

Gender–Age Marker

Assessment Report
2016 and 2017

June 2020

European Civil
Protection and
Humanitarian Aid
Operations

Gender-Age Marker

Assessment Report 2016 and 2017

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June 2020

DG ECHO Gender- and age-sensitive humanitarian aid documents

DG ECHO Thematic Policy Document No 6:
Gender: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance
(July 2013)

DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker Toolkit

DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker Report,
Assessment 2014 and 2015
(October 2018)

Further information:

[https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/
gender-sensitive-aid_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/gender-sensitive-aid_en)

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Acronyms

DRR/DP	Disasters Risk Reduction / Disaster preparedness
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
DO	Desk Officer
EU	European Union
FE	Field expert (it refers to DG ECHO staff)
MPCT	Multi-purpose Cash Transfers
PROGEN	Protection and Gender Team
HIP	Humanitarian Implementation Plan
HQ	Headquarters
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
TA	Technical Assistant
SADD	Sex and age disaggregated data
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Executive Summary

Gender matters in humanitarian assistance because natural disasters and man-made crises have a different impact on women, girls, boys and men and elderly people. They have differentiated needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities. In order to respond effectively to the differentiated needs of various gender and age groups, humanitarian assistance supported by the European Union must take gender and age into high consideration. In line with the **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid**¹ and the 2013 humanitarian gender policy '**Gender in Humanitarian Aid: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance**',² the **Gender-Age Marker**³ (herein after referred to as "the Marker") was introduced on January 1, 2014.

The Marker aims at improving the quality of humanitarian aid actions. It fosters assistance that is more sensitive to the differentiated needs and capacities of women, girls, boys and men by creating a forum for the staff of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - DG ECHO) and partners to constructively discuss gender and age issues in humanitarian projects. It tracks gender and age sensitive actions, allowing Commission staff to monitor its own performance in integrating gender and age.

The Marker consists of four criteria and is applied throughout the lifetime of the project (proposal, monitoring and final report stage). Depending on the stage of the management cycle, the relevant DG ECHO staff and the EU's humanitarian partners provide inputs upon which the marker is determined. The final mark is given by DG ECHO staff in Brussels Headquarters at the final report stage.

The four criteria of the Gender-Age Marker are: Gender and age analysis/sex and age disaggregated data (SADD); Adapted Assistance; Negative Effects; and Adequate Participation. Depending on how many criteria are met, the project is given a mark. This ranges from '0' (meaning that the action barely incorporates gender and age) to '2' (meaning that the action strongly incorporates gender and age). All types of humanitarian actions funded by DG ECHO are marked. However, DG ECHO staff mark emergency decisions only once the final report is submitted. For those few humanitarian actions that do not directly deal with affected populations the marker is considered 'Not Applicable' ('N/A').⁴

¹ European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

² DG ECHO — Thematic Policy Document. Gender-Different Needs, Adapted Assistance. 2013.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_age_marker_toolkit.pdf

⁴ Please refer to the introduction on page 12-13 for further explanation of how the Marker works.

In October 2018, DG ECHO published its **first assessment report on the Marker** (application in 2014 and 2015).⁵ This report highlighted the usefulness of the marker and called upon partners to continue investing in capacity-building on gender and age. It concluded that in 2015, 81% of all EU humanitarian aid integrated gender and age considerations ‘strongly’ or ‘to a certain extent’.

This is the second assessment report on the DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker. It looks at the application of the Marker for projects that started in 2016 and 2017.

Regular assessment provides valuable insights into the progress made by DG ECHO and partners regarding gender and age-sensitive humanitarian programming and helps to identify gaps and challenges. In 2020, DG ECHO will also undertake an evaluation on the implementation of its Gender Policy (2013) for the period 2014-2018. The evaluation will also look at the impact of the Gender-Age Marker. The data gathered through this assessment will provide a useful input for this evaluation.

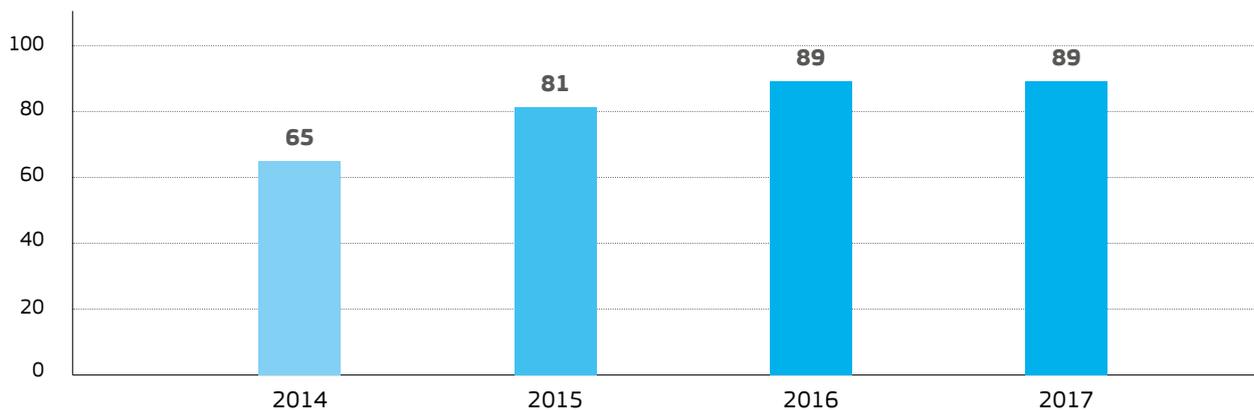
⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/gender_and_age_marker_2014-2015_full_report.pdf

Main Findings

1. An overall improvement in the integration of gender and age considerations into humanitarian assistance

The final marks provided in 2016 and 2017 reflect a considerable upwards trend compared to the previous period assessed. In both 2016 and 2017, **89% of all DG ECHO-funded actions integrated gender and age considerations either 'strongly' (mark '2') or 'to a certain extent' (mark '1')**. This represents a remarkable improvement from the percentages in the previous period (65% in 2014 and 81% in 2015).

Graphic 1. % of actions that integrate gender and age considerations (mark '1' or '2' in Gender-Age Marker)



In addition, the percentage of projects marked with '2' has increased from proposal to monitoring in both years. To illustrate, in 2016, DG ECHO field staff marked 38% of actions at proposal stage with a '2', compared to 46% at monitoring stage. In 2017, the percentage changed from 46% to 51%. This is important as this stage allows to monitor the actions on the ground (rather than only what is written in proposals). This underlines the importance of having this quality and accountability tool in place, to measure progress made, as well as indication of the success of the Marker to induce and encourage better mainstreaming of gender and age considerations in EU-funded humanitarian assistance.

2. Varying levels of success in meeting the marker's four criterion

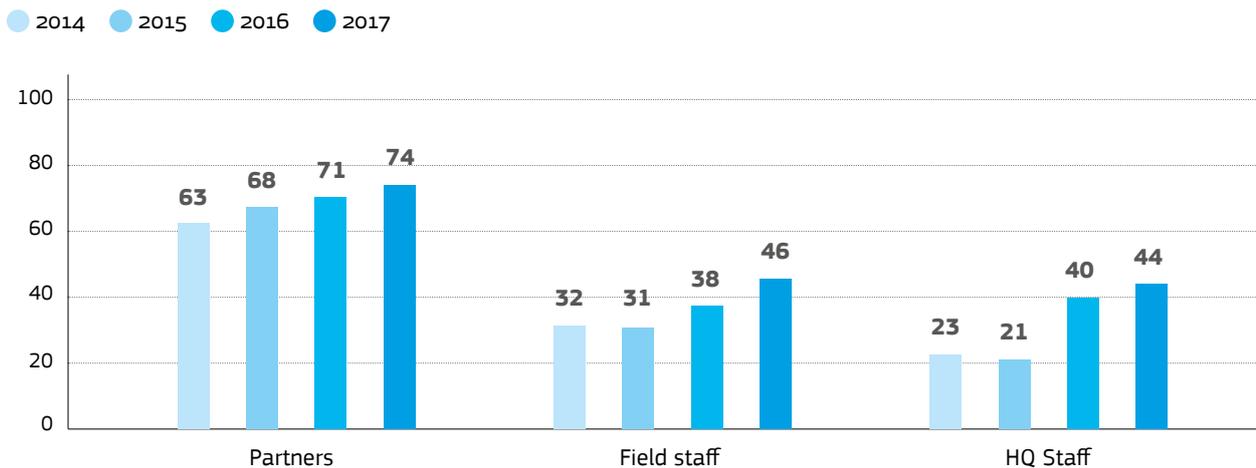
The criterion most often sufficiently met for the period 2016-2017 is 'Criterion 2' (Adapted assistance) and the criterion that was least met is 'Criterion 4' (Adequate participation). The previous assessment report included the same conclusion. This allows DG ECHO to pay additional attention to these two aspects in i.e. the discussions with partners at proposal-stage.

3. Discrepancy between marking between DG ECHO and its partners⁶

Discrepancy in marking between the DG ECHO staff and its humanitarian partners continued. To illustrate, in 2016, 71 % of proposals were self-assessed by partners with the highest score (mark '2'). Meanwhile DG ECHO field staff gave a mark '2' to 38 % of proposals and DG ECHO HQ staff to 40 % of proposals. Similarly, for 2017, 74 % of proposals were self-assessed by partners with the highest score (mark '2'). Meanwhile DG ECHO field staff gave a mark '2' to 46 % of proposals and DG ECHO HQ staff to 44 % of proposals.

Despite the differences in marks, the graph below shows a consistent increase in proposals marked with '2' by all those involved in the marking process. Moreover, it shows that while discrepancy in marks between DG ECHO partners and DG ECHO staff (in HQ) remains considerable in 2017 (30 %) it also represents a sharp decrease since the introduction of the Marker in 2014 (40 %). Another positive trend is represented by the considerable decrease in discrepancy between marks provided by DG ECHO field and HQ staff (from an average of 9 % in 2014 to 2 % in 2017).

Graphic 2. % of proposals marked with '2'



⁶ With the current marking system, partners only fill in a self-assessment at proposal stage. At monitoring and final report stage only DG ECHO staff provides a mark, while partners provide only narrative comments.

4. Consistent improvement in correct and consistent marking, but new challenges emerge

The Marker was made mandatory at all phases of the action for DG ECHO field and HQ staff in July 2017. It is therefore unsurprising that the consistency in marking is a near perfect 100 % at proposal and final report stage.

Nevertheless, some issues have been identified, and for a number of actions information on **the Marker was not filled in at monitoring stage**. A possible explanation seems to be related to the system: while the Marker remains a mandatory field to be completed in the monitoring report (FichOp), the first question one needs to reply is whether the Marker is applicable. It is possible that this could lead to a mistaken interpretation that the Marker must be filled in only if gender and age considerations have been monitored during the mission. Another possible explanation is that monitoring reports were simply not completed, and the project was finalised in any case.

The assessment also demonstrated that DG ECHO staff potentially continue to struggle with the application of the Marker to urgent actions. While on the basis of the Gender and Age Marker Toolkit, the Marker is not accessible at proposal stage (so also not for Partners), and should therefore only be filled in at monitoring and final report stage, DG ECHO staff frequently do not fill in the Marker at any stage, deeming it not-applicable.

Lastly, as in the previous period assessed, partners mostly used the **comments section** of the Marker to inform on how the proposed action will ensure gender and age mainstreaming, instead of focusing on additional information not included in other sections of the Single Form (where such information should be included). However, some improvement was found in 2017.

5. Need to make the marks more meaningful

The random quality check exercise carried out by the DG ECHO Protection and Gender Working Group (ProGen)⁷ demonstrated that, similarly to the findings of the assessment covering 2014-2015, discrepancies exist between the marking of on the one hand partners and DG ECHO staff and on the other hand the ProGen. For the sample of 15 projects, on average only 1 project at proposal and final report stage received the same mark from all actors (DG ECHO staff, partners and the DG ECHO Protection and Gender Working Group). Whilst it is not uncommon that partners and DG ECHO staff differ of opinion, this assessment showed that also discrepancies exist between DG ECHO field/HQ staff and the ProGen. Partners and DG ECHO field/desk staff also consistently mark much higher than the ProGen. On a positive note, ProGen does provide higher average marks at final report level for 2017 (0.75 on average), as compared to 2014 (0.45 on average), -2015 (0.57 on average), as well as 2016 (0 on average).

⁷ The DG ECHO Protection and Gender Working Group (ProGen) consists of the 6 thematic experts on Protection and Gender based in the DG ECHO regional field offices as well as the policy officer for Gender and Age based in Brussels. The quality check entails these 7 members of DG ECHO checking a random sample of projects that have been marked by their DG ECHO colleagues and partners, and check the quality of the marks provided. In short, a project awarded a '2', did it really integrate well gender and age? Please note that in the previous assessment report this group of experts was referred to as the Gender and Protection Team or GPT (to identify the working together of the expert on gender with the experts on protection), but since the terms of references of experts have changed to Protection and Gender, in this report they will be referred to as ProGen.

Recommendations

1. Continued capacity building needed on the marker

The key findings above point to the need for continued capacity building and familiarisation with the application of the DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker. This will foster improvements in for instance, making the marks more meaningful and clarity on the application of the Marker in urgent actions.

Capacity-building efforts undertaken by DG ECHO in 2017 focused on practical workshops on gender-age mainstreaming in specific sectors as opposed to training on the use of the Marker itself.

Moreover, DG ECHO has now a team of 6 field thematic experts on Protection and Gender to enhance the synergies between the two thematic areas and to build upon them to enhance the quality of humanitarian assistance. The increased gender capacities in the field will also be pivotal for continuous capacity building for Technical Assistants.

In view of the high turn-over of staff and the limited internal capacity to provide trainings around the globe to both partners and DG ECHO staff, in 2019 a **Gender-Age Marker e-learning**⁸ was launched. This e-learning explains the functioning of the DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker, as well as the key concepts of gender and age. Accessible to all DG ECHO staff and partners, the online learning includes a practical case-study where the participants do self-marking (for partners) and judge a proposal *vis-à-vis* its integration of gender and age (for DG ECHO staff).

2. Applying the marker correctly and consistently in the project cycle

In view of the noted difficulties on consistent marking, some further IT solutions could be found to further eliminate erroneous interpretation of the application of the Marker. For instance, at monitoring stage, information on the Marker is often not filled in. A possible solution could be to remove the question whether or not the Marker applies. Instead, it could be ensured that if the Marker has been deemed applicable at the proposal stage, it should automatically appear for the other phase. IT solutions have proven useful in the past, as exemplified by the success of making the Marker mandatory and with automatic calculation.

Possibilities could be explored to enhance to the analysis of targeted actions, both in terms of revising categories of vulnerabilities as well as the number of vulnerabilities that can be selected at the same time.

⁸ <https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/dl/start>

The way forward

DG ECHO is committed to improving gender and age mainstreaming. This is demonstrated by the continued efforts to improve the implementation of the Gender-Age Marker through different initiatives.

DG ECHO has also commissioned an independent evaluation on the implementation of its Gender Policy (2013) for the period 2014-2018. The evaluation will also look at the impact and usage of the Gender-Age Marker. It is expected that the recommendations of the evaluation will help DG ECHO to adopt concrete measures to further improve the Gender-Age Marker. Ways to address the remaining further IT solutions to address some of the errors in application of the Marker will also be explored.

In parallel, DG ECHO will continue to invest on building capacities of DG ECHO staff on gender and age mainstreaming, both through its network of Protection and Gender Thematic Experts and through the newly launched e-learning. DG ECHO will continue to promote the usage of the e-learning with its own staff, as well as with partners, e.g. in the context of the annual programming exercise.

The Protection and Gender experts are currently also undertaking work to enhance mainstreaming protection in humanitarian assistance. This work will be useful to inform actions to be undertaken to increase partners' performances in meeting 'Criterion 3' of the Gender-Age Marker (Negative effects).

Regular assessments of the Gender-Age Marker will continue to be conducted to monitor progress and continue delivering qualitative gender and age-sensitive humanitarian programming.

The increase of projects that obtained the highest score (mark '2'), from 22% in 2014-2015 (on average), to 45% in 2016-2017 (on average) indicates partners' interest in gender and age mainstreaming. This needs however to translate into continued commitment on capacity-building, policies and tools. These efforts are crucial for the delivery of quality assistance.

Introduction

Natural disasters and man-made crises are not gender neutral. Women, girls, boys, and men have differentiated needs, suffer from different vulnerabilities, face specific risks, do not necessarily have access to the same resources and services, develop diverse coping or survival mechanisms and possess specific capacities to support their families and communities during and in the aftermath of disasters and conflict. Thus, in order to respond effectively to the differentiated needs of various gender-age groups, EU humanitarian assistance must take gender and age considerations into account. Integrating gender and age enhances the **quality** of humanitarian programming, in line with the EU's humanitarian mandate. Aid that is not gender and age-sensitive is less effective. It risks not reaching the most vulnerable people or failing to respond adequately to their specific needs. Furthermore, it could expose vulnerable populations to risks such as sexual and gender-based violence.

The **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid**⁹ stresses the need to integrate gender and age considerations, including protection strategies against sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian response. Moreover, DG ECHO's policy '**Gender in Humanitarian Aid: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance**'¹⁰ (2013), stresses the importance of gender mainstreaming, namely systematically providing assistance that is adapted to the specific needs and capacities of women, girls, boys, men of all ages.

To ensure that this policy is effectively implemented, DG ECHO introduced the **Gender-Age Marker** on 1 January 2014, to improve the quality of humanitarian aid. The Gender-Age Marker fosters assistance that is more sensitive to the differentiated needs and capacities of women, girls, boys and men by creating a forum for the Commission's humanitarian staff and partners to constructively discuss gender and age issues in humanitarian projects. The Marker consists of four criteria and is applied throughout the lifetime of the project (proposal, monitoring and final report stage). Depending on the stage of the management cycle, the relevant DG ECHO staff and the EU's humanitarian partners provide inputs upon which the marker is determined. The final mark is given by DG ECHO staff at the final report stage. See further information on the workings of the Marker in the next section.

This is the second assessment report on the DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker. It looks at the application of the Marker for projects that started in 2016 and 2017.

⁹ European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

¹⁰ DG ECHO — Thematic Policy Document. Gender-Different Needs, Adapted Assistance. 2013.

This report follows the **October 2018 report that assessed the application of the Marker in 2014 and 2015**.¹¹ This report concluded, amongst other things, an improvement of integration of gender and age considerations in the reporting period. To illustrate, in 2014 65 % of all DG ECHO-funded actions integrated gender and age considerations, compared to 81 % in 2015. The first report also noted a significant increase in application of the marker, and a consistent increase in correct marking. Since then the Marker has become mandatory, and is now calculated automatically through the system, based on the assessment of each criteria. It highlighted that the 'Criterion 2' (Adapted assistance) was the most commonly met, and 'Criterion 4' (Adequate participation) was the least commonly met, as well as that DG ECHO staff and partners frequently provide different marks.

Regular assessment provides valuable insights into the progress made by DG ECHO and partners regarding gender and age-sensitive humanitarian programming and helps to identify gaps and challenges as well as strategies to overcome them.

In 2020, DG ECHO will also undertake an evaluation on the implementation of its Gender Policy (2013) for the period 2014-2018. The evaluation will also look at the impact of the Gender-Age Marker. The data and information gathered through this assessment will provide a useful input for this evaluation, which will formulate recommendations for a way forward.

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/gender_and_age_marker_2014-2015_full_report.pdf

1. How the Marker Works

The Marker consists of four criteria and is applied throughout the action management cycle namely at proposal, monitoring and final report stage. Depending on the stage of the management cycle, DG ECHO staff and partners provide different inputs upon which the marker is determined.

Figure 1. The marking process step by step

NUMBER OF CRITERIA MET		MARK		MEANING
The action does not deal directly with affected populations	»	N/A	=	The marker is not applicable
The action meets none or only 1 criteria	»	0	=	The action barely integrates gender and age
The action meets 2 or 3 criteria	»	1	=	The action integrates gender and age to a certain extent
The action meets all 4 criteria	»	2	=	The action strongly integrates gender and age

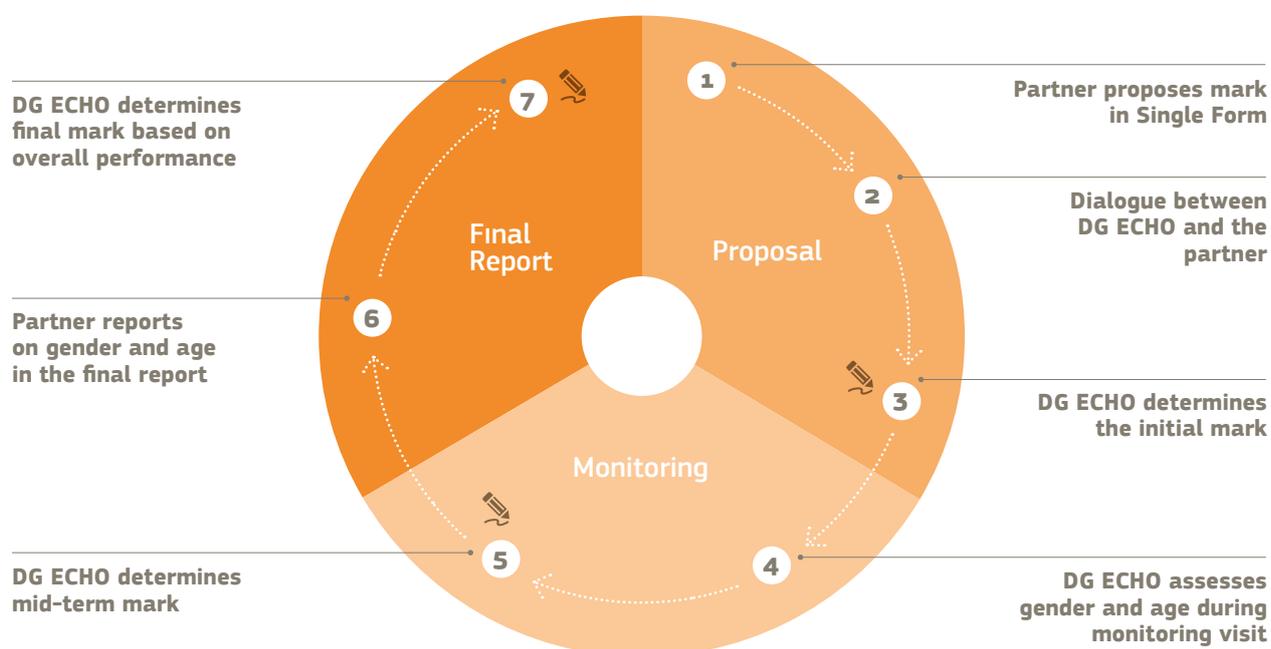
The four criteria of the Gender-Age Marker are:

1. **Gender and age analysis/sex and age disaggregated data (SADD).**
2. **Assistance adapted to the specific needs and capacities of different gender and age groups.**
3. **Prevention and mitigation of negative effects.**
4. **Adequate participation.**

Depending on how many criteria are met, the project is given a mark. This ranges from '0' (meaning that the action barely incorporates gender and age) to '2' (meaning that the action strongly incorporates gender and age).

The Gender-Age Marker is a collaborative tool used by both partner organisations and DG ECHO staff. *Figure 2* provides an overview of the application of the marker at different stages of the process.

Figure 2. The marking process step by step



Partners self-assess to which extent their proposals fulfil the four criteria of the Marker and suggest an initial mark which is then discussed with — and if necessary, adjusted by — DG ECHO. At monitoring stage, DG ECHO staff conducts field visits to observe the progress made by a project on the ground. On the basis of these monitoring visits, DG ECHO staff assign a mark to each action, which can either confirm or change the mark provided at proposal stage. At the final report stage, partners provide information against the targets set at proposal stage (and eventual changes set through modification requests). DG ECHO staff subsequently determines the final mark based on the information provided by partners in the final report. *Table 1* explains the roles of partners and DG ECHO staff during the marking process.

Table 1. Marking process

	PARTNER			DG ECHO (FIELD)			DG ECHO (HQ)		
	Criteria	General	Comments	Criteria	General	Comments	Criteria	General	Comments
PROPOSAL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
MONITORING	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
INTERIM REPORT	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
FINAL REPORT	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

All types of humanitarian actions funded by DG ECHO are marked. However, partners and DG ECHO staff mark urgent actions and actions funded under emergency decisions only once the final report is submitted. For those few humanitarian actions that do not directly deal with affected populations (such as logistics or emergency telecommunications) the marker is considered 'Not Applicable' ('N/A').

For some projects, information on the Marker was not filled in for some of the phases (particularly at the monitoring stage). In those cases, the proposal/action was considered as "Wrongly Marked", as not in line with the guidance provided by the DG ECHO Gender and Age Marker Toolkit.

2. Objective of the Assessment and Methodology

This assessment reviews the use of the Gender-Age Marker for its third and fourth year of implementation (2016 and 2017). The main objective of the assessment is to provide insights into the progress made by DG ECHO and partners regarding gender and age-sensitive humanitarian programming, identify gaps and challenges and develop recommendations to overcome them.

This assessment looks at the following aspects:

- Measure and compare the marks of '0', '1', '2' and 'N/A' attributed to DG ECHO's actions in 2016 and 2017.
- Assess the use of the Marker by both partners and DG ECHO staff.
- Provide an overview of the amount of targeted actions funded by DG ECHO in 2016 and 2017.
- Ensure that challenges regarding the use of the marker are addressed with the final aim to enhance gender and age integration in EU funded humanitarian actions.

This assessment reviews the Marker using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The assessment analyses and presents the data produced by a desk review which allows for the evaluation of the marker's usage at all three phases of the management cycle by partners and DG ECHO staff in Brussels and in the field. The desk review is complemented by a random quality check exercise conducted by the DG ECHO Protection and Gender Working Group (ProGen)¹² and supported by independent experts of the INSPIRE Consortium conducting the overall assessment.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Desk review

A total of 1,406 (801 starting in 2016 and 605 in 2017) DG ECHO funded actions with a **start date between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017** were reviewed based on the following criteria: *a*) proposal must have been funded under the 2016 or 2017 Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs) and *b*) a final report must have been already submitted by partners to be able to assess all phases. Four proposals were excluded from the assessment due to complete lack of information on the Marker, hence the total number of proposals assessed is 1,402 (797 in 2016 and 605 in 2017).¹³

¹² The DG ECHO Protection and Gender Working Group (ProGen) consists of the 6 thematic experts on Protection and Gender based in the DG ECHO regional field offices as well as the policy officer for Gender and Age based in Brussels. The quality check entails these 7 members of DG ECHO checking a random sample of projects that have been marked by their DG ECHO colleagues and partners, and check the quality of the marks provided. In short, a project awarded a '2', did it really integrate well gender and age?

¹³ Three of the four proposals were to be implemented by MSF, who in 2016 decided not to accept EU funding anymore, after appraisal was conducted. The fourth proposal, to be implemented by UN-HABITAT, has no information in the system and was therefore excluded from the assessment.

In order to correctly assess the performance of the Marker, the data set was modified to correct wrongly calculated marks — referring to marks which did not correspond to the number of criteria sufficiently met. These incorrect marks occur when partners or DG ECHO staff manually filled out the individual criteria in the e-single form but encountered problems to calculate the correct resultant mark.

Targeted actions

Certain actions exclusively target a specific gender or age group, rather than providing assistance to most or all members of a community (i.e. boys at risk of forced recruitment by armed groups). Data was extrapolated to measure to what extent Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) actions were funded by DG ECHO.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Random Check

The objective of the exercise, conducted by the DG ECHO Protection and Gender Working Group (ProGen), was to assess how many proposals and final reports had received a “correct” mark¹⁴ by DG ECHO staff and partners based on the proposed actions’ contents. A total of 15 actions from various regions, sectors and partners were selected. In addition, this same random sample of 15 projects were analysed by the INSPIRE team to assess how the “narrative comments” section of the Gender-Age Marker in the Single Form was used by partners as well as what DG ECHO staff filled in on their assessment of the Marker.

LIMITATIONS

1. The Marker is not applicable to proposals exclusively not focusing on the provision of direct assistance to persons in need (e.g. focusing on sectors such as coordination and security). Multi-sectorial proposals including coordination and security among other sectors, however, are considered eligible for the sake of this assessment even though a deeper analysis was not conducted on the percentage of budget spent in the different sectors.
2. Regarding targeted actions, they are commonly defined as targeting a specific gender or age group, rather than providing assistance to the majority or all members of a community. While this definition of targeted actions entails a wide range of actions from different sectors, this assessment solely focuses on two of these dimensions, namely gender-based violence (GBV) and Child Protection.

¹⁴ “Correctly” marked means that the instructions from the Gender-Age Marker Toolkit were followed.

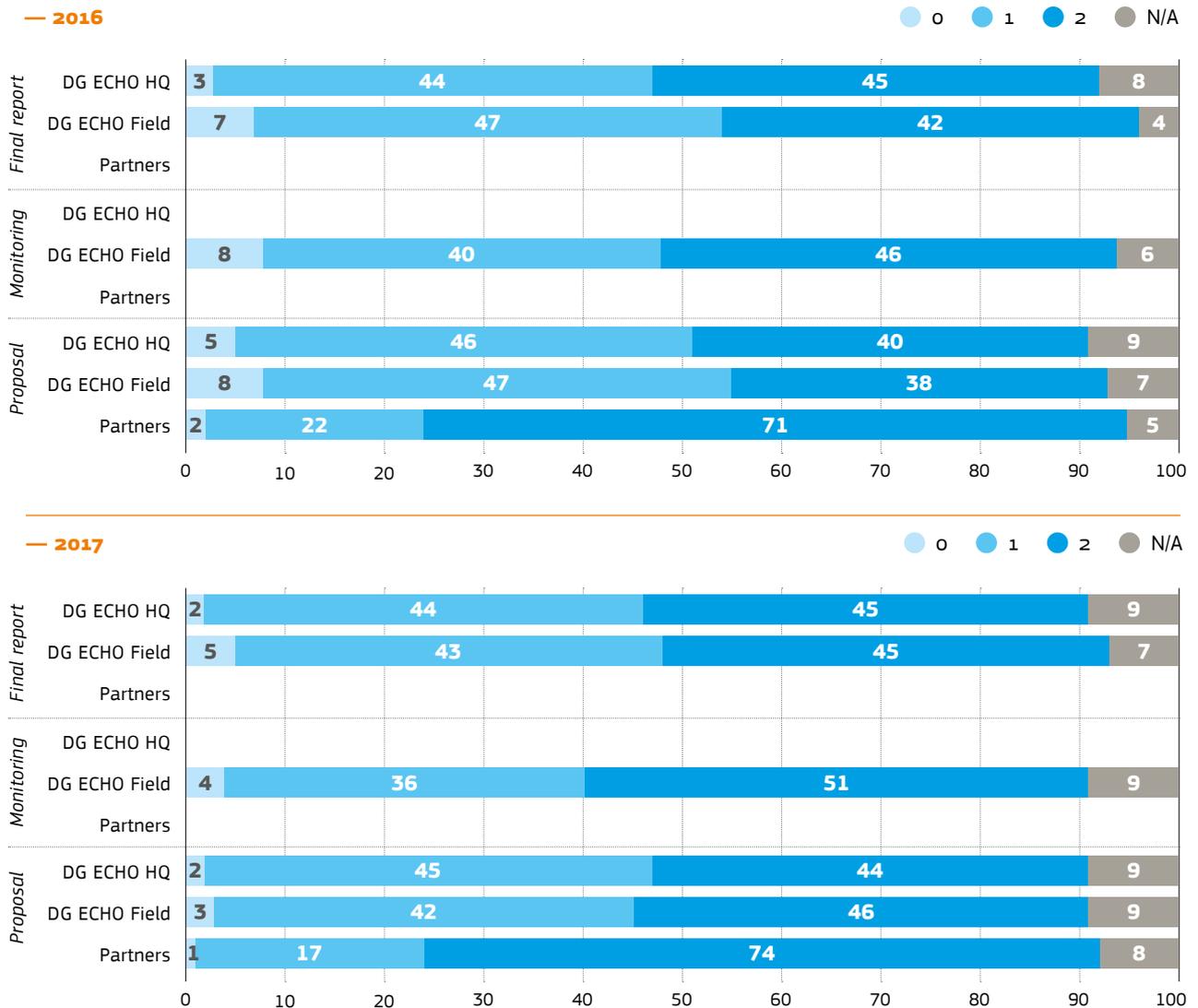
3. Marking in 2016 and 2017

3.1. OVERALL MARKING

In this section the marks provided by DG ECHO and partners at each of the phases of the marking process (final report, monitoring y proposal) will be analysed.

As explained above, DG ECHO staff (field and headquarters) and partners have different roles at different stages of the project cycle management. This is why in the graph below partners are only listed for the proposal stage, and DG ECHO headquarters staff only for proposal and final report. To recall, the mark that is considered ‘final and relevant for statistical purposes’ is the mark that DG ECHO headquarters (HQ) staff gives at final report stage.

Graphic 3/4. Marks (in %) provided by partners and DG ECHO staff at all stages in 2016 and 2017



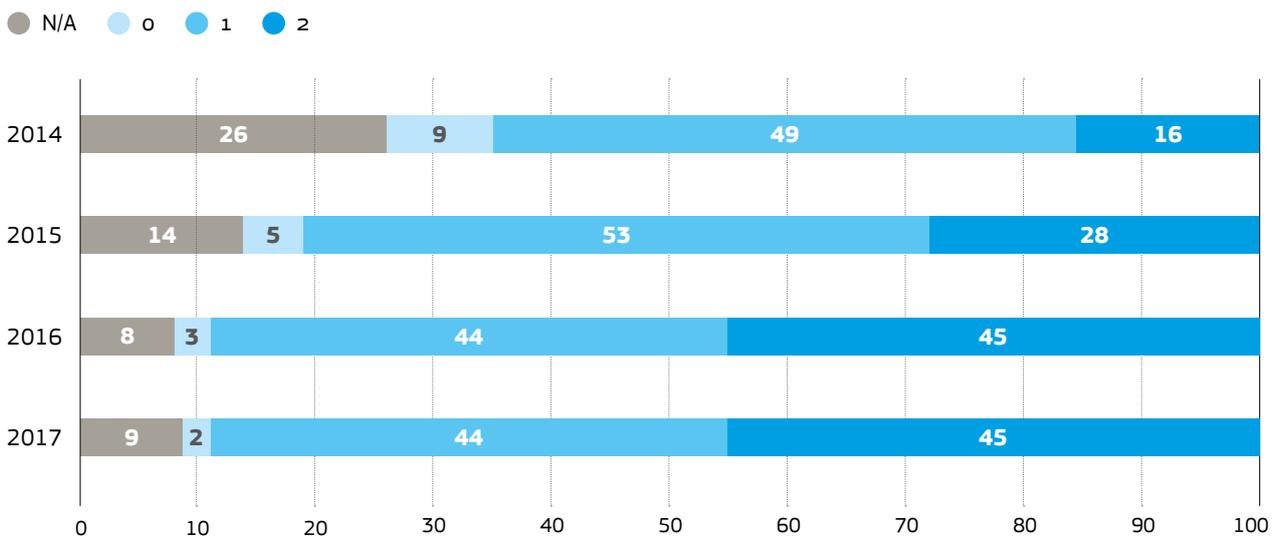
Partners continue to be more generous in their self-assessment compared to DG ECHO staff. In both 2016 and 2017, partners' self — assessments provided the highest score (mark '2') to more than 70% of proposals; meanwhile DG ECHO field staff gave a mark '2' to 38% and 46% of proposals in 2016 and 2017 respectively and DG ECHO HQ staff to 40% and 45%. This follows the trend that already emerged in the previous assessment report, covering 2014-2015.

Secondly, whilst the marks provided are quite similar with only slight differences from 2016 to 2017, improvements can be noticed. For instance, the assessment of DG ECHO field experts in marking projects 2 has increased between 2016 and 2017 at proposal (38% to 46%).

It is also encouraging to see that the percentage of mark '2' increases from proposal to monitoring for both years. In 2016, DG ECHO field experts marked 38% of actions at proposal stage a '2', compared to 46% at monitoring stage. In 2017, this changed from 46% to 51%. This is important as this stage allows for monitoring of the partners actions in practice (rather than only what is written in proposals).

In addition, the final marks allocated to projects by DG ECHO HQ staff have largely stayed the same in 2016 and 2017, signalling internal consistency. In 2016, 89% of projects are considered to integrate gender and age, at least to a certain extent.¹⁵ In 2017, this increases to 90%. It is important to note that this reflects a considerable and consistent upwards trend from the previous period assessed (65% in 2014 and 81% in 2015). See below graph that showcases this trend.

Graphic 5. Final report marks: % of actions integrating gender and age considerations



¹⁵ Actions marked either '1' or '2' by DG ECHO staff at HQ.

Looking across the four years, the percentage of actions marked with a '2' has considerably increased, from 16 % in 2014 to 45 % in 2017.

In addition, actions marked 0 have decreased from 9 % to 2 %. A major change in this seems to be also the number of actions that have been marked 'N/A' (from 26 % to 7.8 %), possibly suggesting a better understanding of the Marker application.

Proposals with mark '1' seem to not have changed considerably across the four years.

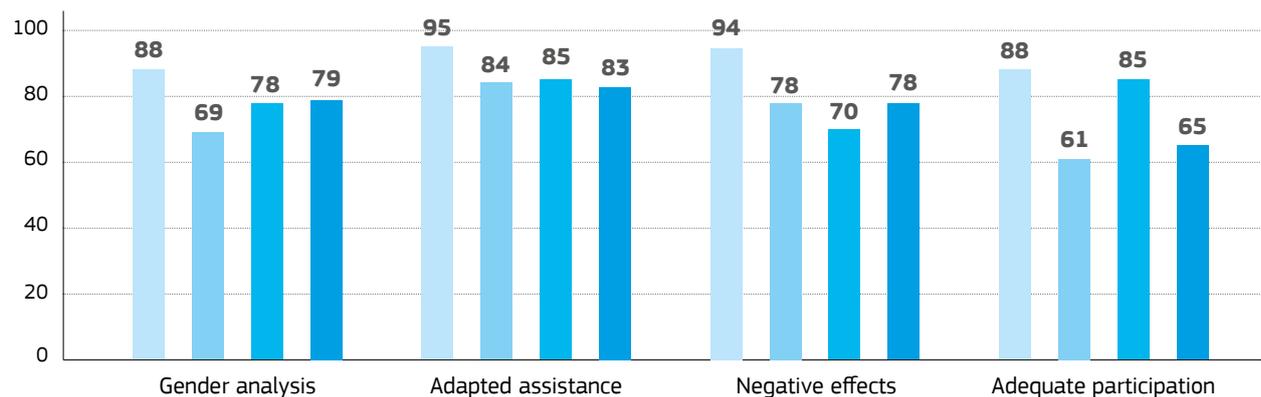
Marking According to Different Criteria¹⁶

Moving on now deeper into the analysis, see below assessment on the individual criteria. To recall, the general mark is calculated upon the feedback provided by partners and DG ECHO staff (in the field) to each of the four criteria ("Yes" or not "Not Sufficiently"). Looking at the individual criteria allows us to assess what parts of the gender and age integration aspects are better understood than others which eventually helps in better designing capacity building and support to DG ECHO staff and partners. As mentioned before, the majority of proposals, and actions have been assessed positively by both partners and DG ECHO. For this reason, the graphs below only provide information related to when a specific criterion was considered "Not Sufficiently Met", in order to identify main challenges and develop actions to counter them.

Graphic 6. Marks provided by partners to each criterion in 2016 (in %)

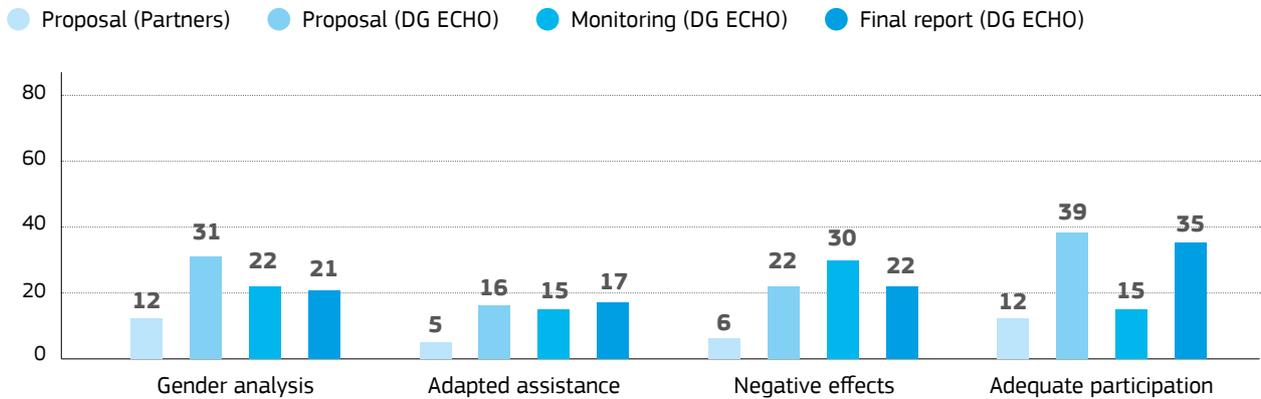
— Criteria Marked with 'Yes'

● Proposal (Partners) ● Proposal (DG ECHO) ● Monitoring (DG ECHO) ● Final report (DG ECHO)



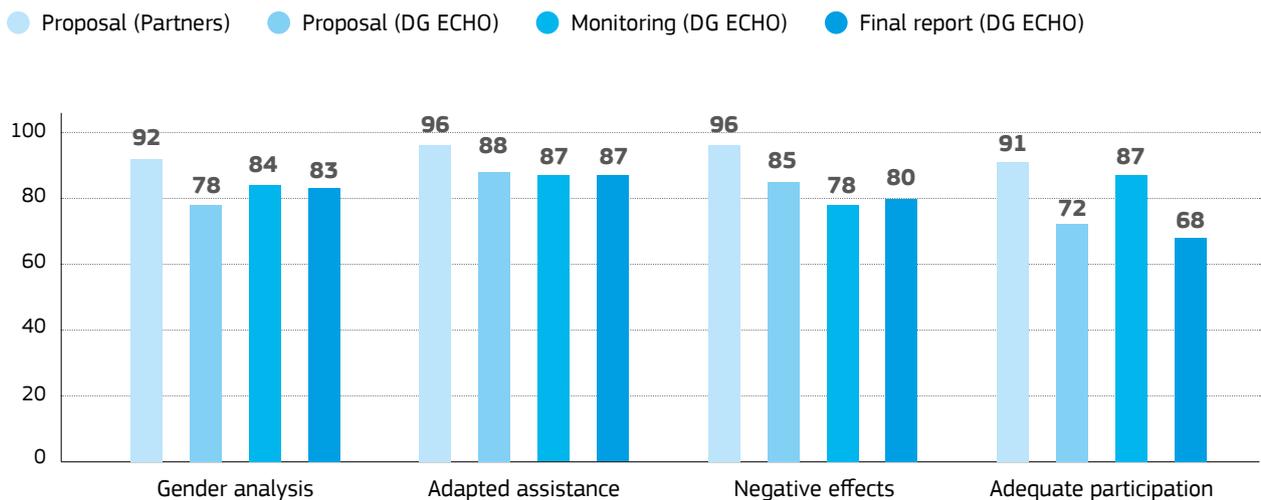
¹⁶ Analysis done with correctly marked answers ('0', '1', '2' and 'N/A'); not included the actions where information was missing.

— Criteria Marked with 'Not Sufficiently'

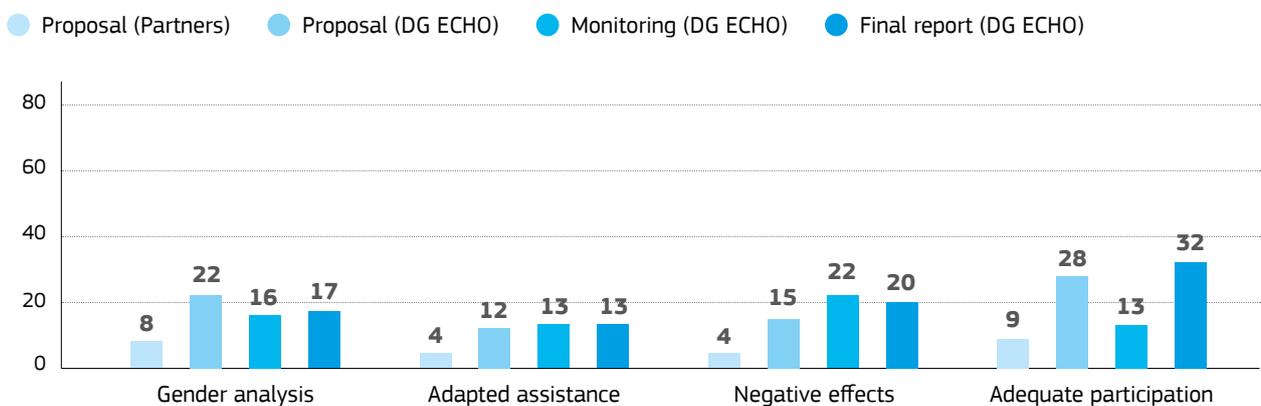


Graphic 7. Marks provided¹⁷ by partners to each criterion in 2017 (in %)

— Criteria Marked with 'Yes'



— Criteria Marked with 'Not Sufficiently'



¹⁷ Percentages are calculated in the basis of the correct marking, meaning that it has been excluded from the total sample the actions where no information was available. The information is presented according to the mark given by each actor in each phase.

There seems to be little difference in assessment between 2016-2017.

Looking at the average scores between proposal, monitoring and final report stage given by DG ECHO staff and partners, for 2016 and 2017, 'Criterion 2' (Adapted assistance) was most frequently met. For both years, at proposal stage, partners considered 'Criterion 1' (Gender analysis/SADD) and 'Criterion 4' (Adequate participation) the most difficult to meet. This is the same assessment for DG ECHO staff, who most frequently noted that 'Criterion 1' and '4' were not met. At monitoring stage, however, DG ECHO field staff changes the analysis and 'Criterion 3' (Negative effects) seems to become the criteria least frequently met. At final report stage, overwhelmingly 'Criterion 4' (Adequate participation) is deemed not met.

It should be noted also that compared to 2014-2015, more individual criteria have been met. But this is not surprising, seeing as we concluded in the previous section that the overall final marks have significantly increased in 2016-2017, compared with the previous reporting period.

3.2. CONSISTENT AND CORRECT MARKING

Table 2. Percentage of marked proposals in 2016 and 2017

	MARK PROPOSAL STAGE ¹⁸		MARK MONITORING STAGE ¹⁹		MARK FINAL REPORT STAGE	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
PARTNERS	100%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
DG ECHO FIELD	100%	100%	89%	91%	100%	100%
DG ECHO DESK	100%	100% ²⁰	N/A	N/A	100%	100%

It is unsurprising that the consistency of marking at proposal and final report stage is perfect, as the Marker was made mandatory in the IT system in July 2014.

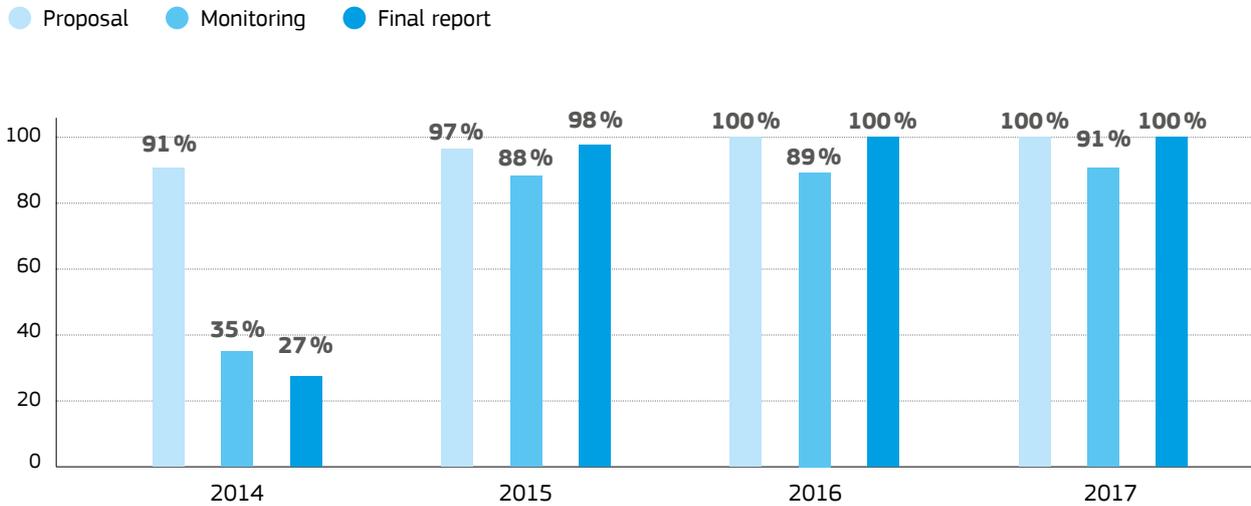
An issue was however identified at monitoring stage. DG ECHO field staff did not fill in the Marker (i.e. the project was not marked at that stage) 11% and 9% of the projects monitored in 2016 and 2017 respectively. A possible explanation for this is that DG ECHO field staff, is asked the question: *Is the Gender-Age Marker Applicable?* when they fill in the monitoring report. Some staff may have answered "Not Applicable", as the question may have been interpreted to mean if the four criteria were monitored during the mission.

¹⁸ Because the Gender-Age marker is not mandatory at the proposal stages for urgent actions, those have been excluded.

¹⁹ These percentages have been calculated over the total number of actions for which there was information available at monitoring stage.

²⁰ There is a 1% missing because Project 2017/00770 had no information at all, but by rounding decimals, the total is 100%.

Graphic 8. Proposals marked (by DG ECHO HQ staff for proposal and final report, and DG ECHO field staff for monitoring report)



Looking at the four years, there has been a noticeable improvement in the consistence of the marking process. The overall trend is definitely positive. The changes in the IT system have therefore produced the desired effect. A point of improvement is the monitoring stage, where DG ECHO field staff may need more guidance on marking proposals.

Table 3.²¹ Correctly marked actions in 2016 and 2017

	PROPOSAL STAGE		MONITORING STAGE		FINAL REPORT STAGE	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
PARTNERS	99%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
DG ECHO FIELD	97%	99%	79%	83%	97%	97%

²¹ Those percentages missing are due to a lack of information, failure in understanding the weighting system (i.e.: 4 Yes = 1) and answered as 'N/A' when they do are applicable (i.e.: Emergencies in final report, being non applicable only in the proposal stage).

"Correctly" marked implies that the general mark has been correctly calculated based on the feedback provided on each of the four criteria as outlined in the instructions in the Marker Toolkit. For instance, if none of the criteria are met, then the mark should be '0'. To recall, DG ECHO desk officers only provide an overall mark and do not fill in the four criteria individually. Therefore, their marks cannot be considered wrongly generated. Moreover, in 2016, following the findings of the previous assessment report, in order to minimise human errors in calculating of the marks (based on the four criteria), **the calculations were automatised in the system**. Therefore it is still relatively surprising that the scores are not full 100% in all phases by all actors. The only explanation for this could be that these projects were marked just before the calculation became automatic. For example, one can see that a project has been marked 'Yes' for each criterion, but the final score is seen as '1' instead of '2'. Looking deeper into the data, for instance, in 2017, out of 145 wrongly marked actions at monitoring stage, 20 were wrongly marked as 'N/A', while there was missing information for 54 and 71 were wrongly calculated. For the final report stage, 3% of the answers provided by DG ECHO field are missing in both years. With this, it can be said that there is a very high marking at proposal and final report stage by all interested stakeholders but still some issues, particularly in the monitoring phase that need to be addressed.

4. Urgent Actions

All types of humanitarian actions funded by DG ECHO must be marked. Special procedures may apply to urgent actions, including actions funded under emergency decisions, as partners can decide to use the simplified version of the eSingle Form, where the fields for the Gender-Age Marker in the Single Form are not active at proposal stage. At monitoring stage and once the action is completed and the final report submitted, the marker sections become active and the action needs to be marked by DG ECHO staff.

Out of the 1,402 proposals analysed in the framework of this assessment, 24 can be classified as urgent actions, 13 in 2016 and 11 in 2017.

Table 4. Urgent actions in 2016

	PROPOSAL STAGE			MONITORING STAGE			FINAL REPORT STAGE		
	Partners	Field	HQ	Partners	Field	HQ	Partners	Field	HQ
UNMARKED	0	1	0	N/A	4	N/A	N/A	2	0
'0'	0	2	0	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	2	0
'1'	0	1	1	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	3	1
'2'	1	0	1	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	2	1
'N/A'	12	9	11	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	4	11

Table 5. Urgent actions in 2017

	PROPOSAL STAGE			MONITORING STAGE			FINAL REPORT STAGE		
	Partners	Field	HQ	Partners	Field	HQ	Partners	Field	HQ
UNMARKED	0	1	1	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	0	0
'0'	0	2	0	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	1	0
'1'	0	2	4	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	2	2
'2'	0	0	0	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	1	0
'N/A'	11	6	6	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	7	9

As one can see above, in 2016, at proposal stage, partners provided a mark to only 1 urgent action proposals, while for the remaining 12 the marker was considered 'Non-applicable', in line with the guidance provided in the Gender and Age Marker Toolkit (as the fields were not active).

Subsequently, DG ECHO field staff marked 3 of these (leaving 1 unmarked), and DG ECHO HQ staff marked 2, while for the large majority the marker has been considered 'Not Applicable'. Similar trends can be detected for 2017.

The percentage of wrongly marked urgent actions at final report stage remains very high. DG ECHO HQ staff has considered the marker 'Not Applicable' for 85 % of reports in 2016 and 82 % in 2017. To recall, the Marker is applicable at the final report stage for urgent actions, and should be filled in by DG ECHO staff.

The percentage of reports wrongly marked by DG ECHO field staff increases from 31 % in 2016 to 64 % in 2017. Frequently, comments in the Marker box stated something along the lines of: *As this is an emergency actions and the partner used the simplified SF the marker is not applicable* or *In DO opinion this marker does not apply*. This means that there is a significant need to continue to familiarise partners and DG ECHO staff with the application of the Gender-Age Marker, and particularly when the marker applies to urgent actions (and not *if*) as well as which actions can be considered 'Not Applicable'.

However, another possible explanation is that DG ECHO staff, when seeing no information on the Marker come in from the partner from the proposal stage, were expected to pick 'Not Applicable' as an option. This is therefore an area that needs to be further investigated, also to potentially identify IT solutions.

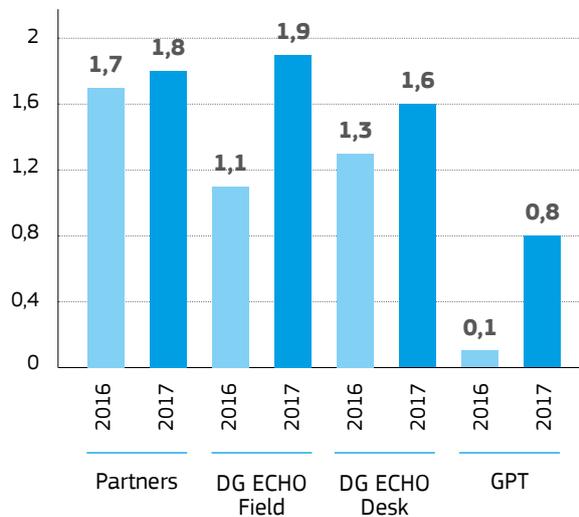
The random check exercise revealed that marks provided to the selected actions by partners, DG ECHO staff and the DG ECHO Protection and Gender Working Group differed. Looking at the proposal stage for both 2016 and 2017 there is only 1 project (out of 15) that received the same mark from partners and all DG ECHO staff. This is in line with the 2014-2015 assessment report, where marks provided to the actions by partners, DG ECHO staff and the DG ECHO ProGen differed significantly (i.e. in 2014, only 2 projects out of 23). Similarly, for the final report stage combining both years, only 1 project (out of 15) received the same mark from partners and all DG ECHO staff. However, given that partners frequently over-mark themselves, this is not surprising.

What is more important is the possible discrepancies between DG ECHO staff (field and desk officers) and the DG ECHO ProGen. Worryingly, at the proposal stage, only 3 out of the 15 proposals (20%) received the same mark by DG ECHO staff and the DG ECHO ProGen. This is a significant decline from the proposal stage in 2014, where 57% of proposals received the same mark from all DG ECHO staff. Looking more closely, at the proposal stage 4 out of 15 proposals (27%) received the same mark from DG ECHO field staff and the DG ECHO ProGen. This is the same at the final report stage. Interestingly at proposal stage, 14 out of the 15 proposals receive the same mark from DG ECHO field staff and desk staff.

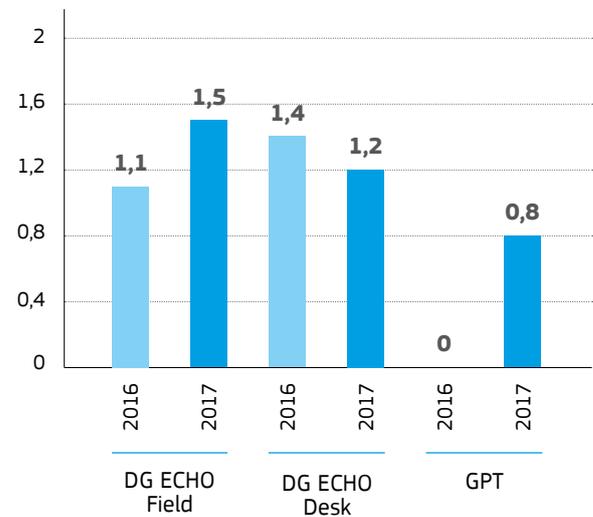
At final report stage there is much more disagreement between the DG ECHO field staff and desk staff. For 3 out of the 15 projects the mark is increased (twice from '0' to '1', and once from '1' to '2'). One project is downgraded from '1' to '0' by the desk officer, and one project is reclassified as 'N/A' (from a 2 score from field staff). Perhaps surprisingly, it should be noted also at the final report stage, that one project was marked higher by the DG ECHO ProGen (2) than the mark awarded by DG ECHO staff (1).

Graphic 10. Average mark provided by partners, DG ECHO staff and the GPT at proposal stage

— Proposal



— Final report

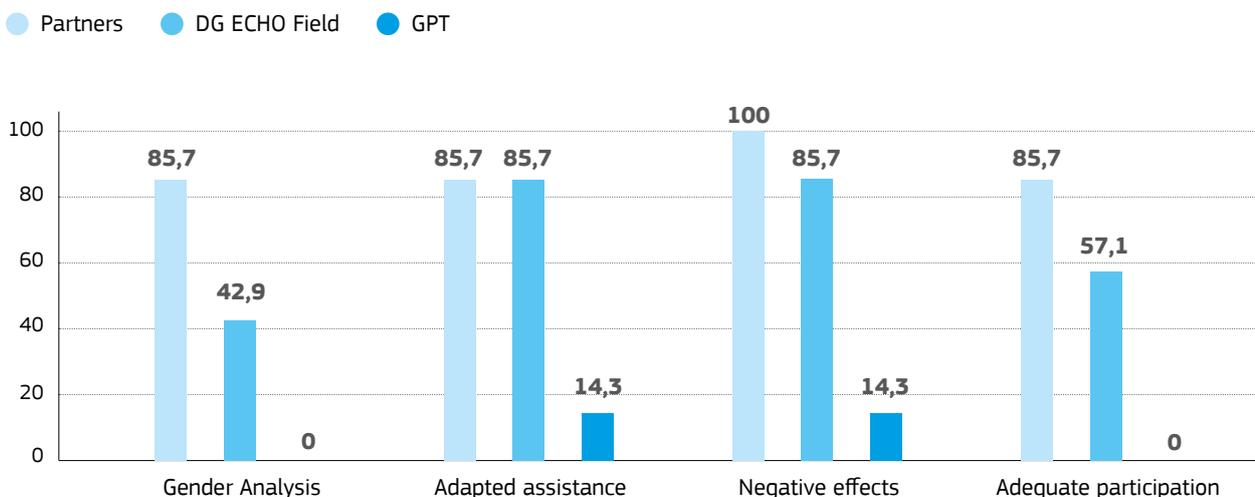


On top of the finding that the marks provided by the DG ECHO ProGen did frequently not match the marks provided by partners and DG ECHO staff, the data shows that in average the latter generally provided higher marks than the DG ECHO ProGen. These differences in opinion are reflected in the average mark provided by DG ECHO staff, partners and DG ECHO ProGen. In 2016, on average, DG ECHO partners awarded their proposal with 1.71. DG ECHO field and desk officers were more critical with 1.1 and 1.3 respectively. The average mark provided by the DG ECHO ProGen of 0.1 constitutes a *significant drop*.

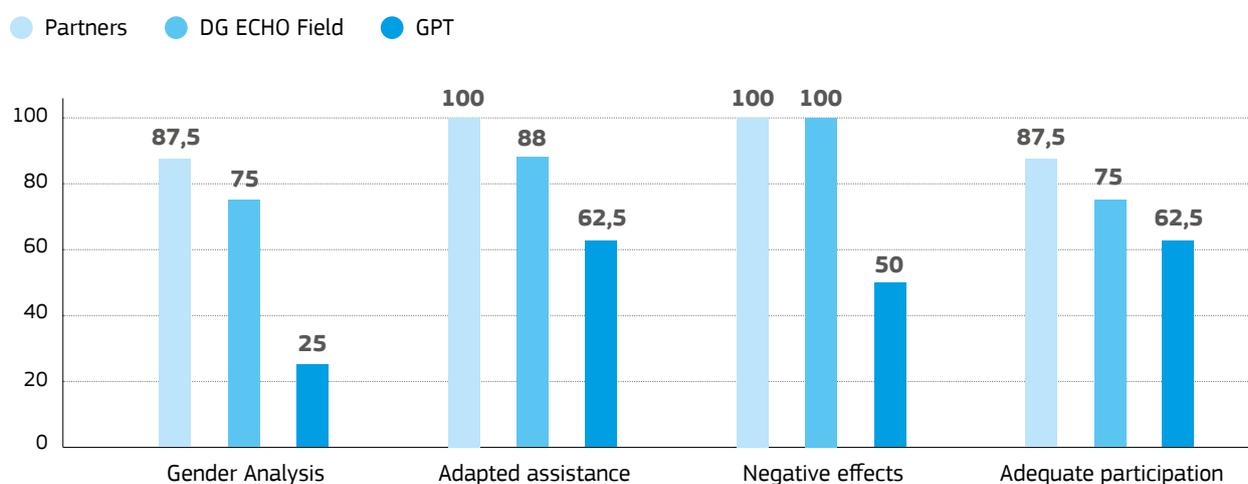
For 2017, partners self-assessed on average generously with 1.75. Interestingly, DG ECHO field staff marked the proposals on average even higher, to 1.9. DG ECHO desk officers were slightly more critical and marked to 1.6. In contrast, the DG ECHO ProGen provided the average mark of 0.75. Nevertheless, on a positive note, we can see a significant improvement between 2016 and 2017. Whilst in 2016, the DG ECHO ProGen on average gave a 0.1 mark at proposal stage and a 0 at final report stage, this at least increased to 0.75 in 2017 (both at proposal and final report stage). Comparing this to 2014-2015, one can see also a start improvement: in 2014, the DG ECHO ProGen provided an average mark of 0.26 and in 2015 of 0.44 (at proposal stage), and 0.45 in 2014 and 0.57 in 2015 (at final report stage). The year 2016 seems therefore particularly “bad” when it comes to the Marker. Overall, at least the figures of 2017 in comparison to 2016, as well as 2017 as compared to 2014-2015, indicate a strong upwards trend in terms of the marker’s quantitative and qualitative application.

The random check exercise also took into account how the four individual criteria were assessed by DG ECHO staff and partners, as compared to the DG ECHO ProGen. The graphs above demonstrate that for 2016, the DG ECHO ProGen deemed ‘Criterion 2’ and ‘Criterion 3’ equally met (and notably, ‘Criterion 1’ and ‘Criterion 4’ not at all). For 2017, this was ‘Criterion 2’ and ‘Criterion 4’ as best met, and ‘Criterion 1’ and ‘Criterion 3’ as least met.

Graphic 11. Percentage of criteria sufficiently met in 2016



Graphic 12. Percentage of criteria sufficiently met in 2017



4.2. NARRATIVE COMMENTS RANDOM CHECK

Using still the same sample of 15 projects, the usage of the narrative comments section will now be analysed. To recall, both DG ECHO staff and partners are given the opportunity to provide additional information on the Mark and each criterion in the comment section of the Single Form. While the core of the gender and age considerations should be embedded into other sections, as per DG ECHO Gender and Age Marker Toolkit, the comment box is designated to capture additional gender and age-related information in a narrative manner, allowing users to (for instance) outline reasons why one or more criteria could not be met. This might be due to the somehow misleading guidance provided to partners to fill in the e-SF: under section “5.1.2 Additional comments and challenges” the Single Form Guidance says “The partner will provide additional information relating to gender and age, including for example potential negative effects of the Action and measures to prevent them, measures for integrating gender and age that would have been appropriate but were not or could not be taken or other challenges encountered when integrating gender and age considerations.”

At **proposal** stage, partners tend to use the box to provide more information about different criteria, for instance components from their gender age analysis. Most of them also outline specific measures to mitigate negative effects, specifically SGBV, in the project context.²² It can be detected that partners, in 2017, do improve by also using the comment box for its original purpose: to provide extra/additional information on why one or more criteria could not be met. DG ECHO field staff tends to use the comment box, at proposal stage, to further explain the score provided.²³

²² For example: “The project expects to contribute to mitigate the risk of GBV for women, girls and boys by reducing distance and periodicity to fetch water, collect grass for shelter material or firewood and by providing privacy and limiting the exposure to GBV risks associated to open defecation”.

²³ For example: “The emergency nature and design of the intervention and proposal does not fully allow a proper Gender & Age analysis”; and sometimes to provide recommendations for improvement, like: “Activities should be further described, and a target could be defined”.

It is noticeable that DG ECHO staff, out of all the stages, provide the least comments during the **monitoring** stage. To note that comments are not mandatory, what counts is that the mark is provided. When they do provide information at monitoring stage, it is frequently to provide remarks on the actual implementation.²⁴

At **final report** stage, many partners take the opportunity to explain how sex and age disaggregated data was gathered throughout the project cycle. Some partners take the chance of explaining additional developments in the framework of the project.²⁵ Others, used it to explain unexpected setbacks²⁶ and to outline the measures adopted to address it.²⁷ DG ECHO field experts, at this stage, usually provide an overall brief overview of field performance or explain the scores provided and the evolution of the gender and age considerations throughout the project cycle. Desk officers frequently take the chance to explain the score provided and show their level of agreement/disagreement with the field expert and/or partners.²⁸

To conclude, similarly to 2014-2015, partners provided comments to inform how the action will ensure gender and age mainstreaming, instead of the additional information not included in other sections (e.g. reasons why a criterion cannot be met in a specific context or for a specific action or future plans to enhance gender and age consideration throughout the implementation process etc.). Comparing to 2014-2015, age considerations are more consistently included in 2016-2017.

²⁴ For example: "The participation of women was encouraged in the formulation and implementation of the action".

²⁵ "Additionally, in this Action, new tools were developed to identify and respond to the unique needs and experiences of women and children assisted" or "the tool was revised for adding some additional insights on protection and human rights".

²⁶ For example: "One of the major findings was that 62% of the population was under the age of 18. As such, the proposal did not contain adequate age analysis. XXX would have targeted increased numbers of children if it had been aware of the accurate population figures" or "Despite persistent advocacy from YYY to have disaggregated data which enables equity-based programme and policy analysis, the Ministry of Health still does not capture the disaggregation by sex or age group".

²⁷ For example: "YY will continue its advocacy at both technical and management levels with the Ministry to introduce the sex disaggregation, and engage both health and nutrition sectors and partners".

²⁸ For example: "Partner has followed a solid G/A approach during the different stages of the action, since the needs assessment to the implementation of targeted activities for different age/sex groups" or "in agreement with TA analysis".

5. Targeted Actions

In order to respond to specific gender-induced vulnerabilities, needs or risks — particularly when one group is clearly more vulnerable than others — actions targeting that specific group, rather than providing assistance to most or all members of a community, may be deemed necessary. However, it is currently not possible to extrapolate these data from HOPE. Moreover, the specific section of the SF which would provide this information (i.e. whether the action is targeted to specific gender and age groups) is unfortunately mis-used by partners who tend to use it to show their intervention will target all vulnerable groups.

In 2016, **€28 million** was allocated to **sexual- and gender-based violence**, compared to **€32 million** in 2017. This is an increase since 2014 (€8 million) and 2015 (€14 million).²⁹

In 2016, **104 million** was allocated to **child protection activities**, compared to **€102 million** in 2017. This is an increase since 2014 (€11 million) and 2015 (€15 million).³⁰

²⁹ Please note that these calculations are based on estimates of the sector “Protection”. The Protection sector includes the sub-sector “GBV”. Partners can tag multiple sub-sectors at result level. An estimate is therefore made, based on the number of sub-sectors tagged at result level. It should be noted that the figures for 2017 also include for the first time the medical response to GBV under health programming. Such figures were not available for 2014, 2015, and 2016. Also the overall budget allocated to protection fluctuates per year (also in line with overall fluctuations of the humanitarian aid budget). These figures should therefore be treated as estimates.

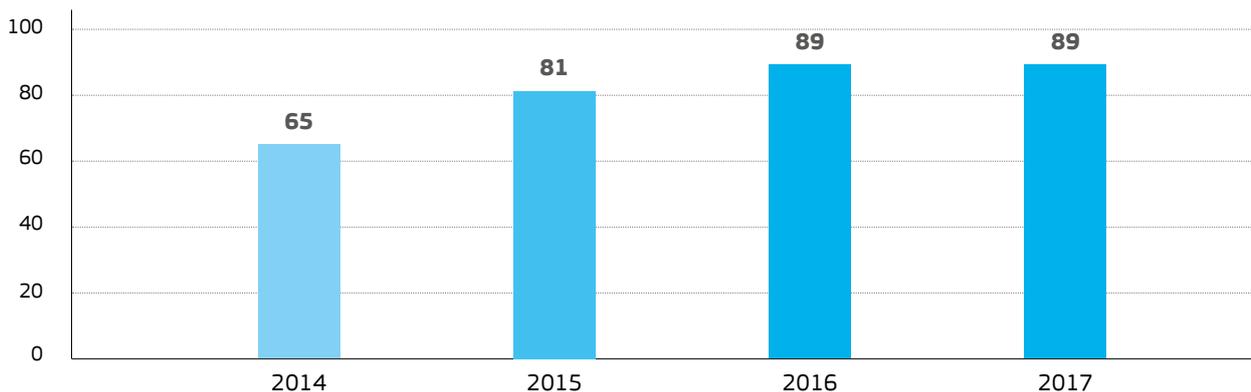
³⁰ Please note that these calculations are based on estimates of the sector “Protection”. This includes one sub-sector relevant for children associated with armed conflict and one sub-sector relevant for unaccompanied and separated children. Partners can tag multiple sub-sectors at result level. An estimate is therefore made, based on the number of sub-sectors tagged at result level. The figures on child protection are based on these two sub-sectors as well as the number of child beneficiaries for all protection activities. These figures should therefore be treated as estimates.

Conclusions

1. An overall improvement in the integration of gender and age considerations into humanitarian assistance

The final marks provided in 2016 and 2017 reflect a considerable upwards trend compared to the previous period assessed. In both 2016 and 2017, **89% of all DG ECHO-funded actions integrated gender and age considerations either 'strongly' (mark '2') or 'to a certain extent' (mark '1')**. This represents a remarkable improvement from the percentages in the previous period (65% in 2014 and 81% in 2015).

Graphic 13. % of actions that integrate gender and age considerations (mark '1' or '2' in Gender-Age Marker)



In addition, the percentage of projects marked with '2' has increased from proposal to monitoring in both years. To illustrate, in 2016, DG ECHO field staff marked 38% of actions at proposal stage with a '2', compared to 46% at monitoring stage. In 2017, the percentage changed from 46% to 51%. This is important as this stage allows to monitor the actions on the ground (rather than only what is written in proposals). This underlines the importance of having this quality and accountability tool in place, to measure progress made, as well as indication of the success of the Marker to induce and encourage better mainstreaming of gender and age considerations in EU-funded humanitarian assistance.

2. Varying levels of success in meeting the marker's four criterion

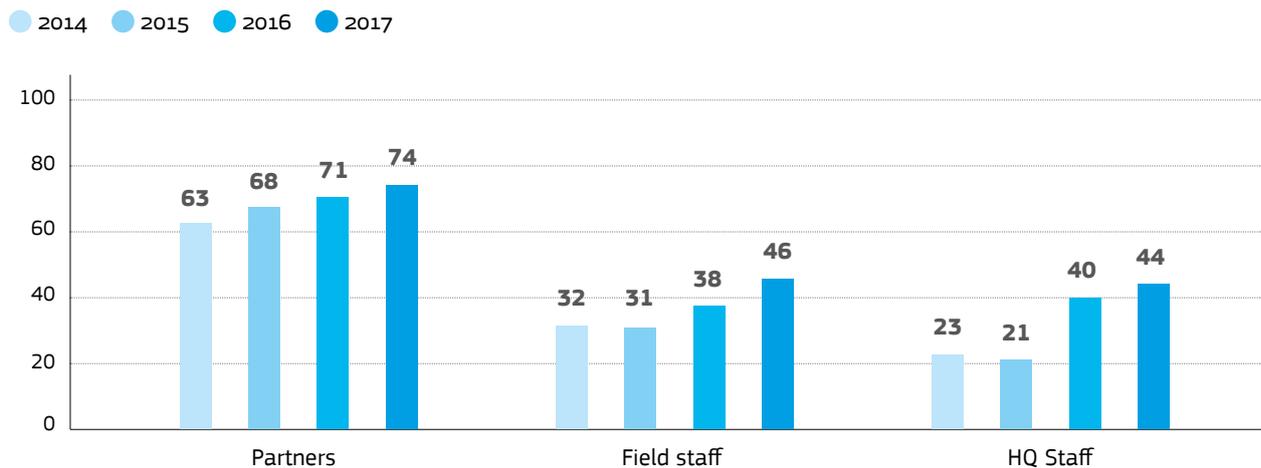
The criterion most often sufficiently met for the period 2016-2017 is 'Criterion 2' (Adapted assistance) and the criterion that was least met is 'Criterion 4' (Adequate participation). The previous assessment report included the same conclusion. This allows DG ECHO to pay additional attention to these two aspects in i.e. the discussions with partners at proposal-stage.

3. Discrepancy between marking between DG ECHO and its partners³¹

Discrepancy in marking between the DG ECHO staff and its humanitarian partners continued. To illustrate, In 2016, 71 % of proposals were self-assessed by partners with the highest score (mark '2'). Meanwhile DG ECHO field staff gave a mark '2' to 38 % of proposals and DG ECHO HQ staff to 40 % of proposals. Similarly, for 2017, 74 % of proposals were self-assessed by partners with the highest score (Mark 2). Meanwhile DG ECHO field staff gave a mark '2' to 46 % of proposals and DG ECHO HQ staff to 44 % of proposals.

Despite the differences in marks, the graph below shows a consistent increase in proposals marked with '2' by all those involved in the marking process. Moreover, it shows that while discrepancy in marks between DG ECHO partners and ECHO staff (in HQ) remains considerable in 2017 (30 %) it also represents a sharp decrease since the introduction of the Marker in 2014 (40 %). Another positive trend is represented by the considerable decrease in discrepancy between marks provided by DG ECHO field and HQ staff (from an average of 9 % in 2014 to 2 % in 2017).

Graphic 14. % of proposals marked with '2'



³¹ With the current marking system, partners only fill in a self-assessment at proposal stage. At monitoring and final report stage only DG ECHO staff provides a mark, while partners provide only narrative comments.

4. Consistent improvement in correct and consistent marking, but new challenges emerge

The Marker was made mandatory at all phases of the action for DG ECHO field and HQ staff in July 2017. It is therefore unsurprising that the consistency in marking is a near perfect 100% at proposal and final report stage.

Nevertheless, some issues have been identified, and for a number of actions information on **the Marker was not filled in at monitoring stage**. A possible explanation seems to be related to the system: while the Marker remains a mandatory field to be completed in the monitoring report (FichOp), the first question one needs to reply is whether the Marker is applicable. It is possible that this could lead to a mistaken interpretation that the Marker must be filled in only if gender and age considerations have been monitored during the mission.

The assessment also demonstrated that DG ECHO staff and partners continue to struggle with the application of the Marker to urgent actions. While on the basis of the Gender and Age Marker Toolkit, the Marker is waived at proposal stage, and should therefore only be filled in at monitoring and final report stage, DG ECHO staff frequently do not fill in the Marker at any stage, deeming it not-applicable.

Lastly, as in the previous period assessed, partners mostly used the **comments section** of the Marker to inform on how the proposed action will ensure gender and age mainstreaming, instead of focusing on additional information not included in other sections of the Single Form (where such information should be included). However, some improvement was found in 2017.

5. Need to make the marks more meaningful

The random quality check exercise carried out by the DG ECHO Protection and Gender Working Group (ProGen)³² demonstrated that, similarly to the findings of the assessment covering 2014-2015, discrepancies exist between the marking of on the one hand partners and DG ECHO staff and on the other hand the ProGen. For the sample of 15 projects, on average only 1 project at proposal and final report stage received the same mark from all actors (DG ECHO staff, partners and the DG ECHO Protection and Gender Working Group). Whilst it is not uncommon that partners and DG ECHO staff differ of opinion, this assessment showed that also discrepancies exist between DG ECHO field/HQ staff and the ProGen. Partners and DG ECHO field/desk staff also consistently mark much higher than the ProGen. On a positive note, ProGen does provide higher average marks at final report level for 2017 (0.75 on average), as compared to 2014 (0.45 on average), -2015 (0.57 on average), as well as 2016 (0 on average).

³² The DG ECHO Protection and Gender Working Group (ProGen) consists of the 6 thematic experts on Protection and Gender based in the DG ECHO regional field offices as well as the policy officer for Gender and Age based in Brussels. The quality check entails these 7 members of DG ECHO checking a random sample of projects that have been marked by their DG ECHO colleagues and partners, and check the quality of the marks provided. In short, a project awarded a '2', did it really integrate well gender and age? Please note that in the previous assessment report this group of experts was referred to as the Gender and Protection Team or GPT (to identify the working together of the expert on gender with the experts on protection), but since the terms of references of experts have changed to Protection and Gender, in this report they will be referred to as ProGen.

Recommendations

1. Continued capacity building needed on the marker

The key findings above point to the need for continued capacity building and familiarisation with the application of the DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker. This will foster improvements in for instance, making the marks more meaningful and clarity on the application of the Marker in urgent actions.

Capacity-building efforts undertaken by DG ECHO in 2017 focused on practical workshops on gender-age mainstreaming in specific sectors as opposed to training on the use of the Marker itself.

Moreover, DG ECHO has now a team of 6 field thematic experts on Protection and Gender to enhance the synergies between the two thematic areas and to build upon them to enhance the quality of humanitarian assistance. The increased gender capacities in the field will also be pivotal for continuous capacity building for Technical Assistants.

In view of the high turn-over of staff and the limited internal capacity to provide trainings around the globe to both partners and DG ECHO staff, in 2019 a **Gender-Age Marker e-learning**³³ was launched. This e-learning explains the functioning of the DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker, as well as the key concepts of gender and age. Accessible to all DG ECHO staff and partners, the online learning includes a practical case-study where the participants do self-marking (for partners) and judge a proposal vis-à-vis its integration of gender and age (for DG ECHO staff).

2. Applying the marker correctly and consistently in the project cycle

In view of the noted difficulties on consistent marking, some IT solutions should be found. For instance, at monitoring stage, information on the Marker is often not filled in. A possible solution could be to remove the question whether or not the Marker applies. Instead, it should be ensured that if the Marker has been deemed applicable at the proposal stage, it should automatically appear for the other phase. Possibilities could be explored to enhance to the analysis of targeted actions, both in terms of revising categories of vulnerabilities as well as the number of vulnerabilities that can be selected at the same time.

³³ <https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/dl/start>

The way forward

DG ECHO is committed to improving gender and age mainstreaming. This is demonstrated by the continued efforts to improve the implementation of the Gender-Age Marker through different initiatives.

DG ECHO has also commissioned an independent evaluation on the implementation of its Gender Policy (2013) for the period 2014-2018. The evaluation will also look at the impact and usage of the Gender-Age Marker. It is expected that the recommendations of the evaluation will help DG ECHO to adopt concrete measures to further improve the Gender-Age Marker. Ways to address the remaining further IT solutions to address some of the errors in application of the Marker will also be explored.

In parallel, DG ECHO will continue to invest on building capacities of DG ECHO staff on gender and age mainstreaming, both through its network of Protection and Gender Thematic Experts and through the newly launched e-learning. DG ECHO will continue to promote the usage of the e-learning with its own staff, as well as with partners, e.g. in the context of the annual programming exercise.

The Protection and Gender experts are currently also undertaking work to enhance mainstreaming protection in humanitarian assistance. This work will be useful to inform actions to be undertaken to increase partners' performances in meeting 'Criterion 3' of the Gender-Age Marker (Negative effects).

Regular assessments of the Gender-Age Marker will continue to be conducted to monitor progress and continue delivering qualitative gender and age-sensitive humanitarian programming.

The increase of projects that obtained the highest score (mark '2'), from 22 % in 2014-2015 (on average), to 45 % in 2016-2017 (on average) indicates partners' interest in gender and age mainstreaming. This needs however to translate into continued commitment on capacity-building, policies and tools. These efforts are crucial for the delivery of quality assistance.

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