions relating to the contracts are outlined in Chapter IV of the General Rules and the accompanying financial conditions (Annex I).

## 5.1. Sickness, medical evacuation, incapacity, disability and life insurance

The European Commission pays premiums on behalf of the technical assistant for the group "sickness, accident, disability and life" insurance policy and for the pension policy.
The technical assistant, their dependent spouse and children shall be covered by a group “sickness” insurance policy taken out by the European Commission. In addition, the technical assistant and their expatriate dependents shall be covered by a “medical evacuation” insurance policy, also taken out by the European Commission.

The technical assistant will also be covered by an “incapacity-life” insurance taken out by the European Commission. This coverage includes provisions for both temporary and permanent disability. Permanent disability, irrespective of its cause – whether resulting from illness or from an accident (including non-occupational accidents) – is covered under the policy.

The technical assistant shall be required to contribute one-third of the premium. Medical, pharmaceutical, hospital and surgical costs incurred by the technical assistant in the event of sickness or accident suffered by himself, his dependent spouse and/or children shall be reimbursed subject to the conditions (including ceilings) laid down in the policy.

[1] if applicable due to the nature of the position.

## 5.2. Pension insurance

The European Commission has taken out a group pension insurance policy for its technical assistants. TAs are required to contribute one third of the premium. Each technical assistant shall be informed of the general and specific conditions governing the pension insurance upon starting their employment. The scope and conditions of insurance cover with respect to all technical assistants may be subject to amendments, depending on the possible amendments of the policy itself.

# 6. LEAVE (Public holidays, annual leave, special leave, unpaid leave)

## 6.1. Public holidays

The list of public holidays, up to a maximum of 15 days per year, is set based on local practices. These days are not considered working days and do not reduce the annual leave entitlement. TAs do not receive compensatory leave if they are on mission during a public holiday at their place of assignment but benefit from the local public holidays in the country of the mission.

## 6.2. Annual leave

Technical assistants are entitled to 2.5 days of paid annual leave per month of work, based on time worked. Leave must be planned in coordination with the Commission to ensure business continuity of the service. Requests should be submitted at least two weeks in advance, except in unforeseen cases. A limited number of unused leave days may be carried forward with prior approval; otherwise, unused leave is not compensated. If leave cannot be taken before the end of the assignment, financial compensation may apply. Any negative leave balance at contract end will be deducted from final payments.

## 6.3. Special leave

Technical assistants may be granted special leave for specific personal or family-related circumstances. This includes:

- **Compassionate leave**, for events such as bereavement, serious illness of close relatives, or marriage.
- **Leave for the arrival of a child**, including maternity, paternity, co-parenting, and adoption leave.
- **Breastfeeding breaks**, which may be granted during working hours.
- **Respite leave** when changing place of assignment. The duration depends on the classification of the duty station (from 5 to 15 working days)

Each type of leave is subject to specific conditions and documentation requirements. Remuneration generally continues during these periods, and further details are outlined in the General Rules.

### 6.4. Rest & Recuperation (R&R) leave and hardship leave

These types of leave are intended to provide regular breaks for staff working in challenging environments, allowing them to rest and recover before returning to their duty station.

- In **category 3 duty stations**, Technical Assistants are entitled to **5 days of R&R**, **five times per year**.
- In **category 2* duty stations**, Technical Assistants are entitled to **5 days of hardship leave**, **three times per year**.

R&R/hardship leave must be taken periodically during the assignment and cannot be postponed or carried over.

### 6.5. Unpaid leave

Technical assistants may request unpaid leave, subject to prior approval by DG ECHO based on the justification provided and the needs of the service. This type of leave temporarily suspends the employment relationship and may affect entitlements such as annual leave, progression, and benefits depending on its duration. Specific conditions apply regarding the minimum duration, continuity, and combination with other leave types. Financial implications, including salary, allowances, and cost coverage, vary according to the length of the unpaid leave and are outlined in the relevant agreement.

## 7. TELEWORKING GUIDELINES

TAs are authorised to work from outside their place of assignment for up to 10 working days per calendar year. It can be combined with leave (annual or any other special leave).
TAs may telework 1 day a week at their place of assignment subject to their Head of Office approval.

## 8. HOUSING

Technical assistants must have suitable and secure accommodation to be able to fulfil their duties.

For short-term assignments (short-term contracts and Surge Response Experts), DG ECHO will provide the accommodation regardless of the housing regime of the duty station.

For long-term assignments, housing with facilities (kitchen, laundry, sufficient space, etc.) is needed. In certain countries (normally category 3 offices), DG ECHO may operate a “guesthouse” system, which can serve as accommodation both in a duty station and in a mission location. If such guesthouses are provided by DG ECHO, technical assistants must stay there.

In family duty stations, the housing will take into account the family composition, when possible in the housing market, and visitors are allowed. In non-family duty stations, non-residential visitors (i.e. visitors not living in the country themselves) are not accepted.

TAs are informed as part of their assignment information, if their accommodation will be under a regime of housing allowance (housing regime A[2]) or housing provision (housing regime B[3]).

The precise housing conditions relating to the contracts are outlined in Chapter V of the General Rules governing the employment contracts of Technical Assistants working in European Union Humanitarian Aid operations in non-member countries and the "Housing Policy (2023) in accordance with art 29 of the TA General conditions".

# 9. CONTACT POINT

For further information, please contact the DG ECHO Field Network Unit: ECHO-HR-TAS@ec.europa.eu

[2] Technical assistants are responsible for finding suitable accommodation, signing the lease agreement and paying the rent. DG ECHO subsequently reimburses the rent in accordance with applicable ceilings and conditions. In this regime, accommodation is generally unfurnished, although exceptions may apply.

[3] DG ECHO takes responsibility for identifying the accommodation, signing the lease, and paying the rent directly. This arrangement does not necessarily mean that the accommodation is furnished