



EVALUATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION

*FINAL REPORT*

---

***COMBINED EVALUATION OF DG ECHO'S  
RESPONSE TO THE VENEZUELAN  
REGIONAL CRISIS AND OF DG ECHO'S  
PARTNERSHIP WITH UNHCR, 2017-2021***

---

*August 2023*

**EVIDENCE  
MATTERS**



Euro  
Civil P  
Civil Protection &  
Humanitarian Aid



Prepared by:



ICF S.A.  
Avenue Marnix 17  
B-1000 Brussels (Belgium)

Framework Contract ECHO/E2/FWC/RC/2021/SI2

Contract No ECHO/ADM/BUD/2022/01202

Contract title: Combined evaluation of the European Union's response to the Venezuelan regional crisis, and of DG ECHO's partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017-2021

---

#### Authors

Petra van Nierop	Vittorio Furci
Cristina González Monsalve	Rocío Naranjo Sandalio
Mélanie Dubuis	Sofía Esteves
Janne Fillet	Wanda A. Ferraguto
Inés Echevarría	

#### Contact information:

European Commission  
Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations – DG ECHO  
Unit ECHO.E.2 Programming, Control and Reporting  
Email: ECHO-EVAL@ec.europa.eu  
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations:  
[Evaluations | European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations \(europa.eu\)](#)

## **LEGAL NOTICE**

This document has been prepared for the European Commission as part of the evaluations of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. However, it reflects the views only of the authors, and the European Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this document, and is not liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse of this publication. More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://www.europa.eu>).

The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by the Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). Except otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the European Union, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective rightholders.

© European Union, 2023

**Combined Evaluation of DG ECHO's Response to the Venezuelan regional crisis and of DG ECHO's Partnership with UNHCR**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
Objectives and scope of the evaluation.....	vii
Structure of this report.....	vii
<b>1 Methodological approach.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Overview of the context.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Overview of the Venezuelan regional crisis.....	5
2.2 Description of the EU action and its objectives.....	25
<b>3 Evaluation findings.....</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1 Relevance.....	27
3.2 Coherence.....	48
3.3 Effectiveness.....	64
3.4 Efficiency.....	91
3.5 Sustainability.....	106
3.6 EU added value.....	119
<b>4 Conclusions and recommendations.....</b>	<b>122</b>
4.1 Conclusions.....	122
4.2 Recommendations.....	126
<b>5 Methodological approach.....</b>	<b>134</b>
5.1 Evaluation questions.....	134
5.2 Methodological approach and description of data collection sources.....	134
5.3 Limitations and robustness of the findings.....	135
<b>6 Overview of the context.....</b>	<b>137</b>
6.1 Overview of UNHCR.....	137
6.2 Overview of DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership and Theory of Change.....	138
<b>7 Evaluation findings.....</b>	<b>144</b>
7.1 Coherence.....	144
7.2 Efficiency.....	163
7.3 Effectiveness.....	169
<b>8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>197</b>
8.1 Conclusions.....	197
8.2 Recommendations.....	201

## **ABSTRACT**

This is the combined evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian response to the Venezuelan regional crisis and of DG ECHO's partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2017 – 2021). The evaluation used evidence from project data, literature review, interviews, and remote / in-country field missions.

DG ECHO's response to the Venezuelan regional crisis was overall relevant and adapted to the context, coherent and complementary to that of other donors, generating EU added value. Despite numerous operational challenges and constraints, it was implemented effectively and efficiently. Progress in finding durable solutions to the crisis and operationalising the Triple Nexus was limited, despite efforts. Recommendations focused on the regional approach, partner capacity and learning, advocacy and the sought for longer-term solutions.

DG ECHO and UNHCR were overall aligned as regards their mandates, strategic priorities/objectives and approaches, despite some differences. The partnership had a positive impact on coordination at strategic level and the quality of humanitarian responses, but its impact on efficiency gains, coordination at field and sectoral level, and cooperation towards the Nexus, was limited. Recommendations focused on mutual learning, links between the strategic and field levels, operational and cross-cutting dialogues, and the operationalisation of the Nexus.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>SW</b>	Who does What, Where, When and for Whom	<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>CLAP</b>	Local Supply and Production Committees	<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation	<b>LAC RMD Coalition</b>	LAC Coalition for Refugees, Migrants and Displaced Population
<b>DG ECHO</b>	Directorate General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	<b>MAM</b>	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
<b>DG INTPA</b>	Directorate General for International Partnerships	<b>MDM</b>	Médicos del Mundo
<b>DP</b>	Disaster Preparedness	<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction	<b>MPCT</b>	Multi-Purpose Cash Transfers
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>EUDEL</b>	EU Delegations	<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>EiE</b>	Education in Emergencies	<b>OCHA FTS</b>	OCHA Financial Tracking System
<b>EQ</b>	Evaluation Question	<b>OCHA ROLAC</b>	OCHA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>FAFA</b>	Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement	<b>PAHO</b>	Pan-American Health Organisation
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization	<b>PoC</b>	Persons of Concern
<b>FSL</b>	Food Security and Livelihoods	<b>R4V</b>	Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product	<b>RHN</b>	National Humanitarian Network
<b>GTRM</b>	Grupo de Trabajo para Refugiados y Migrantes	<b>RMRP</b>	Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan
<b>GIFMM</b>	Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos	<b>SAM</b>	Severe Acute Malnutrition
<b>HCT</b>	Humanitarian Country Team	<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
<b>HA WG</b>	Humanitarian Aid Working Group	<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>HIP</b>	Humanitarian Implementation Plan	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>HIPTA</b>	HIP Technical Annex	<b>UNHCR</b>	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan	<b>UNDRR</b>	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>IHL</b>	International Humanitarian Law	<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>ICG</b>	International Contact Group for Venezuela	<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>ICCG</b>	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group	<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross	<b>US</b>	United States
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund	<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organisation	<b>VAF</b>	Vulnerability Assessment Framework
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration	<b>VASyR</b>	Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon
<b>JC</b>	Judgement criterion	<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

## INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

### Objectives and scope of the evaluation

The objective of this evaluation was to provide an independent and retrospective assessment of the European Union (EU)'s humanitarian interventions in response to the Venezuelan regional crisis and of DG ECHO's partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the period 2017 – 2021.

The **Evaluation of DG ECHO's response to the Venezuelan regional crisis (2017-2021)** was a 'traditional' ex-post, theory-based evaluation that combined an overall summative approach with formative elements to also advise DG ECHO on future action in the region, building on identified and validated good practices and lessons learnt. It considered all DG ECHO-funded activities in Venezuela and neighbouring countries hosting refugees and migrants from Venezuela during the evaluation period. It covered all relevant sectors, including protection, health, WASH, shelter and settlements, food security and livelihoods, DRR / disaster preparedness, nutrition, education in emergencies (EiE), coordination and multi-purpose cash transfers (MPCT).

The **Evaluation of DG ECHO's partnership with UNHCR (2017-2021)** followed a theoretical approach at its core but was more formative in nature. It combined elements of a process evaluation to examine in detail the performance and quality of the partnership and to identify the influencing factors. In terms of scope, it considered the strategic and operational partnership between DG ECHO and the UNHCR at a global level and focused on identifying lessons learned.

Each component of the evaluation was underpinned by an evaluation framework containing the evaluation questions (and where relevant, sub-questions), judgement criteria and key indicators and a theory of change describing the different elements of the interventions and the casual links between them (see Sections 2.2 and 6.2).

### Structure of this report

This report is structured in two parts, one for each component of the evaluation. **Part A** presents the results of the evaluation of DG ECHO's response to the Venezuelan regional crisis, while **Part B** covers DG ECHO's partnership with UNHCR. Each part is composed of the following sections:

Table 1. Structure of the report

Item	Part A	Part B
Description of the <b>methodological approach</b> : (i) evaluation questions, (ii) description of the method and data collection sources, and (iii) Key limitations and robustness of the findings	Section 1	Section 5
<b>Overview of the context</b> and the logic for the intervention	Section 2	Section 6
<b>Evaluation findings</b> , presented per evaluation criterion and evaluation question	Section 3	Section 7
<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	Section 4	Section 8

The main report is complemented by the following annexes (published separately):

- **Annex 1:** List of documents reviewed;
- **Annex 2:** Portfolio analysis;
- **Annex 3:** Results from the social media analysis;
- **Annex 4:** List of stakeholders consulted;
- **Annex 5:** Results from the online surveys;
- **Annex 6:** Mini-mobile survey results;
- **Annex 7:** Additional evidence supporting the findings;
- **Annex 8:** Case studies; and
- **Annex 9:** Terms of reference.

# ***PART A: EVALUATION OF DG ECHO'S RESPONSE TO THE VENEZUELAN REGIONAL CRISIS***



## 1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

### 1.1. Evaluation questions

This component of the evaluation covered six evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, EU added value, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability). Table 2 presents the evaluation questions included under each criterion.

Table 2. Evaluation criteria and questions covered in this evaluation

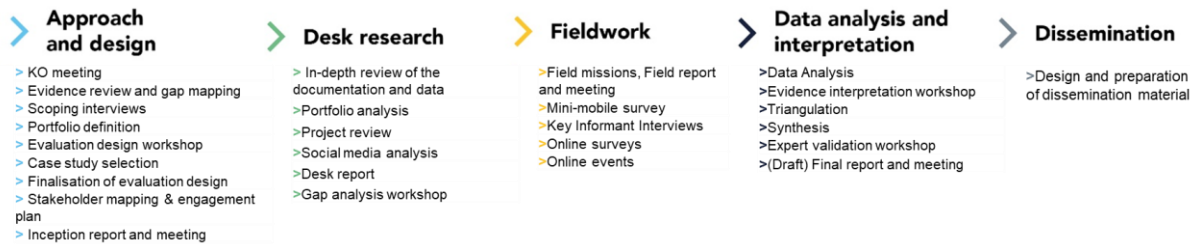
<b>Relevance</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EQ1.</b> To what extent were DG ECHO strategy and funded actions relevant and adapted to the evolving context of the Venezuelan crisis?</li> <li>• <b>EQ2.</b> To what extent did DG ECHO-funded actions take into account the evolving needs of the most vulnerable people affected, particularly women, children, elderly and disabled persons? To what extent were beneficiaries appropriately consulted in the design and implementation of DG ECHO-funded actions?</li> </ul>
<b>Coherence</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EQ3.</b> To what extent was DG ECHO's response aligned with: the humanitarian principles; DG ECHO's relevant thematic/sector policies; and relevant global thematic/sector guidelines and standards?</li> <li>• <b>EQ4.</b> To what extent was DG ECHO successful in coordinating its response with other donors/actors to avoid overlaps and ensure complementarities?</li> </ul>
<b>EU added value*</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EQ5.</b> To what extent has DG ECHO's use of their mandate and resources in responding to the Venezuelan crisis generated a measurable added value?</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EQ6.</b> To what extent were DG ECHO's objectives (as defined in the HAR, the Consensus and the specific HIPs) achieved? What concrete and measurable results were achieved? What critical success or barrier factors can be distinguished?</li> <li>• <b>EQ7.</b> How successful was DG ECHO through its direct and indirect advocacy and communication measures in influencing other actors on issues like humanitarian intervention and space, respect for IHL (International humanitarian law), addressing gaps in response, applying good practice, and carrying out follow-up actions of DG ECHO's interventions?</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EQ8.</b> To what extent did DG ECHO achieve cost-effectiveness in its response? What factors affected the cost-effectiveness of the response?</li> <li>• <b>EQ9.</b> Was the budget allocated by DG ECHO to the Venezuelan regional crisis predictable, timely, appropriate and proportionate to what the actions were meant to achieve?</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EQ10.</b> To what extent did DG ECHO contribute to achieve longer-term planning and programming to address the protracted regional crisis (or Venezuelans' forced displacement)? What could be further done (enabling factors, tools, mechanisms, change of strategy, etc.) to promote sustainability, build resilience and strengthen the nexus?</li> </ul>

\*To improve the flow of the narrative, EU added value is the last evaluation criterion covered in this report.

### 1.2. Methodological approach and description of data collection sources

The methodological approach was structured around five main phases (approach and design phase, desk phase, fieldwork phase, data analysis and interpretation phase and dissemination phase), each comprising various tasks, as depicted in Figure 1. This section summarises the main data collection and analysis work undertaken under each phase.

Figure 1. Overview of the methodological approach



During the **Approach and design phase**, the evaluation framework and methodological approach were refined based on a rapid review of documentation and data and preliminary consultations from relevant DG ECHO officials (in Headquarters and Field Offices in Latin American countries).

As part of the **Desk research phase**, the team reviewed in detail the documentation available and carried out an analysis of the entire portfolio of 80 actions funded by DG ECHO to address the Venezuelan regional crisis during the evaluation period. The results of this analysis are presented in Annex 2. The team also reviewed the project documentation (Single Forms and FichOp)<sup>1</sup> following a two-step approach. The first step consisted of the review of elements of the project documentation extracted from various HOPE databases (e.g. qualitative and quantitative information in the Pre-Selection Dashboard, gender-age and resilience markers, KOIs and KRIs information), while the second level of analysis consisted of a more detailed review of 40 actions. Finally, an analysis of social media data (Twitter data and comments from relevant forums) across eleven Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries was conducted to collect information on the experience of Venezuelans and host communities as well as key challenges faced by these communities (the results of this analysis are presented in Annex 3).

During the **Fieldwork phase**, the evaluation team collected feedback from relevant stakeholders through the following activities:<sup>2</sup>

- **Online survey for DG ECHO (framework and implementing) partners.** The survey was launched in January and closed in March 2023, receiving a total of 39 responses. The results can be found in Annex 5.
- A short **mini-mobile survey targeting end beneficiaries** of DG ECHO-funded actions, circulated via framework and local implementing partners. The results of this survey are presented in Annex 6.
- A total of **23 key informant interviews (KIIs)** with 26 stakeholders with DG ECHO officials in HQ (one KII) and Field Offices (five KIIs), other EU institutions (two KIIs), DG ECHO partners (nine KIIs with 10 stakeholders), national R4V platforms (two KIIs with three stakeholders), cluster/sector representatives (three KIIs) and other donors (one KII with two stakeholders). Annex 4 presents an overview of the stakeholders consulted through KIIs.
- **Four field missions**, i.e. one remote field mission in Panama and three in-country field missions in Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador. The field missions entailed face-to-face and/or remote consultations with key actors (DG ECHO Field Officers, EU Delegations in the field, DG ECHO partners, coordination mechanisms including cluster/sector leads, other donors, beneficiaries and affected communities) in the form of 116 individual and group interviews and 25 focus group discussions (FGDs).an overview of the stakeholders consulted during the field missions is included in Annex 4. During the in-country field missions, the evaluation team also carried out project visits of three DG ECHO-funded actions per country, selected in agreement with the Steering Group. The actions selected were implemented by consortia led by UNHCR (Colombia and Ecuador), IFRC (Venezuela),

<sup>1</sup> Single Forms contain information submitted by DG ECHO partners in their proposal as well as interim and final reports. FichOps present DG ECHO's appraisal, monitoring and reporting of the action.

<sup>2</sup> Initially, an online workshop with key stakeholders was also envisaged to discuss and analyse specific topics relating to advocacy and sustainability, but these were not required as the information gathered during the other desk and field activities was considered sufficient.

OXFAM (Colombia and Venezuela), Médicos del Mundo (Venezuela), CARE (Colombia), UNICEF (Ecuador) and Caritas (Ecuador).

The field evidence was summarised in three thematic case studies which covered: Health interventions in Venezuela (Case study 1), Protection interventions outside of Venezuela (Case study 2) and Coordination and the nexus in Venezuela and neighbouring countries (Case study 3) (see Annex 8).

During the fourth phase of the evaluation (***analysis and interpretation phase***), the evaluation team analysed the evidence emerging from the various tasks, paying particular attention to the changes triggered by the intervention as well as the limiting factors, good practices and lessons learned. The results of the different analytical exercises were triangulated and synthesised to provide the answers to the evaluation questions presented in Section 3 of this report. The evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations will be discussed with, and validated by, the members of our panel of experts during the expert validation workshop, which will be held following the submission of this report.

### ***1.3. Limitations and robustness of the findings***

The findings presented in this report were affected by several limitations regarding the breadth and quality of the evidence collected for the evaluation. The main limitations primarily concerned the secondary evidence available, notably:

- ***Information and data on humanitarian needs***, especially in Venezuela but also in the region: statistical information and data on humanitarian needs in the context of the Venezuelan regional crisis are scarce and fragmented and do not allow for a detailed and comparable assessment of the magnitude of the crisis and its evolution during the evaluation period (2017-2021). This is especially noticeable in Venezuela, where official figures are few and generally unreliable, but it was also observed in other countries, where the quality and comparability of the information collected on the needs of Venezuelan migrants/crisis – especially at the onset of the crisis – was not sufficiently high.
- ***Humanitarian funding data***: the evaluation relies on the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s Financial Tracking System (FTS) data to analyse and compare humanitarian funding at global level, as this is the source that provides the highest level of comparability of such data. However, the database presents several limitations that affect its reliability, the main one being that reporting to OCHA FTS is not consistently done by all donors and partners (as it is not mandatory) and therefore, the data presented is not fully comprehensive. Despite this, a comparison between OCHA FTS data against funding data reported by the United States (the main donor to the crisis) did not reveal major discrepancies, confirming the validity of the findings.
- ***DG ECHO funding data and project documentation***: a large proportion of the actions funded by DG ECHO to respond to the crisis were multi-country (with many tackling the internal and external dimensions of the crisis) and multi-sector, which limited the ability of the evaluation to extract and compare findings referring to specific sectors or countries as the information contained in the two main DG ECHO databases used for the analysis (HOPE/EVA) was often not broken down per country/sector. To address this constraint, the evaluation also relied on information contained in a third DG ECHO internal dataset on the Venezuelan regional crisis (referred to in the report as "VENSIT data"), but this was not always possible. Relying on three databases which different reporting systems also led to (small) discrepancies in the information presented, although these do not affect the validity of the findings.

The stakeholder feedback collected also presented several limitations, including:

- ***Some key stakeholders could not be consulted*** due to political sensitivities (national authorities in Venezuela), lack of interest in the evaluation (other EU institutions or national authorities in some of the countries covered by field missions) or data protection constraints (end beneficiaries of health interventions in Venezuela). As a result, their views

are not as widely reflected in this report as those of other stakeholder groups such as DG ECHO officials and DG ECHO partners.

- **High rotation of staff within humanitarian organisations** in Venezuela and the region, which meant that many of the individuals consulted did not have a full overview of the situation and the response during the entire evaluation period.

Beyond the specific mitigation measures outlined above, the use of complementary research methods enhanced the reliability and validity of the data collected and allowed for sufficient cross-verification, corroboration, and triangulation of the results of the evaluation, which are overall valid and robust. Any limitations or weaknesses of the findings are properly highlighted in the respective sections.

## 2 OVERVIEW OF THE CONTEXT

### 2.1 Overview of the Venezuelan regional crisis

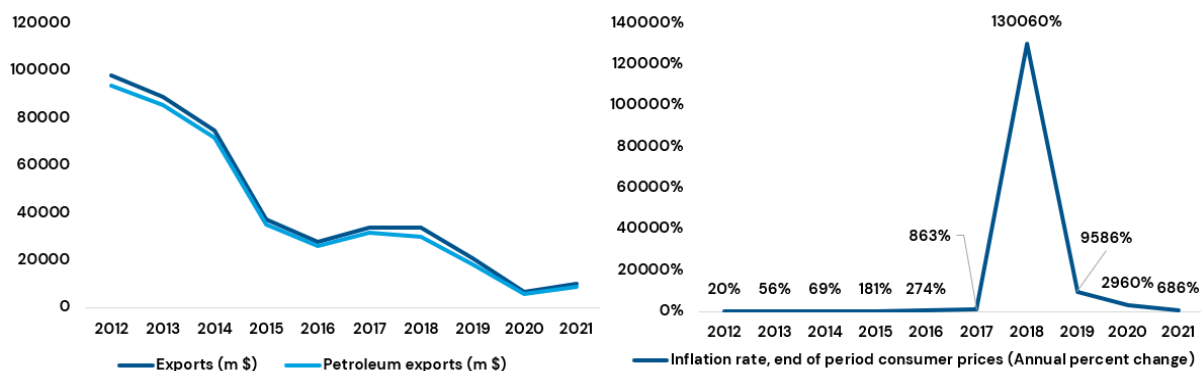
This section presents an overview of the context surrounding the Venezuelan crisis. It first provides an overview of the internal (Section 2.1.1) and the external (Section 2.1.2) dimensions of the crisis, highlighting key socio-economic factors and reflecting on the main humanitarian needs of people living in Venezuela and Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the region. It then summarises the humanitarian response at international and DG ECHO level.

#### 2.1.1 The crisis in Venezuela

By March 2022, more than **19 million people in Venezuela were in need of humanitarian assistance**<sup>3</sup> due to the country's ongoing political and socioeconomic crisis (an increase of 4 percentage points (pp) compared to March 2020). Unprecedented hyper-inflation and the dramatic decline in oil exports have affected the Venezuelan economy and fuelled a humanitarian crisis that has displaced millions and cut off access to food, sanitation, education, and healthcare since 2014. The highly politicised environment made delivering aid to those in need increasingly difficult.<sup>4</sup> The US sanctions to the country added another layer of difficulties for the Government, the Venezuelan people, and the humanitarian actors<sup>5</sup>. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic further put a strain on the already fragile healthcare and economic systems of the country, reduced humanitarian access and hampered mobility into neighbouring countries.

To understand the situation in Venezuela during the evaluation period, it is important to explore the context around the country's income system and evolution of the political crisis. Amidst continuous debates about the legitimacy of his government, Nicolas Maduro has been the President of Venezuela since he took over in 2013 after the former ruler's death. During that time, the sharp drop of oil prices in 2014 and the reduction of petroleum exports – on which Venezuela relies almost entirely for external income – have resulted in a decline in the living conditions in Venezuela, which had already begun to be affected by pre-existing economic and political factors, added to insecurity and high levels of inflation, which peaked at 130,000% in 2018, and accumulated 53,798,500% between 2016 and 2019 according to the Venezuelan National Central Bank.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 2. Left - Venezuela: exports vs petroleum exports 2012-2021(USD). Right - Venezuela: Inflation rates 2017-2021



Source: ICF (2023) based on OPEC (petroleum exports) and IMF and Venezuelan Central Bank (inflation rates). Note that as a pre-contextual reference, the figure starts in 2012 as this was the last election that took place before Maduro stepped into power.

As the crisis worsened, the national currency, the Venezuelan Bolivar, became weaker. This eventually led the Venezuelan economy to undergo a **process of dollarisation** (despite heavy regularisation of the currency since the early 2000s), to the point that some scholars consider the

<sup>3</sup> HUMVenezuela. 2022. Condiciones de vida – Hoja infográfica (Marzo 2022). Available at: [Condiciones-de-vida-Hoja-infografica-Marzo-2022.pdf](https://condiciones-de-vida-hoja-infografica-Marzo-2022.pdf) (humvenezuela.com)

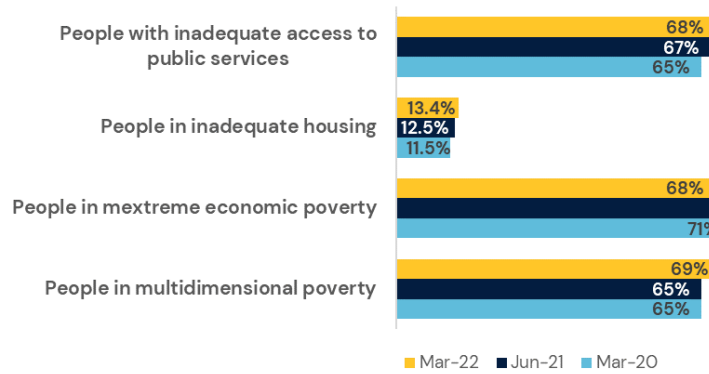
<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch. 2020. Venezuela: Humanitarian Groups Under Attack.

<sup>5</sup> WOLA. 2020. The Impact of U.S. Sanctions on Oil Production and the Humanitarian Emergency in Venezuela.

<sup>6</sup> Venezuela al día. 2019. BCV admite hiperinflación de 53.798.500% desde 2016.

country to have become an officially dollarised economy in September 2018 (as the rate of bank deposits in foreign currencies versus the total of deposits exceeded 40%).<sup>7</sup> This process partially reactivated some parts of the economy, but also increased socio-economic disparities within the country. In addition to the diminished purchase power, living conditions dramatically deteriorated in Venezuela and the provision of essential services became increasingly limited (see Figure 3), resulting in an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the country and forcing millions of Venezuelans to migrate (see Section 2.1.2).

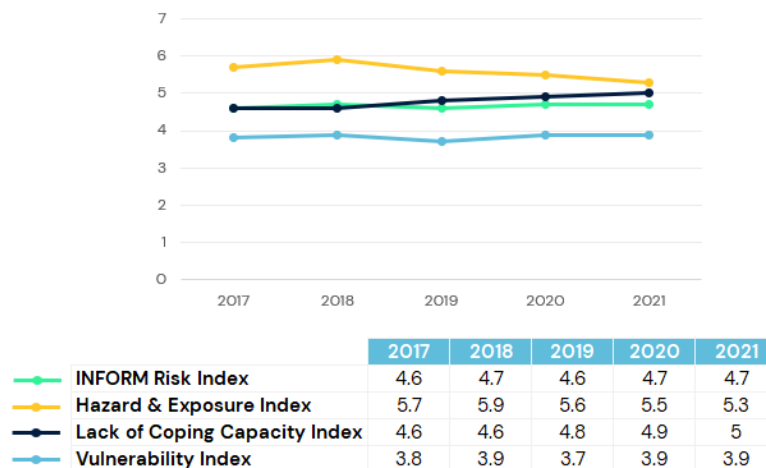
Figure 3. Selected living condition indicators in Venezuela, March 2020 to March 2022



Source: ICF (2023) based on data from HumVenezuela<sup>8</sup>

An analysis of INFORM data (an open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters which is widely used to support decisions about prevention, preparedness and response<sup>9</sup>) shows that during the evaluation period (2017-2021), Venezuela was in the medium-high ranges with respect to the Risk, (Lack of) Coping Capacity and Vulnerability indexes, and high for Hazard & Exposure index (see Figure 4). More recently, the Risk index increased, with Venezuela sitting at the high level (5.1 in 2022, and 5 in 2023). A more recent INFORM severity analysis, which assesses data related to crises, shows a high severity index for the Venezuelan regional crisis<sup>10</sup> (3.9 in 2023), and either medium or high severity indexes for Venezuelans displaced in multiple LAC countries.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 4. Risk INFORM index and its components for Venezuela (2017-2021)



Source: ICF (2023) based on data from INFORM Risk<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Zambrano. 2022. Dolarización y desdolarización, ¿un dilema en Venezuela?

<sup>8</sup> Available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/tabla-de-datos-2022/>

<sup>9</sup> European Commission. 2023. 'Inform Risk'. Available at: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk>

<sup>10</sup> European Commission. 2023. 'Results and data'. Available at: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Severity/Results-and-data>

<sup>11</sup> Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama, Peru.

<sup>12</sup> Available at: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Risk-Facts-Figures>

Quantifying the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela or its evolution during the 2017-2021 period is, however, difficult due to the lack of reliable and consistent statistical information on Venezuela (both internal and external).<sup>13</sup> Based on the limited information available, the remainder of this sub-section presents a summary of the situation and key needs per sector.

One of the sectors with the highest level of needs is **health**. As further explained in the case study on Health interventions in Venezuela (see Annex 8), the healthcare system in Venezuela became increasingly fragile, the result of shortages of essential medication, staff and often electricity,<sup>14</sup> the latter affecting an estimated nine out of ten Venezuelans in 2022.<sup>15</sup> According to World Bank data, Venezuela had a maximum of 0.9 hospital beds per 1000 inhabitants in 2017 (latest data available).<sup>16</sup> Table 3 shows an overview of selected health indicators, based on World Bank data. It shows a decrease in the health expenditure per capita between 2017 and 2019 (latest available data) and a slight worsening of other health indicators. Data published by HumVenezuela also demonstrated increased losses of public and private health services (52.2% in 2020 and 65.5% in 2021), and serious acute health conditions not cared for by public health (11.4% and 17% respectively)<sup>17</sup>.

Data for other health indicators is also available but only for specific years, thereby limiting the ability to compare and gather enough insights to build an estimate of the full health context. For example, HUMVenezuela<sup>18</sup> data shows that 68.3% of the population were unable to afford illness related costs in 2018. In 2019, 79.1% of newborns in Venezuela received inadequate care. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reported the following: “In August 2019, 352 deaths of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum were extra officially reported (98,87 deaths per 100,000 live births), 17% less than in 2018 (426 deaths), although the rate is still high. In addition, the adolescent fertility rate is 95 per 1,000 women aged 15-19 years old, compared to a regional average of 62”.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Venezuela had one of the highest teenage fertility rates in the region, and especially “among young people that live in extreme poverty, in indigenous rural areas and among Afro-Descendants”.<sup>20</sup>

Table 3. Selected Health indicators for Venezuela (2017-2021)

Selected Health indicators	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Current health expenditure per capita (current USD)	524.5	464	338.8	..	..
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	72.25	72.13	72.06	72.07	..
Prevalence of anaemia among children (% of children ages 6-59 months)	27.3	27.7	27.9	..	..
Prevalence of anaemia among pregnant women (%)	25.7	26.1	26.4	..	..

Source: World Bank

<sup>13</sup> Medina-Ramirez. 2016. In Venezuela, data is power. The limited availability of data was confirmed by this evaluation, which also found that in the absence of official data for the evaluation period, statistical data heavily depends on reporting from different stakeholders, which could have limited access to data themselves based on national circumstances (see Health case study).

<sup>14</sup> The field report identified significant difficulties to import medicines, added to international sanctions and the unwillingness of the Maduro government to accept humanitarian aid from specific countries. Finally, the Venezuelan exodus also meant that the workforce was affected, and medical staff transitioned into the private sector or simply left to other countries.

<sup>15</sup> Runrun. 2022. Comité de Afectados por Apagones: Fallas eléctricas aumentaron en octubre. Available at: <https://runrun.es/noticias/488940/comite-de-afectados-por-apagones-fallas-electricas-aumentaron-en-octubre/>

<sup>16</sup> World Bank. 2022. Hospital beds (per 1,000 people) – Venezuela, RB. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.MED.BEDS.ZS?end=2017&locations=VE&start=2012>

<sup>17</sup> HUMVenezuela. 2021. Available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/en/june-2021-tables/>

<sup>18</sup> HUMVenezuela. 2020. Impactos de la emergencia en salud. Available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/monitoreo/>

<sup>19</sup> UNFPA. 2021. Humanitarian response in Venezuela.

As regards **WASH**, Table 4 points to a slight decrease in the percentage of population using at least basic drinking water services between 2017 and 2020 (latest data available). This is in contrast with data published by HUMVenezuela for 2020 and 2021, which shows that access to drinking water worsened during those years (44.5% of the population in 2020, and 51.9% in 2021)<sup>21</sup>. HUMVenezuela also suggests that between 2020 and 2022, the situation remained stable or worsened for several comparable WASH indicators: by March 2022, 90% of the population still lacked a stable water supply (8pp more than in March 2020)<sup>22</sup>, 74% of the population had access to deficient sewage collection services in 2022 (compared to 64.3% in 2020) and 19.1 million people suffered interruptions or lacked connection to piped water systems in 2022 (1 million more than in 2020).<sup>23</sup>

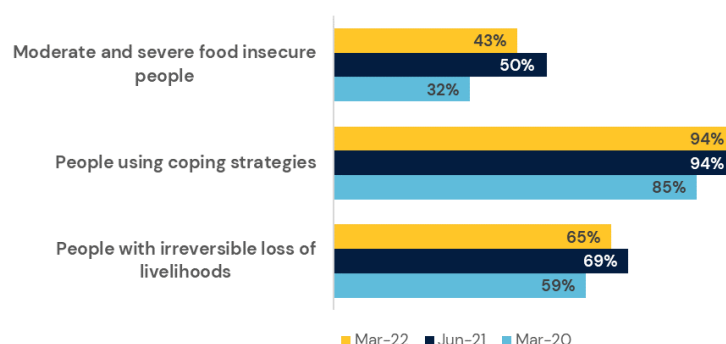
Table 4. Selected WASH indicators for Venezuela (2017-2021)

Selected WASH indicators	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
People using at least basic drinking water services (% of population)	94.22	94.04	93.86	93.69	..
People using safely managed sanitation services (% of population)	22.43	22.64	22.85	23.07	..

Source: World Bank

The crisis also affected **food security and nutrition**, being responsible for acute food shortages. Available data indicates that the levels of moderate and severe food-insecure people and of people using coping strategies increased between March 2020 and March 2022 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Selected food security and livelihoods indicators in Venezuela, March 2020 to March 2022



Source: ICF elaboration (2023) based on data from HumVenezuela<sup>24</sup>

Initially, the crisis affected food availability, and Venezuelans had to rely on the Local Supply and Production Committees (CLAP) - created in 2016 and implicitly favouring government supporters<sup>25</sup> - or queue for long hours to buy government-regulated products. The food availability situation slightly changed in 2016, and a new phenomenon appeared in the country: *bodegones* (import business). As local businesses went broke under the economic pressure of the crisis, some citizens began importing goods and selling them for high prices (and often in American Dollars, which are not easy to access for all sectors of the population), increasing their availability but reducing their accessibility.<sup>26</sup> Although these new businesses had no high impact on the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), they have had a deep social impact in a country where inequality has been a core source of conflict for decades.

<sup>21</sup> HUMVenezuela. 2021. Available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/en/june-2021-tables/>

<sup>22</sup> HUMVenezuela. 2022. Available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/tabla-de-datos-2022/>

<sup>23</sup> HUMVenezuela. 2020. National Follow-up Report on the Complex Humanitarian Emergency in Venezuela; HUMVenezuela. 2022. Follow-up Report on the Impacts of the Complex Humanitarian Emergency in Venezuela Following the Confinement due to the COVID Pandemic.

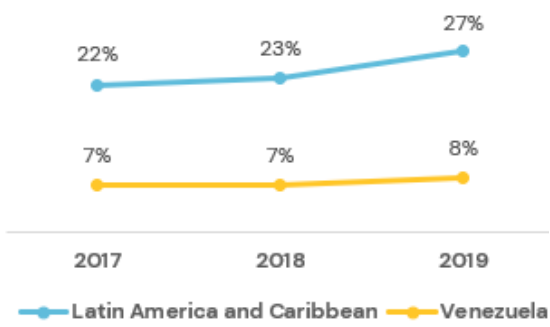
<sup>24</sup> Available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/tabla-de-datos-2022/>

<sup>25</sup> Transparencia Venezuela. 2021. Los CLAP: La dominación se entrega puerta a puerta.

<sup>26</sup> Cronica Uno. 2021. El fenómeno económico del 'bodegón' puede ser uno de los sucesos sociales más importantes de Venezuela.



Figure 6. Undernourishment (% of the population)



Source: ICF elaboration (2023) based on Roser and Ritchie (2019)

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that around 27.4% of the Venezuelan population suffered from **undernourishment** between 2018 and 2020, while the World Bank indicates the prevalence of undernourishment ranged from 22 to 24% between 2017 and 2019.<sup>27</sup> Other sources show similar results (see Figure 6). Available data also shows that the share of children attending school without regular school feeding increased from 72% in March 2020 to 95% in March 2022.<sup>28</sup>

HUMVenezuela published several indicators for specific years that further explore the nutrition crisis. For example, they reported 49% of adults who were hungry and could not eat in 2019, and 56.8% of pregnant women with malnutrition in 2019.<sup>29</sup> UNICEF's 2021 annual report covered malnutrition among Venezuelan children in four provinces of the country (in total, 233,449 children under five years of age were screened), with results showing that 15,786 (7%) children were identified with acute malnutrition. Out of them, 11,554 (4.9% of children under five) had Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) and 4,232 (1.8%) had severe acute malnutrition (SAM).<sup>30</sup>

The **education** system in Venezuela has also been widely impacted by the crisis and, more recently the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) estimated that 2.2 million children and adolescents were in assistance of education, and 1.1 million children were out of school across the country. Low school attendance is due to a compound of factors, including the lack of, or poor conditions of school infrastructures, but also lack of food, water and transport and difficulties to acquire teaching and learning materials<sup>31</sup> which affect students and teachers alike. Already in 2019, the Venezuelan Teachers' Association indicated that since 2016, 172,000 of the 860,000 (20%) registered teachers had abandoned their classrooms due to the low salary or to leave the country. More recently, HUMVenezuela reported that more than half of the teachers have left the education system since 2020<sup>32</sup> and an estimated 2.9 million children were not attending school regularly in Venezuela in March 2022 (an increase of 4.8 pp compared to March 2020).<sup>33</sup> In many cases, minors started working to help their families by taking additional responsibilities at home or entering the labour market, an 'invisible' situation that has little to no information in Venezuela.<sup>34</sup>

In 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic placed even more strain on Venezuela's public services by closing schools and pushing even greater numbers out of education and adding demand to an already fragile healthcare system. It also limited the access of humanitarian actors to Venezuela.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Macrotrends. 2023. Venezuela Hunger Statistics 2023.

<sup>28</sup> <https://humvenezuela.com/en/march-2022-tables/> HUMVenezuela (2022). Available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/en/march-2022-tables/>

<sup>29</sup> HUMVenezuela. 2020. Impactos de la emergencia en Alimentación y nutrición. Available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/monitoreo/>

<sup>30</sup> UNICEF. 2021. Country Office Annual report 2021 Venezuela. Note that HumVenezuela reports higher malnutrition rates.

<sup>31</sup> UNICEF. 2019. Country Office Annual Report 2019 – Venezuela; Theirworld. 2019. Venezuela crisis is wrecking education and hope for millions of children; Deutsche Welle. 2022. La crisis del Sistema educativo en Venezuela.

<sup>32</sup> HUMVenezuela (2022). Available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/en/march-2022-tables/>

<sup>33</sup> UNICEF (2019) 'Press Release: over one million children estimated to be out of school'.

<sup>34</sup> UNICEF. 2019. Country Office Annual Report 2019 – Venezuela; Coscojuela. 2022. El trabajo infantil en Venezuela "invisibilizado" por falta de datos.

<sup>35</sup> OCHA (2021) 'Humanitarian Response Plan, Update 2021'.

In 2020, an estimated 6.8 million children were affected by school closures amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>36</sup>

DG ECHO's Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs) and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) for Venezuela also highlighted significant **protection**-related needs (the 2019 HRP estimated 2.7 million people were in need of protection assistance in Venezuela). Along with systematic violations of human rights (e.g. arbitrary detentions, restrictions on freedom expression, excessive use of force) and high levels of violence within the country (i.e., the murder rate in Venezuela reached 90 per 1000 inhabitants in 2015 and went down to 40,1 in 2021, still the second highest one in the region after Jamaica),<sup>37</sup> protection concerns were linked to the growing number of people forcibly displaced due to the socio-economic and political crisis. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) required protection assistance to ensure their safety, access to basic services and protection of legal rights (including in relation to housing, property and forced evictions). The documents also highlighted a rise in gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual exploitation and human trafficking, and significant child protection and safety risks – heightened in the case of unaccompanied and separated children – linked, for instance, to child labour and recruitment by armed groups, which many children also requiring psychosocial support and support to access education. Limited access to essential services and humanitarian assistance were also a key protection concern which particularly affected the most vulnerable population, which some vulnerable groups (e.g. indigenous communities, LGBTIQ+ community, elderly people and people with disabilities) facing additional protection challenges due to discrimination and marginalisation.

#### 2.1.2 The ensuing migratory crisis and its effect in the region

The impact of the crisis extended beyond Venezuela's borders, resulting in the biggest mass displacement in the history of South America. According to R4V data, more than six million Venezuelan refugees and migrants left the country between 2014<sup>38</sup> and 2021, with **the latest figures surpassing seven million** (as of March 2023).<sup>39</sup> Most Venezuelan refugees and migrants (6.1 million as of March 2023) are currently located in Latin American and Caribbean countries. The largest numbers are reported in Colombia (2.48 million), Peru (1.51 million), Ecuador (502,000) and Chile (444,000),<sup>40</sup> with R4V projections estimating an increase in these numbers in 2023 (e.g. 2.98 million Venezuelans with an intention to stay in Colombia, 1.62-1.72 million in Peru and 519,000 in Ecuador).<sup>41</sup> These large migratory flows were affected by the spread of COVID-19 throughout the region as the pandemic led to borders closures and exacerbated difficulty to find regular migratory pathways, while lockdowns worsened protection, food shortages, loss of livelihoods, and access to education. Between mid-March 2020 and early March 2021, for instance, 151,000 displaced persons returned to Venezuela.<sup>42</sup>

The **demographic profile of Venezuelan migrants and refugees fleeing Venezuela evolved** over the years as the economic crisis deteriorated and evolved into a humanitarian emergency, with 2015 representing a turning point. During the first waves of migration (between the early 2000s and 2015), the majority of people leaving the country were adults with high levels of education and

---

<sup>36</sup> The number is 6,866,822. Statista (2022) 'COVID-19: students impacted by school closures by level Venezuela 2020'. Available at: <https://runrun.es/noticias/488940/comite-de-afectados-por-apagones-fallas-electricas-aumentaron-en-octubre/>

<sup>37</sup> Statista. 2022. Venezuela: tasa de homicidios 2014-2021; Statista. 2022. Homicide rates in selected Latin American and Caribbean countries in 2021.

<sup>38</sup> The Venezuelan exodus began in 2002-2003, following the attempted coup d'état and national strike against then-President Chavez, but most of the migration flow was perceived since 2015. Between 2015 and 2017 alone, the proportion of Venezuelan migrants increased by 132% globally, and a closer look at South America reveals an increase of 895%. Source: El Tiempo. 2018. 'Cuántos venezolanos están saliendo de su país y a dónde se dirigen – Datos'.

<sup>39</sup> Platform for Interagency Coordination for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants (R4V). 2021. R4V América Latina y el Caribe, Refugiados y Migrantes Venezolanos en la Región – Mar 2023.

<sup>40</sup> Platform for Interagency Coordination for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants (R4V). 2023. R4V América Latina y el Caribe, Refugiados y Migrantes Venezolanos en la Región – Mar 2023. Official numbers changed overtime. During the consultation stage of the evaluation, stakeholders admitted that countries like Colombia noticed there were more Venezuelans than previously thought as a result of regularisation schemes. In this sense, numbers may variate depending on the source.

<sup>41</sup> GIFMM Colombia. 2023. Cifras clave; GTRM Peru. 2023. Cifras Clave; GTRM Ecuador. 2023. Cifras Clave.

<sup>42</sup> OCHA (2021) 'Humanitarian Response Plan, Update 2021'.

middle-class young people with a university degree. These groups typically had the financial resources and enjoyed favourable conditions to establish themselves in other countries. When the so-called *exodus* began in 2015, however, the profile of people fleeing Venezuela changed. In the years that followed, migrating Venezuelans mostly came from low-income households with lower levels of education, seeking to escape the complex humanitarian emergency.<sup>43</sup> Among this later wave, the demographic profile also evolved over time. Initially, the majority were working-age individuals, almost half of them identifying as women, which matched the profile of the host countries. As they settled in the new countries, many were able to bring their families. This resulted in a shift in the profile of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the following years, as most of them were families with children, pregnant women, elderly people and people with disabilities.

Variations in Venezuelan migrants' and refugees' profiles could also be observed between countries of destination. In a 2021 study which covered 11 countries in the region, the Migration Policy Institute noted that Venezuelans in neighbouring countries (Brazil, Colombia, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago) tended to be young and single, have lower education levels (most having completed only secondary school), report more difficulties to access health services and mental health support, and were less likely to ask for assistance. A second group of countries (Ecuador and Peru) tended to host young Venezuelans, but these were more likely to hold a technical degree or higher, with a majority of the sample (74%) working independently. The third group (Costa Rica plus Southern Cone: Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) hosted Venezuelans with high levels of educational attainment (approximately half of them held a college or graduate degree) and who showed greater willingness to stay long term.<sup>44</sup>

### ***The phenomenon of the caminantes***

Among the last wave of migrants and refugees, many were forced to make the trip on foot. The reasons were varied but were often linked to inaccessibility to proper means to leave, namely a lack of resources to access international or local transport tickets or lack petrol to use personal vehicle. The phenomenon became more prevalent in 2018 and prompted the use of the term '**los caminantes**' (walkers, in Spanish). Caminantes faced even more risks than Venezuelans who took other means of transport, including controls and abuse at checkpoints, exposure to violence as well as armed conflict, lack of access to basic services, exacerbated vulnerability to diseases, and even crime.<sup>45</sup> Given the political situation of the country, many Venezuelans struggled to access official documentation when leaving, which, added to the increasing requirements by other Latin American countries, put asylum seekers in positions that forced them to live in precarious conditions in their new host communities.

The mixed nature of migration flows from Venezuela resulted in continuous discussions on their status, also leading to wide differences across countries in the region in the type of protection and avenues to regularisation for Venezuelan migrants and refugees.<sup>46</sup> In 1984, Latin American countries adopted the (non-binding) **Cartagena Declaration**, which broadened the definition of the term 'refugee' by expanding the conditions presented in the Geneva Convention (1951) to also include victims of generalised violence, international aggression, internal conflicts, human rights violations, or other circumstances affecting public order. Although the expanded definition was incorporated in the national legislation in 15 countries in the region,<sup>47</sup> its implementation has been mixed.<sup>48</sup> Specifically in the context of the Venezuelan migration crisis, many countries have been reluctant to apply the Cartagena Convention. Only Brazil officially used the definition to mass recognise Venezuelan refugees in 2017 (this was the only official use of the Declaration's definition since its creation), with Mexico loosely implementing it for some Venezuelans. As a result, many

<sup>43</sup> IMF (2023) 'Venezuela's Migrants Bring Economic Opportunity to Latin America'.

<sup>45</sup> ACAPS in Reliefweb (2021) 'Colombia/Venezuela - The Caminantes: needs and vulnerabilities of Venezuelan refugees and migrants travelling on foot, Thematic report, January 2021'.

<sup>46</sup> Platform for Interagency Coordination for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants (R4V) (2021) 'R4V América Latina y el Caribe, Refugiados y Migrantes Venezolanos en la Región - Mar 2023'.

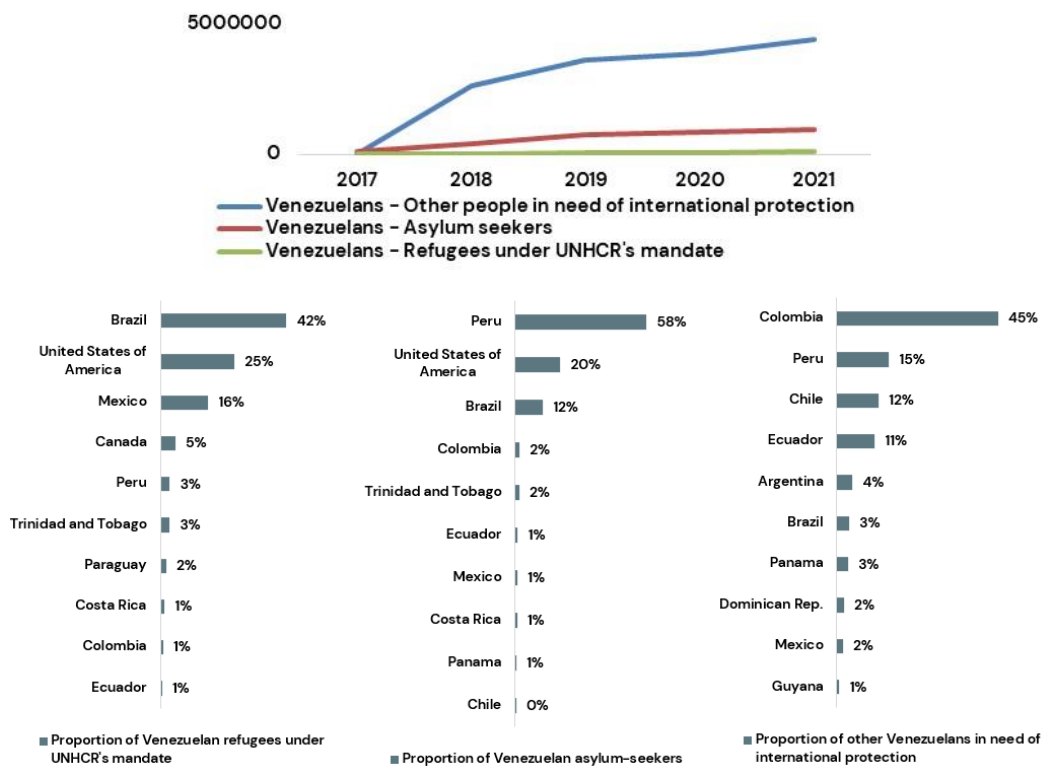
<sup>47</sup> Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

<sup>48</sup> Acosta and Madrid (2020) 'Migrants or refugees? 'Let's do both'. Brazil's response to Venezuelan displacement challenges legal definitions'. Fundacion Carolina 9/2020.

Venezuelans have faced major barriers to access international protection or have been deported or removed from the receiving country.

Like hosting countries, the UN has also been reluctant to recognise Venezuelans fleeing the crisis in Venezuela as refugees. Despite the UNHCR calling for Venezuelans to be recognised as refugees, the UN (including UNHCR) has, for the first time, defined the migratory flow from Venezuela as a mixed flow of migrants and refugees, meaning it is assisted by both UNHCR and IOM. This is reflected in UNHCR data on the crisis, which uses the label 'Other people in need of international protection' to refer to most of the Venezuelans registered under the UNHCR system between 2017 and 2021,<sup>49</sup> reflecting the initial reluctance of countries to accept Venezuelans as refugees.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, while Venezuelans were the largest group of asylum seekers during the evaluation period at global level (3,229,181), they represented only 8% of the refugees under UNHCR's mandate while they constituted 100% of other people in need of international protection by 2021.<sup>51</sup> Venezuelans also represented 35% of the asylum-seekers in the region. Considering that over 6 million of the 7+ million Venezuelans who have left the country fled to other countries in the Americas, these numbers suggest that many who would qualify for refugee status pursued alternative international protection and legal forms of stay instead.

Figure 7. Number of Venezuelans in the Americas divided by group, and their proportion per host-country (2017-2021)



Source: ICF elaboration (2023) based on UNHCR population figures

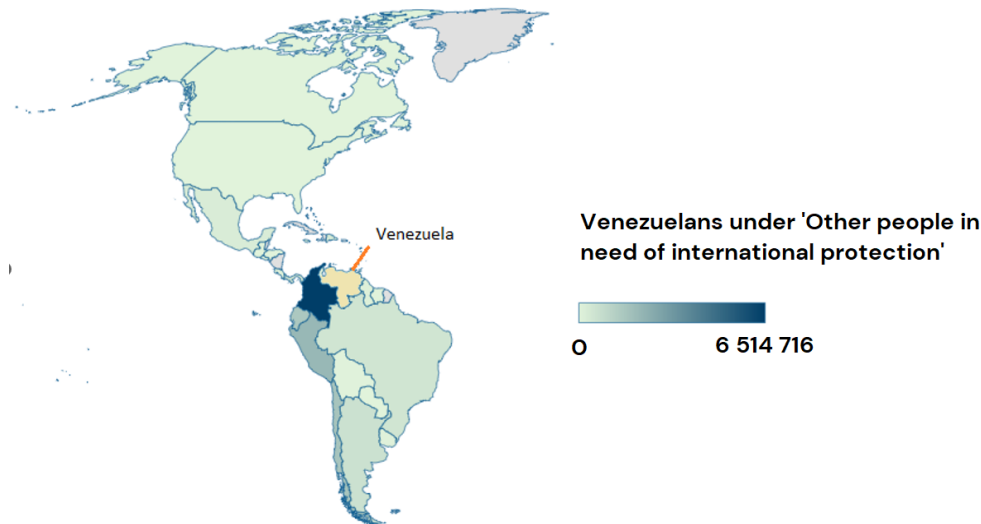
As regards their geographic distribution, Venezuelans under the category 'Other people in need of international protection' are mainly located in Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) or other South American countries (Brazil, Colombia, Peru, and Chile) (Figure 8).

<sup>49</sup> UNHCR uses this category for "people who are outside their country or territory of origin, typically because they have been forcibly displaced across international borders, who have not been reported under other categories". Source: UNHCR (2022) 'Persons who are forcibly displaced, stateless and others of concern to UNHCR'.

<sup>50</sup> Brumat, L (2022) 'Migrants or refugees? 'Let's do both'. Brazil's response to Venezuelan displacement challenges legal definitions'.

<sup>51</sup> UNHCR (2022) 'Refugee Statistics'. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=G1lv5o>

Figure 8. Venezuelan crisis: displacement to other countries in the Americas (2017 – 2021)



Source: ICF elaboration (2023) based on UNHCR Population Figures

**Complex political relationships and high poverty levels elsewhere in the region created additional challenges.** Displacement from Venezuela was initially seen by some as the failure of the Chávez regime's social programmes, and Venezuela's history of welcoming refugees was initially reciprocated in countries such as Colombia.<sup>52</sup> However, as the crisis worsened, it further strained economies and government services in host countries, with many not renewing or fully ending their special visa programmes, forcing hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to move throughout the region without official documentation or legal status, increasing resentment and discrimination from locals.<sup>53</sup> Section A7.1.1 (Annex 7) highlights some of the relevant migratory and international protection decisions made by countries in the region regarding the legal status of Venezuelans, and the table below summarises some of the identified alternative protection and/or regularisation schemes and requirements for Venezuelans in the LAC countries receiving the largest numbers of Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

Table 5. Summary of requirements for alternative protection/regularisation schemes (selected LAC countries)

Country	Regularisation requirements
<b>Colombia</b>	In 2021, the government announced a regularisation effort through the adoption of the temporary protection statute specifically for Venezuelan migrants ( <i>Estatuto Temporal de Protección para Migrantes Venezolanos</i> ), which grants a temporary residence permit valid for 10 years. The ETPV can be requested by Venezuelan refugees, asylum seekers and migrants with a regular status, as well as those with an irregular migration status if they prove that they were in the country before 31 January 2021. Other Venezuelans will need a valid passport to request a visa.
<b>Peru</b>	Between 2017 and 2018, Venezuelans in Peru could obtain an ad-hoc temporary permit ( <i>Permiso Temporal de Permanencia</i> or PTP), valid for one year. As of 31 December 2018, the PTP can no longer be requested. Since 2019, Venezuelans who wish to stay in Peru need to obtain a humanitarian visa, which is issued by Peruvian consulates (i.e. it needs to be obtained prior to arriving in the country). The humanitarian visa allows individuals to opt for a humanitarian migration status upon their arrival ( <i>Calidad Migratoria Humanitaria</i> ), but many Venezuelans cannot obtain it due to its costs and the difficulty to provide the documents required, i.e. passport and criminal record. Since 2021, the Peruvian migration authorities have made the application procedure for the temporary permit to stay more flexible through the <i>Carné de Permiso Temporal de Permanencia</i> , applicable to all nationalities. However, many

<sup>52</sup> Xchange (2019) 'Latin America Spotlight: the Venezuela-Colombia border'.

<sup>53</sup> Vick, Karl (2021) 'You Don't Have to Be Rich to Do the Right Thing.' Colombia's President Iván Duque on Welcoming Venezuelan Refugees,' *Time* March 20.

Country	Regularisation requirements
	Venezuelans in Peru face difficulties to obtain the temporary permit because the requirements include the payment of all migration-related fines (e.g. for overstaying their permit) and debts, unaffordable for many. <sup>54</sup>
<b>Brazil</b>	Since December 2019, Brazil applies simplified asylum procedures for Venezuelans affected by the crisis. Between March 2020 and June 2021, however, temporary entry restrictions were imposed (linked to the pandemic), preventing Venezuelan migrants and refugees entering the country (irregularly) from applying for asylum. In June 2021, Brazil approved Ordinance 655, which allowed Venezuelans who entered the country irregularly after March 2020 to regularise their status by applying for asylum (providing proof of vaccination) or a migratory residence permit. <sup>55</sup>
<b>Ecuador</b>	Since 2019, Ecuador has required Venezuelan citizens to have a visa prior to entering the country. This decision was accompanied by the adoption, in August 2019, of a temporary residence visa for humanitarian reasons (VRTERH), which allowed Venezuelans to apply for it prior to entering the country (it could only be obtained in Ecuadorian consulates in Venezuela, Colombia and Peru) by presenting a valid passport (passports within the first five years of their expiration date were accepted) and paying USD 50. The scheme was also available for Venezuelan migrants who had entered the country before 26 July 2019. Subsequent regularisation efforts took place in 2020 with the adoption of the temporary residence visa for humanitarian reasons (VERHU) and, more recently, the exceptional temporary residence visa for Venezuelan citizens (VIRTE), adopted in 2022. The VIRTE (which is valid for two years) allows Venezuelan citizens in Ecuador who entered the country (regularly) before 3 June 2022 to regularise their situation.
<b>Chile</b>	Chile announced the Democratic Responsibility Visa for Venezuelans in 2017, which allows Venezuelan citizens to stay and work in the country in the country for one year (it can be extended for one more year). A new Migration Bill was approved in 2021, seeking to regulate and renew immigration permits, require visas for Venezuelan migrants, and standardise procedures for plural expulsions of irregular migrants.

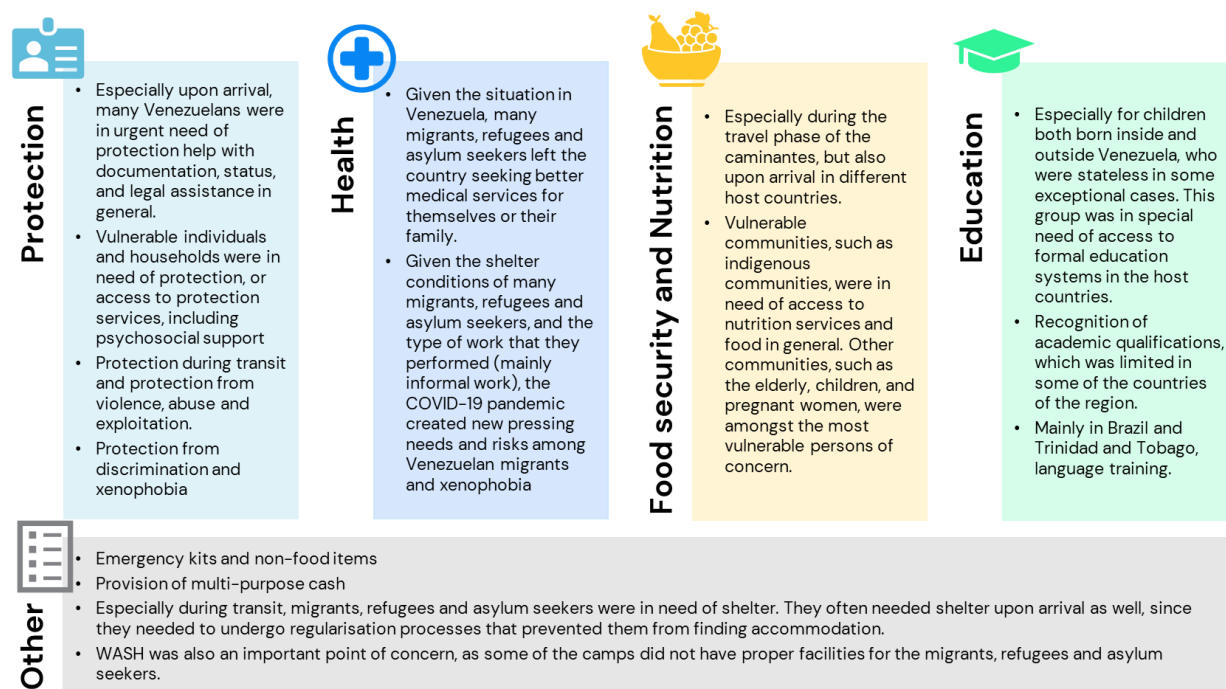
Source: ICF elaboration

Regardless of the protection regulatory framework, as a result of the crisis and the migration patterns, the evidence gathered for this evaluation showed that **Venezuelan refugees and migrants had similar needs across the region**, even if some differences between host countries could be observed due to the profile of refugees or migrants arriving, the accessibility to regularisation services or the socio-economic context in each country. Figure 9 shows the main needs of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the region during the evaluation period, based on secondary and primary evidence gathered for this evaluation.

<sup>54</sup> Equilibrium CenDE. 2021. Inmigración Venezolana en el Perú: Regularización Migratoria y el Sistema de Refugio.

<sup>55</sup> UNHCR. 2022. Submission by UNHCR for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report. Universal Periodic Review: 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle, 41<sup>st</sup> session (Brazil).

Figure 9. Overview of needs of Venezuelan migrants in host countries



Source: ICF elaboration (2023) based on documentation review (HIPs, RMRP needs assessments, and reports from OIM, IMF, MPI), mini-mobile survey for beneficiaries, KIIs and field interviews in Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador.

In line with this information, the R4V has published the **Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plans for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela** since 2019,<sup>56</sup> highlighting the actions, strategies, and needs of different partners across the region. Consistent with some of the context elements explored in other sections, the reports show special sections on Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile, although the latter starts being more relevant from 2020. Other parts of the region (such as the Caribbean and Central America) are often merged for analysis purposes. From a regional perspective, the reports explore the **needs and challenges that neighbouring countries face when receiving Venezuelan migrants, refugees and asylum seekers** (especially those who belong to more vulnerable categories), as well as influx response and absorption capacities. Overall, **the reports have explored similar topics each year**, with the exception of **COVID-19**, which is mentioned as a priority in the 2021 plan, as these strategies are often prepared the year before their publication. The pandemic added a new level of concern to the plan, as mobility and living conditions for Venezuelan displaced populations suffered great consequences as a result of health measures taken in Venezuela and across the region.

The box below provides an overview of recurring needs and challenges seen in the regional response plans published by R4V. Although the reports focus on the regional dimension of the crisis, some of these issues apply to Venezuela as well.

**Recurring needs and challenges (based on Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plans for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela 2019-2021)**

- Access to official documents. Lack of documentation frameworks in the region.
- Reception services and assistance
- Access to labour market and other services, which are increasingly overstretched by the demand
- Limited access to formal education systems
- Protection services for vulnerable populations (women, children, elderly people, disabled persons, etc.)
- Exposure to violence, human trafficking, exploitation and abuse by criminal networks and incidents with irregular armed groups and actors
- Socio-economic and cultural integration

<sup>56</sup> Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela 'Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plans for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela' (2019, 2020, 2021)

- Mobility issues, lack of safe routes for migrants
- Political instrumentalisation of the humanitarian crisis, which led to mixed policies from host countries.
- In the context of COVID-19, increased difficulties to access health services, added to more difficulties to all the points mentioned above.

As COVID-19 added a layer of pressure to the region, many host communities used the crisis to further stop Venezuelans from **accessing national services and support**.<sup>57</sup> Increasing levels of **xenophobia** and discrimination in the hosting communities or along the route were also seen across the region, as multiple **anti-Venezuelan protests** were reported in different South American countries.<sup>58</sup> When coupled with the precarious conditions due to the irregular migratory status, these situations exacerbated exposure of Venezuelans on the move to further risks.

### 2.1.3 Humanitarian response to the Venezuelan regional crisis

As noted by DG ECHO officials consulted for this evaluation, it took some time for the international community to qualify the situation in Venezuela as a humanitarian crisis, which started to become more evident for the international community around 2016.<sup>59</sup> Between 2016 and 2019, humanitarian actors gradually recognised the gravity of the humanitarian situation in Venezuela (see timeline in Section A7.1.1 in Annex 7), leading to a significant scale-up of humanitarian funding allocated to address the (humanitarian) needs of the Venezuelan population (internal dimension of the crisis) and of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the region (external dimension).

Since 2019, the coordination of the humanitarian response to the internal dimension of the crisis has been led by the **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**. The first Humanitarian Response Plan was also adopted in 2019, developed by the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) under the supervision of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and in consultation with a range of stakeholders, including the Government of Venezuela and the National Assembly's Special Commission for the Monitoring of Humanitarian Aid.<sup>60</sup>

As regards its external dimension, a coordinated regional response was deemed crucial given the extent of the migration crisis, which currently affects more than 20 countries. This prompted the adoption of the Quito Declaration on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizen in 2018, but also the establishment - by the UN Secretary General - of the **Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from (R4V)**, co-lead by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The platform covers interventions across 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and is now composed of more than 200 organisations across the region.<sup>61</sup> Since 2019, the platform publishes the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) - initially every year and, since 2022, every two years - to mobilise support from the international community.<sup>62</sup>

Both inside and outside Venezuela, the provision of **humanitarian aid was highly impacted by political and operational factors** during the evaluation period, as further explained under the Effectiveness section of this report (EQ6). In Venezuela, the complexity of the political situation (with two parallel governments<sup>63</sup>) and Maduro's inconsistent position towards humanitarian aid (he fully rejected humanitarian aid, closed borders, added administrative barriers, and made statements

<sup>57</sup> OHCHR. 2020. 'Venezuela: la emergencia sanitaria no es excusa para seguir restringiendo los derechos humanos, dicen expertos de la ONU'; Cabrera, Gonzalez, Lawrence, Daly and Daly. 2021. 'XENOFobia HACIA PERSONAS VENEZOLANAS: MANIFESTACIONES EN CINCO CIUDADES COLOMBIANAS'.

<sup>58</sup> ICF. 2023. Social media listening analysis.

<sup>59</sup> ICF. 2022. Scoping interviews.

<sup>60</sup> OCHA. 2021. Humanitarian Response Plan, Update 2021.

<sup>61</sup> Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (2021) 'RMRP for refugees and migrants from Venezuela, Jan-Dec 2021'.

<sup>62</sup> As noted by a DG ECHO official consulted for this evaluation, the RMRP (for the region) and the HRP (for Venezuela) were prepared and published separately, with no reference to each other until recently.

<sup>63</sup> Although Juan Guaidó had initially been recognised as the Interim President of Venezuela, and encouraged humanitarian aid entering the country, Maduro's government holds most of the de facto power in the country. In addition, Guaidó has lost legitimacy in the last few years, and actors like the EU stopped recognising him as the Interim President in 2021. Source: France24 (2021) 'La Unión Europea deja de reconocer a Juan Guaidó como "presidente interino" de Venezuela'.



on the matter during the first years of the evaluation period but eventually accepted aid from Russia and the European Union)<sup>64</sup> made it difficult for humanitarian organisations to work in the country. There have been reports of forced imprisonments, added to the already difficult conditions inside Venezuela. In this sense, humanitarian organisations had to work under very difficult conditions to reach the target populations, and national and international organisations' capacity to operate were affected by the decisions from political actors.

The Venezuelan humanitarian migration crisis also faced politicisation outside of Venezuela, becoming a central topic in the political agenda of different actors in the Americas.<sup>65</sup> As a result, humanitarian aid actors and Venezuelans faced uncertainty with every political change in the region as new governments often adopted new legislation and/or approaches to the migratory crisis. For example, in Brazil, the arrival of Jair Bolsonaro to the government in 2019 created uncertainty as to whether the mass recognition of Venezuelans as refugees – approved in 2017 under Michel Temer's presidency – would be maintained.<sup>66</sup>

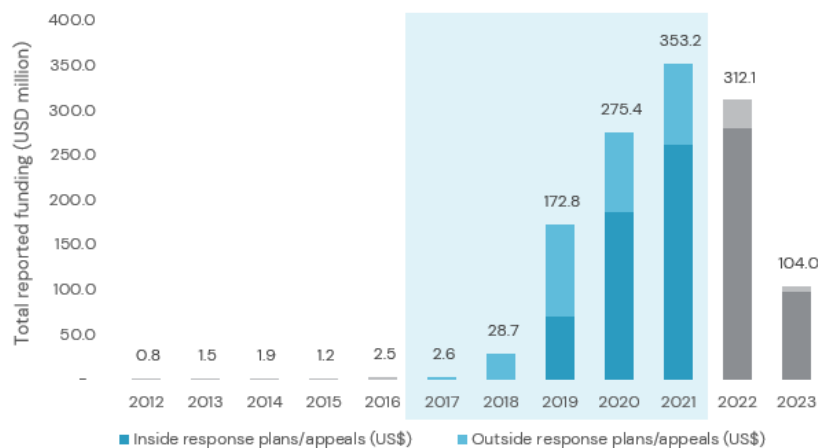
The **COVID-19** pandemic was also one of the most significant factors that affected humanitarian interventions during the evaluation period. In Venezuela, the pandemic had a dual effect on the humanitarian environment in Venezuela. On the one hand, it contributed to opening humanitarian space in the country since it forced the government to accept humanitarian aid. In contrast, it made the implementation of projects remains difficult, forcing international organisations establish effective links with local actors, which also faced their own obstacles in the country.

The following sections explore the international response to the crisis and DG ECHO's involvement.

### 2.13.1 International response to the Venezuelan regional crisis

According to OCHA's 5W (Who does What, Where, When and for Whom) database, as of December 2021 Venezuela had at least 132 organisations reporting humanitarian activities in the country, which had reached 4.5 million people in need.<sup>67</sup> OCHA's FTS data shows that the level of humanitarian annual funding in Venezuela during the 2017–2021 period increased from USD 2.6 million to 353.2 million (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Overview of humanitarian funding towards Venezuela (2012 – 2022)



Source: ICF (2023) based on OCHA FTS extracted in July 2023.<sup>68</sup> The figure shows the totality of humanitarian funding reported to OCHA's FTS database. This includes the funding provided under the Humanitarian Response Plan (from 2019 onwards) and outside of it.

<sup>64</sup> El Periódico (2019) 'Maduro rechaza ayuda humanitaria: no somos mendigos de nadie'; EL PAIS (2019) 'Maduro acepta ayuda humanitaria de la Unión Europea y anuncia un lote de medicinas de Rusia'.

<sup>65</sup> Curtis (2001) 'Politics and Humanitarian Aid: Debates, Dilemmas and Dissension'.

<sup>66</sup> Acosta and Madrid (2020) 'Migrants or refugees? 'Let's do both'. Brazil's response to Venezuelan displacement challenges legal definitions'. Fundacion Carolina 9/2020.

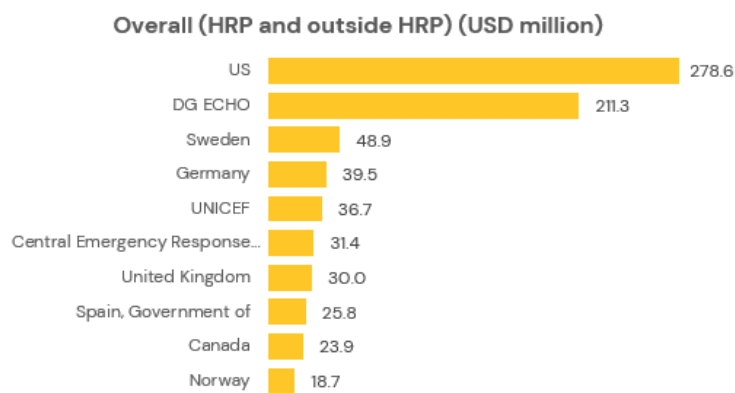
<sup>67</sup> OCHA in Reliefweb. 2022. Venezuela 5W - Humanitarian Operational Presence 2022 - Who does What Where When & for Whom? as of 31 December 2021.

<sup>68</sup> Note from source: "trends from 2008 to 2018 data are currently under review. Reliable annual data can be found in the Country Page by year. The amount per year might change based on daily reports received and processed in the system"

**Disclaimer about OCHA's FTS data:** this evaluation relies on OCHA's FTS for information on international humanitarian funding to the Venezuelan regional crisis as this is the database that offers the highest degree of comparability of the data. As reporting to OCHA's FTS is not mandatory (and, as noted by some stakeholders consulted for this evaluation, not done systematically by all humanitarian actors), the data presented here is not fully comprehensive.

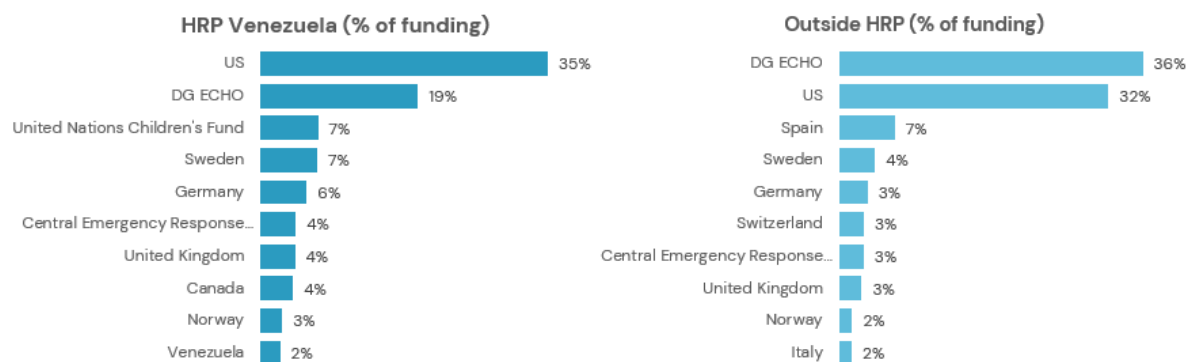
Figure 11 shows the top 10 donors for Venezuela (under the HRP and outside of it) for the evaluation period. It reveals that the top donor for Venezuela were the United States (US) (USD 278.6 million or 34% of total funding) followed by DG ECHO (USD 211.3 million or 26% of total funding) and Sweden (USD 48.9 million or 6%). When looking specifically at the top donors to the HRP (2019-2021) and outside the HRP (2017-2021), the results are slightly different (Figure 12). Under the HRP, the US remained the top donor (35%) followed by DG ECHO (19%), with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) being the third highest donor to the plan (7%). Outside the HRP, DG ECHO was the main donor (36%), followed by the US (32%) and Spain (7%).

Figure 11. Top 10 donors of international humanitarian funding to Venezuela: total funding in USD million to the HRP and outside the HRP (2017-2021)



Source: ICF (2023) based on UN OCHA FTS extracted in May 2023.

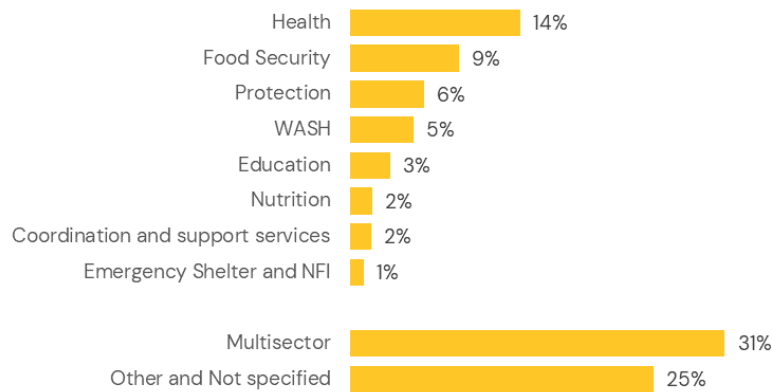
Figure 12. Top 10 donors to the HRP for Venezuela (left) (2019-2021) and outside the HRP (right) (2017-2021)



Source: ICF (2023) based on UN OCHA FTS extracted in May 2023.

From a sectorial perspective, the figure below shows the main sectors that were funded inside Venezuela (2017-2021), both as part of the HRP and outside of it. Beyond the funding that went towards interventions in non-specified sectors (25%) or that were multi-sector (31%), the sector most funded was Health (14%), followed by Food Security (9%).

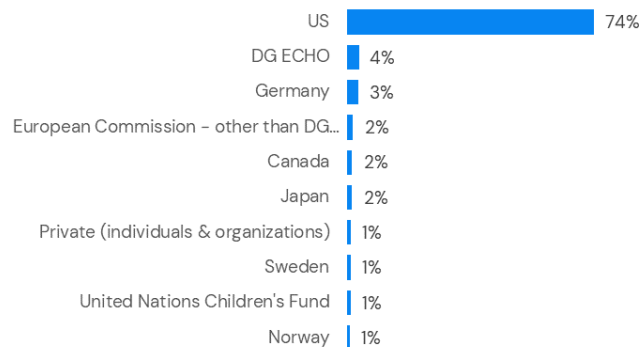
Figure 13. Main sectors funded in Venezuela (2017–2021): Venezuela overall (HRP and outside HRP) (share of total funding)



Source: ICF (2023) based on UN OCHA FTS extracted in July 2023.

As regards funding to the external dimension of the crisis, OCHA's FTS data only allows to analyse it from the perspective of contributions to the RMRP. In total, USD 1,666.2 million were allocated to the 2019–2021 funding. Figure 14 illustrates the top donors to the plan between 2019 (first year of publication) to 2021, showing that the main donor was, by far, the US (USD 1,228.2 million or 74% of the total funding). This was followed by DG ECHO (US 60.6 million or 4% of the funding) and Germany (USD 57.4 million or 3% of the funding).

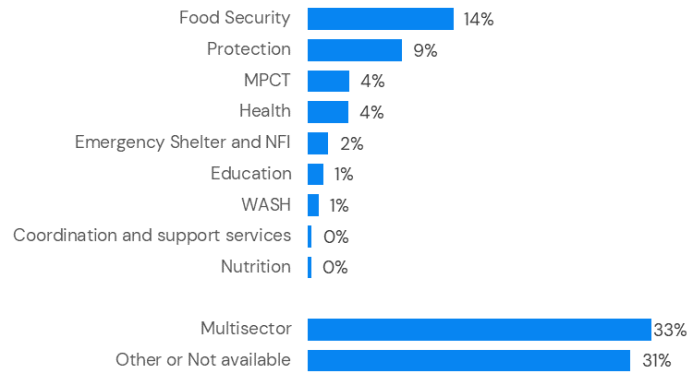
Figure 14. Top 10 donors to the RMRP (2019–2021)



Source: ICF (2023) based on UN OCHA FTS data extracted in July 2023.

Concerning the main sectors funded, as shown in Figure 15, 64% of the funding went towards multisector interventions (33%) or interventions under 'Other/not specified' sectors (31%). Beyond this, the main sectors funded under the 2019–2021 RMRPs were Food Security (14%), Protection (9%) and Multi-Purpose Cash Transfers (4%). The figure below shows that the sectors covering multiple field clusters and 'not reported' represented the highest overall funding of the 2019–2021 RMRP plans (32% and 24% respectively), followed by food security (24%). In 2019 and 2020, multiple field clusters were the most relevant sector (71% and 33% respectively), while not reported actions represented 36% in 2021.

Figure 15. Main sectors funded under the RMRP (2019-2021)<sup>69</sup> (share of total funding)



Source: ICF (2023) based on UN OCHA FTS data extracted in July 2023.

### 2.1.3.2 DG ECHO's response to the Venezuelan regional crisis

DG ECHO first made explicit reference to the Venezuelan crisis in a Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) in 2017. Before then, humanitarian interventions were being implemented in Venezuela, but these were constricted to specific areas in the border with Colombia and were only targeting Colombian refugees in the country.<sup>70</sup> UNHCR, for instance, the only UN agency with field presence in Venezuela in the years leading up to 2017, had been working for years with Colombian refugees settled in Venezuelan states along the border.<sup>71</sup> Other DG ECHO activities focused on Disaster Preparedness (DP)/Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), to deal with natural hazards occurrences in the territory, and on addressing violence.

The scoping interviews and the reports from the field missions carried out by DG ECHO between 2014 and 2017 show that, during that time, civil society organisations (CSOs) in Venezuela had started to raise the alarm about the situation and looming humanitarian crisis. This led to increasing requests from DG ECHO partners working with Colombian refugees to include host populations as part of the target group, arguing that there was a lack of access to basic services and to education.<sup>72</sup> In response to this, DG ECHO's Field Office in Colombia started establishing regular contact with CSOs and conducting field missions in Venezuela to monitor the situation (including the human rights situation), observing a deterioration in the area. A key activity funded by DG ECHO in Venezuela before the evaluation period was a project implemented by Caritas France in 2016 which, in addition to providing nutrition support in some locations, carried out a nutritional survey which showed zones in the country with acute malnutrition requiring humanitarian response.<sup>73</sup> In the region, DG ECHO's response generally focused on DP/DRR or to address humanitarian needs linked to other crises, like the armed conflict in Colombia.

The main issue at the time was, however, the lack of data, which made it impossible to quantify the extent of the crisis, nor to follow an evidence-based approach. This was mentioned both during the scoping interviews<sup>74</sup> and in documents reviewed.<sup>75</sup> According to DG ECHO officials consulted, UN agencies at the time were using official data, which tended to be outdated and / or underestimate the extent of the crisis. For some sectors, like nutrition, there was no data at all.<sup>76</sup>

Although DG ECHO's office in Venezuela started operations in 2019, the document review and the scoping interviews show that there were monitoring missions in the country before this event. Initially, concerns arose in 2016 when the situation for Venezuelan population started showing

<sup>69</sup> To facilitate the comparison of the OCHA data, some categories were merged under a common label.

<sup>70</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews.

<sup>71</sup> DG ECHO. 2018. Field mission report (Venezuela, June 2018).

<sup>72</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews.

<sup>73</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews; DG ECHO. 2019. Mission report (Venezuela, Feb. 2019).

<sup>74</sup> ICF. 2022. Scoping interviews.

<sup>75</sup> WFP. 2022. WFP Venezuela Operational Update (31 January 2022); ICF. 2022. Review of mission reports (Venezuela).

<sup>76</sup> ICF. 2022. Scoping interviews.

signs of deterioration due to violence and food security issues reflected in increasing cases of acute malnutrition in children under five years old. DG ECHO heads of office tried to secure funding to tackle insecurity in the country, but this attempt was unsuccessful. As the situation worsened for Venezuelans, monitoring operations increased between 2016 and 2018, with DG ECHO providing funding for this purpose to several organisations. Efforts increased after this, and DG ECHO allocated more operational funds and monitoring missions for the Venezuelan population inside the country and those leaving the country, with DG ECHO playing an important role in drawing the attention of the international community to the humanitarian crisis at the beginning of the evaluation period.

DG ECHO's response to the crisis was regional, covering both its internal (i.e. the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela) and the external dimension (i.e. addressing the humanitarian needs linked to the displacement crisis that originated from the crisis in Venezuela). Among other reasons, this decision came as a result of political challenges in Venezuela, where different parties instrumentalised the use of humanitarian crisis language for their rhetoric and campaigns. By keeping an internal and external dimension, funds were easier to access in case of blockage or internal complications.

DG ECHO's regional approach was designed around four main pillars: i. (vulnerable) Venezuelan refugees (and asylum seekers) and migrants, ii. indigenous populations (inside and outside Venezuela), iii. Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the Caribbean islands (where there were some additional protection risks), and iv. vulnerable people in Venezuela (see box below).

#### ***The four main pillars of DG ECHO regional approach<sup>77</sup>***

##### ***(Vulnerable) Venezuelan refugees (or asylum seekers) and migrants***

DG ECHO approach to support (vulnerable) Venezuelan refugees (or asylum seekers) and migrants aimed to follow them along their journey. DG ECHO followed the displacement flows, covering the whole route. Eventually DG ECHO also focused on hotspots such as the border between Ecuador and Peru or the northern Chilean region Colchán.

##### ***Indigenous people***

The second pillar focused on indigenous people (in Venezuela and moving to neighbouring countries, i.e. Colombia and Brazil), a vulnerable group. Outside of Venezuela, the geographical focus was mostly Roraima (Brazil) but to some extent also La Guajira (Colombia). DG ECHO focused on the most basic support, mostly protection (especially for children and women). 90% of Venezuelans moving to Brazil were indigenous people. Inside Venezuela, DG ECHO also focused on indigenous populations in Bolivar and Amazonas (i.e. southern states of Venezuela).

##### ***Venezuela migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the Caribbean islands***

The third pillar was the Caribbean islands. The region was completely out of the radar of other donors, but DG ECHO identified some specific needs. Many Venezuelans moved to both Trinidad and Tobago and Dominican Republic; in Aruba and Curacao the numbers were not as high but there were some additional elements that warranted response, as there were many Venezuelan women and girls victims of exploitation. In the Caribbean, the main needs were around protection. Eventually, DG ECHO phased out of some of these countries, including the Dominican Republic where Venezuelans were able to integrate more easily.

##### ***Vulnerable people inside Venezuela***

The situation in Venezuela was very uncertain (unlike in other LAC countries). The tensions in 2018 and 2019 were particularly high, i.e. the Country Team was not recognised as such, OCHA's presence in the country was very limited, and the situation in the country made it very difficult to ensure a meaningful and sustainable support. Right before COVID-19, the government started being more open to the idea of receiving humanitarian support (the crisis had worsened in the country, and they realised that support was needed). DG ECHO focus was on providing support to vulnerable people (especially people left behind, who were often women, the elderly or people with disabilities). In terms of sectors, DG ECHO focused on nutrition, protection, health and, to some extent, food security as well as capacity building.

<sup>77</sup> ICF. 2023. Interview with DG ECHO (1)

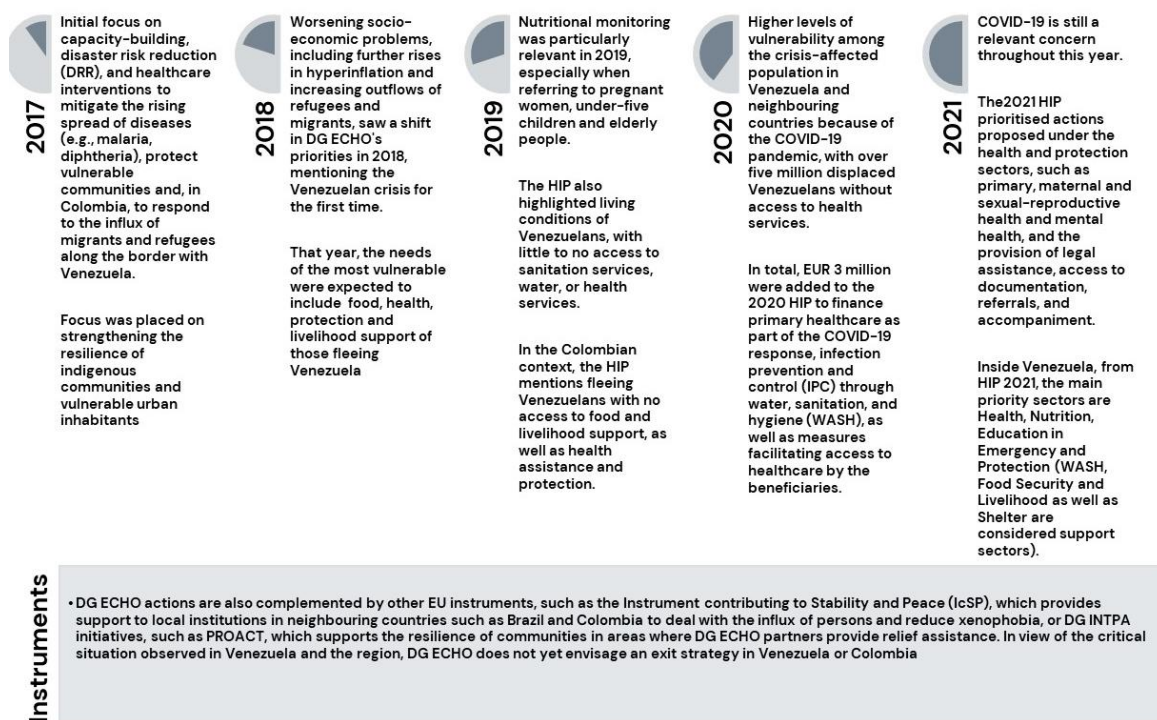
In terms of funding, DG ECHO, which was the second largest donor after the US for the crisis during the evaluation period, has dedicated a majority of its funding to the internal dimension of the crisis, as other donors have focused more on the external (regional) dimension.

Given this complex and extensive crisis, and the impact of displacement into neighbouring countries, DG ECHO took an integrated and holistic approach to humanitarian needs in the region, which continues to evolve with the needs of the situation. In Venezuela, the target groups included children under five, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, people with disabilities, people 'left behind' (i.e., elderly people and children, who stay in the country when the parents leave), indigenous populations in remote areas affected by epidemics and violence, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The priority areas for geographical coverage since 2021 are the border States with Colombia, Brazil, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, Aruba, and Curaçao, as well as urban and peri-urban settlements.

On **operations outside Venezuela**, the response to the **wider regional migration crisis** required adapting assistance to the specific needs of the crisis-affected population outside Venezuela. The **target population** included displaced Venezuelan migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in transit to neighbouring countries, due to their high vulnerability and limited access to services and resources. Given the influx of Venezuelans into neighbouring countries, the border areas were areas of high vulnerability and were thus prioritised under the **geographical coverage** of DG ECHO's actions.

Regarding **areas of interest**, the figure below presents an overview of highlights extracted from the HIPs covering the evaluation period.

Figure 16. DG ECHO highlights in relation to the Venezuelan regional crisis

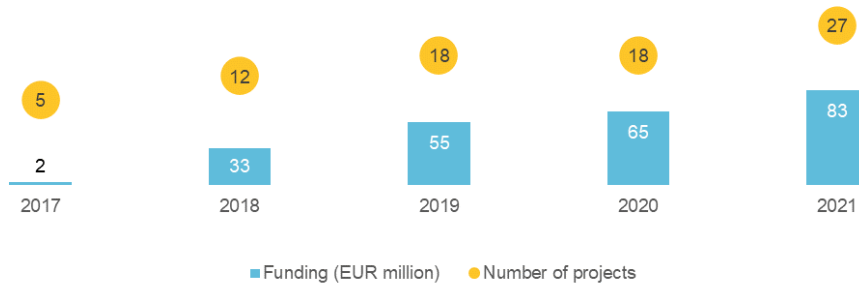


Source: ICF (2023) based on data from DG ECHO HIPs (2017-2021)

According to HOPE/EVA data, during the evaluation period, DG ECHO funded 80 projects in the context of the Venezuela crisis (both in Venezuela and in the region) to over EUR 237 million (see figure below), of which two thirds (58%) were allocated to respond to the internal dimension of the crisis (i.e. activities implemented in Venezuela through country or multi-country actions) while the remaining 43% was destined to address the needs of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the

region.<sup>78</sup> The amount of funding increased significantly from EUR 2.3 million in 2017 to EUR 32.5 million in 2018 and increased again in 2019 (EUR 55 million), and 2020 (EUR 64.6 million), to then increase significantly to EUR 83.2 million in 2021.

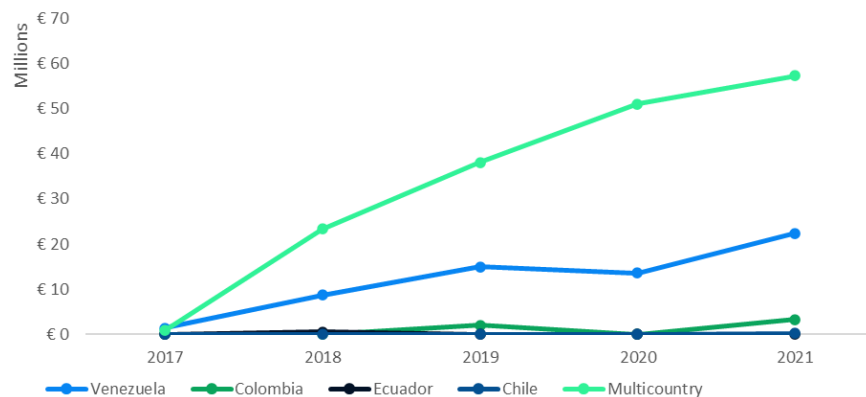
Figure 17. DG ECHO funding and number of projects to the Venezuelan regional crisis from 2017 to 2021<sup>79</sup>



Source: ICF (2023), based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases.

Around 59% of these projects were multi-country (i.e., the interventions were implemented in two or more countries, including Venezuela), representing 72% of the total funding. Beyond the multi-country actions, 33% of the projects funded by DG ECHO during the evaluation period either operated solely in Venezuela or included Venezuela as one of the countries where interventions were implemented.<sup>80</sup> Venezuela was followed by Colombia (6% of projects implemented).

Figure 18. Evolution of DG ECHO funding to the Venezuelan regional crisis per country



Source: ICF (2023) based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases.

Between 2017 and 2021, **UNICEF** was the main beneficiary of DG ECHO funding in Venezuela and the region, receiving EUR 31.2 million, accounting for 13% of all funding to implement multi-sectorial approaches mostly combining EIE interventions (e.g. identification of out-of-school children and establishment of re-entry programmes, supporting the development of capacities inside and

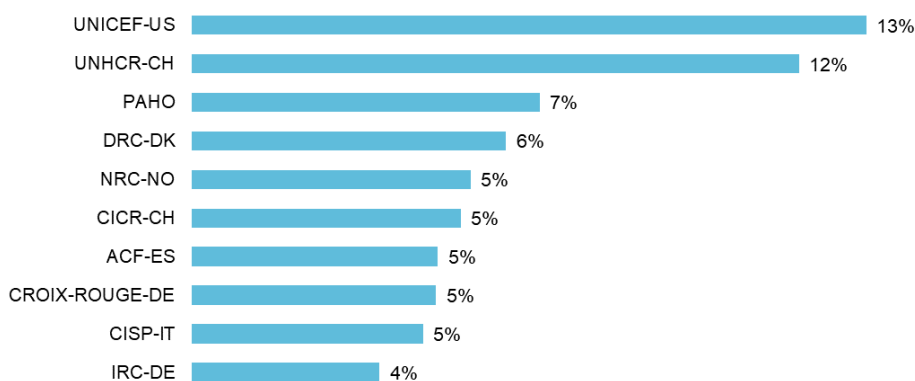
<sup>78</sup> Note that there are misalignments DG ECHO's internal budgetary data and HOPE/EVA data with respect to the total funding to the crisis (according to HOPE/EVA, the total funding amounted to EUR 250,1 million). This discrepancy is explained by the fact that while HOPE/EVA considers the total funding allocated to actions with an initial funding decision taken between 2017-2021 (regardless of whether additional funding was allocated outside of the evaluation period), DG ECHO's internal budgetary data allows to break down the funding to each action allocated per year and therefore, it does not include funding allocated to the covered actions beyond 2021.

<sup>79</sup> Please note that there is a slight discrepancy between the data extracted from HOPE and the Dashboard data provided by DG ECHO, with the latter indicating that the total amount of funding allocated to the Venezuela crisis amounted to EUR 238 million over the evaluation period. This discrepancy will be clarified, in cooperation with DG ECHO, during the next stage of the project.

<sup>80</sup> The data extracted from HOPE contains three main types of projects: i) multi-country projects (projects in which the area of intervention is a group of countries, not distinguishing the specific actions implemented in each of them), ii) projects containing distinct interventions in two or more countries (projects with several areas of intervention, i.e., one per country covered) and iii) single country projects (projects implemented only in one country).

outside of Venezuela, promoting the integration of Venezuelan students in the formal education system in other countries in the region and, in Venezuela, providing financial incentives to learning facilitators to reduce abandonment) with food assistance and nutrition (e.g. nutritional screening, provision of nutritional supplements, school feeding programmes), WASH (e.g. installation and rehabilitation of WASH facilities in schools and other centres), health and protection interventions. This was followed by **UNHCR** (EUR 28 million, i.e., 12% of all funding). As part of its response to the Venezuelan crisis, UNHCR provided support to countries receiving Venezuelan asylum-seekers, refugees and other migrants for the improvement of reception conditions, registration, and profiling. It also advocated for legal stay and inclusion, identified protection risks, and ensured access to basic services through the provision of non-food items and coordination with national authorities and institutions.<sup>81</sup> **The Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO)** was the third largest beneficiary, receiving EUR 16.1 million, accounting for 7% of overall funding. The figure below presents a breakdown of DG ECHO's main partners in Venezuela.

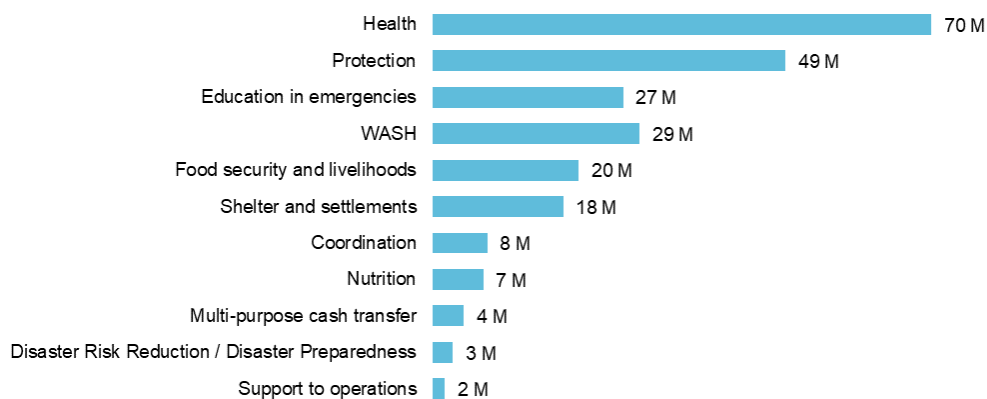
Figure 19. DG ECHO main partners of DG ECHO's response to the Venezuelan regional crisis, 2017-2021



Source: ICF (2023) based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases

The figure below shows a summary of the sectors funded during the evaluation period. The sectors most represented by the projects undertaken in the context of the Venezuelan crisis were **health** (29%), **protection** (21%), and **education in emergencies** (12%). These sectors were followed by WASH (11%), food security and livelihoods (9%), and shelter and settlements (8%). Overall, the funded categories tend to match the HIP concerns over Venezuela, although the regional focus had more DP/DRR representation.

Figure 20. DG ECHO's main areas of funding allocated to the response to the Venezuelan regional crisis, 2017-2021



Source: ICF elaboration (2023) based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases

<sup>81</sup> UNHCR (2021) 'Venezuela situation – 2021'.



Transfers were mainly allocated **in kind** throughout the evaluation period (except 2019, when cash transfers matched the funding at 10%), followed by **cash and vouchers**. However, most of the funding was allocated to activities that did not comprise direct transfers to beneficiaries (at least 70% each year).

## 2.2 Description of the EU action and its objectives

Figure 21 (overleaf) illustrates the revised theory of change (ToC) underpinning this evaluation. Based on the draft version prepared at the inception of the project, the evaluation has reconstructed the ToC throughout the project, based on the evidence collected from the various tasks. The theory of change summarises the context and the rationale explaining the intervention and identifies its key elements. The table below briefly explains the elements included in the ToC and summarises the main changes made compared to the draft version prepared at inception.

Table 6. Theory of change: key elements and changes compared to its draft version

ToC element	Changes compared to the draft ToC
<b>Objectives</b> that the intervention sought to achieve	Unchanged
<b>Inputs</b> , i.e. financial, institutional and human resources dedicated by DG ECHO to respond to the crisis	The amount of the funding dedicated to the crisis has been updated to reflect the updated analysis of the portfolio of actions.
<b>Activities</b> carried out to respond to the internal dimension of the crisis (in Venezuela) and its external dimension (in the region). The activities are structured around the main sectors covered in each of the two contexts.	The order of sectors and level of detail regarding the activities carried out depends on the extent to which they were prioritised in each context (e.g. in the region, specific activities are listed only for prioritised sectors)  The list of activities for some sectors has been slightly amended in line with evidence gathered.
Results of the activities in the short, medium and long term (respectively, <b>results, outcomes, and impacts</b> )	The draft Toc presented four levels of impacts: outputs, results, outcomes and impacts. The current version of the ToC ensures alignment with DG ECHO's logic model (and thereby, project data gathered) as it does not differentiate between outputs and results.
Underlying <b>assumptions</b> explaining the casual links between the different elements.	Small adjustments to delete some assumptions that were not relevant as they referred to effects of the intervention (e.g. "Interventions improve the health conditions of the target group")
<b>External factors</b> influencing the effects of the intervention.	Unchanged

Figure 21. Revised theory of change



### 3 EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section presents the findings from the evaluation, structured around the six evaluation criteria and 10 evaluation questions (EQs) listed in Section 1.1 of the report. At the beginning of each question, a table summarising the key findings per judgement criterion and assessing the strength of the evidence has been included. The quality of the evidence is illustrated using the colour code system described in Table 7.

Table 7. Colour scheme to assess strength of evidence

Ranking of evidence	Reasoning
<b>Strong</b>	<p>High quality body of evidence, large or medium in size, highly or moderately consistent, and contextually relevant.</p> <p>Quality – includes evidence includes high quality studies and evaluations and/or good quality soft data</p> <p>Size – large or medium</p> <p>Consistency – similar messages emerge from different pieces of evidence. There might be some areas of dissonance / divergence</p>
<b>Medium</b>	<p>Moderate quality studies, medium size evidence body, moderate level of consistency. Studies may or may not be contextually relevant.</p> <p>Quality –good quality soft data</p> <p>Size –medium or low</p> <p>Consistency – similar messages emerge from different pieces of evidence. There might be some areas of dissonance / divergence</p>
<b>Weak</b>	<p>The evidence is limited to a single source of questionable quality (i.e. there is an obvious risk of bias) or, is mainly anecdotal in nature, or there are many sources of evidence but the information they provide is highly contradictory and it is not possible to distinguish their quality.</p>

#### 3.1 Relevance

EQ1. To what extent were DG ECHO strategy and funded actions relevant and adapted to the evolving context of the Venezuelan crisis?

Table 8. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC1.1 DG ECHO's strategy (as described in the HIPs) was appropriately tailored to individual country contexts (Venezuela vs region), considering regional and cross-border aspects as well as needs and was continuously adapted to follow the evolution of the situation.	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The adoption of a regional approach was sensible to tackle the significant population movements across the region, considering cross-border aspects and regional common needs, but its operationalisation faced several challenges (e.g. complex administration and coordination, variations in national contexts and response, limited funding and unsuitable reporting systems).</li> <li>Separating the two dimensions of the crisis was appropriate to adequately consider the specific context, challenges and needs faced inside Venezuela (e.g. lack of recognition of the humanitarian crisis, political situation) and in neighbouring countries.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG ECHO's strategy was adapted to the specific contexts and needs of individual countries in the region to some extent, with specific emphasis on Venezuela and Colombia, but did consider regional elements and cross-borders aspects.</li> <li>• DG ECHO's strategy addressed the most pressing needs both within and outside of Venezuela. The strategy demonstrated a degree of flexibility in adapting to the evolving situation and changing needs. However, the constraints of limited funding and consequent strategic choices hindered DG ECHO's ability to expand and fully adjust to the protracted nature of the crisis over time.</li> <li>• DG ECHO's geographical focus (i.e. on border areas) was appropriate to respond to the most urgent needs in light of the limited funding available.</li> </ul>
<p>JC1.2 DG ECHO-funded actions were aligned with DG ECHO strategy and objectives set out in the HIPs (for in-country operations and for the regional migration crisis response)</p>	<p><b>Strong</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funded actions were generally in line with DG ECHO strategy thanks to a clear definition of priorities as part of the HIPs and HIPTAs as well as DG ECHO careful revision of partner proposals.</li> <li>• The horizontal issues outlined in the ToC were all considered to some extent by partners during project design and by DG ECHO during proposal review/ selection. The utilisation of markers such as the Resilience marker and the Gender &amp; Age marker determined the importance assigned to these issues. DG ECHO demonstrated a particular focus on capacity building, protection mainstreaming, and DP/DRR. Framework partners emphasised the integration of protection mainstreaming, inclusion, capacity building, and coordination. Both DG ECHO and partners allocated relatively less attention to environmental concerns.</li> </ul>
<p>JC1.3 DG ECHO-funded actions were well designed and their approaches (including transfer modalities choices such as the limited use of schemes involving cash and vouchers) were appropriately tailored to their specific context and needs (e.g., regional crisis approach, integrated/ multi-sector, migrants/ refugees in border zones, transit, peri-urban/ urban areas) and reflected lessons learnt from past interventions</p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The needs assessments exhibited varying levels of quality among different partners, countries, sectors, and years. However, overall, DG ECHO-funded actions were well-designed, incorporating, to the extent possible in light of the challenges faced, a thorough assessment of needs that considered the local context, specificities, and to some extent, lessons learned.</li> <li>• There were notable weaknesses in the quality and robustness of risk analyses especially during the initial stages of the crisis, primarily attributed to a rushed response, the important flow of migrants/refugees, and a lack of capacity among the partners.</li> <li>• The rationale behind the choice of transfer modality was not systematically justified in project documentation, but the consultations with DG ECHO and framework partners suggest it was tailored to the context considering existing government restrictions and other donors (i.e. USAID) interventions.</li> </ul>

**DG ECHO strategy and funded actions were relevant and adapted to the context of the Venezuelan crisis. The adoption of a regional approach was sensible to tackle the significant population movements across the region, considering cross-borders aspects**

**and common needs, but its operationalisation faced several challenges. In addition, separating the two dimensions of the crisis was appropriate to adequately consider the specific context, challenges and needs faced inside Venezuela and in neighbouring countries (JC1.1).**

DG ECHO adopted a regional approach in response to the Venezuela situation (see Section 2.2) covering two dimensions of the crisis: its response inside Venezuela and its response in the surrounding region, both implemented in parallel but separately. As such, DG ECHO promoted a joint strategy for operations in Venezuela and neighbouring countries, which mainly focused on border areas and circular movements.<sup>82</sup> The portfolio analysis shows that 59% of funded actions covered at least two countries (see JC1.2).<sup>83</sup> Most respondents to the survey strongly agreed (28% or 11 out of 39 responses) or agreed (56% or 22 out of 39 responses) that a regional approach was appropriate<sup>84</sup> while many stakeholders interviewed agreed on the need for a regional approach.<sup>85</sup> Several factors in support of a regional approach were identified in the document review, survey and KIIs and included:

- **Addressing emerging issues:** the regional strategy allowed DG ECHO to address emerging issues and changes across the region, such as the "Ruta de los caminantes" (the walkers' route), the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in US policy impacting the entire region. Additionally, a multi-country approach allowed for more flexibility in responding to evolving needs and arising issues (e.g. if the humanitarian space in Venezuela closed, the funds could be redirected to supporting Venezuelan migrants in the region);
- **Addressing cross-cutting issues:** a regional approach was necessary to address cross-cutting issues (e.g. coordination) and to better respond to common needs of migrants and refugees across the region (e.g. health, protection);
- **Addressing displacement-related issues:** a regional approach made sense from a mixed migration perspective, considering the movement of people and the need for a coherent response across countries. The region was not prepared for the scale and magnitude of the population movement caused by the crisis in Venezuela, making it crucial to understand together how to deal with and respond to such a situation. In addition, a multi-country approach was necessary to cover mixed migration routes and ensure a harmonised approach, despite differences among countries;
- **Ensuring greater visibility:** a regional approach allowed to raise awareness in the region about the issues in Venezuela and the broader impact on people in the LAC as well as to increase the visibility of the crisis. In addition, it supported advocacy efforts to attract funding;

While in theory, a regional approach was deemed adequate, its operationalisation faced several challenges, as reported in the document review, partner survey and KIIs, and a few stakeholders<sup>86</sup> questioned the rationale behind it. The main challenges identified included:

- **Administrative and operational:** the high number of countries involved led to complex administration and coordination. In addition, there was a lack of mechanisms to facilitate cross-border collaboration, such as referral systems and border-crossing monitoring. The evaluation also found insufficient information exchange between neighbouring countries, hindering effective regional coordination (see EQ4 for further details on coordination).
- **Variations in national contexts and response:** the context, caseloads and response were different in each country and therefore achieving a proper cross-border, regional approach was a challenge given the different national contexts. Additionally, while DG ECHO

---

<sup>82</sup> ICF. 2022. Analysis of LAC HIPs and HIPTAs (2017-2021).

<sup>83</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases). N=80.

<sup>84</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (33 out of 39 responses).

<sup>85</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 6, DG ECHO partners: 3, Coordination mechanism: 1, Other EU bodies: 1); and ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (1).

<sup>86</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (1 comment) and KIIs (DG ECHO: 2).

funded actions were multi-country, the implementing partners' teams in the different countries lacked a regional vision and did not necessarily talk amongst themselves, and as such the implementation was not multi-country.

- **DG ECHO funding and organisational structure:** the already limited funding from DG ECHO was spread among many countries. There was also a disconnection between DG ECHO system and the crises, primarily felt in Colombia. Separate budget lines were allocated for disaster preparedness (DP), Venezuela situation (VENSIT), and Colombia situation (COLSIT), initially leading to delays in adapting to emerging crises (e.g. the DP budget line was linked to natural hazards, but not to mixed migration, so when a situation like the Venezuela crisis started it took time to adapt) as well as to missed opportunities in terms of synergies/ complementarity.<sup>87</sup> Additionally, DG ECHO e-SingleForm is not adequately tailored to multi-country actions.

While the partner survey<sup>88</sup> and KIIs<sup>89</sup> indicate that, overall, DG ECHO's envisaged response was adapted to individual country contexts, the review of the HIPs and their technical annexes (HIPTAs) shows that DG ECHO's strategy in response to the Venezuelan regional crisis was, as of 2019, tailored to selected countries and regions in the LAC with a primary focus on Venezuela and Colombia, but did not explicitly cover the specific context and needs of each country affected by the Venezuelan regional crisis.<sup>90</sup> The 2021 HIP reported on Venezuelan refugees and migrants in 16 countries across the region<sup>91</sup> and contained, for the first time, an assessment of people affected by Venezuelan crises and their needs at regional level for South America, Central America and Mexico, and the Caribbean. HOPE data shows that DG ECHO funded actions in 11 countries across the region in response to the Venezuelan regional crisis.<sup>92</sup> With regard to regional and cross-border aspects, the review of the HIPs shows that specific needs (e.g. protection) and horizontal issues (e.g. coordination, environment) applying across the different countries were considered while cross-border aspects were increasingly taken into account over the evaluation period, with COVID-19 further strengthening the need to consider cross-border issues.<sup>93</sup> This was supported by framework partners, 28 out of 39 respondents to the survey<sup>94</sup> strongly agreed or agreed that DG ECHO objective and strategy consider regional and cross-border aspects, confirmed by several KIIs.<sup>95</sup>

**DG ECHO geographical focus was appropriate to respond to the most urgent needs in light of the limited funding available (JC1.1).** DG ECHO aimed to follow vulnerable Venezuelan migrants and refugees along their journey. As such, its geographical prioritisation was based on vulnerability (reflecting the four pillars: Venezuela migrants, Indigenous people, Caribbean islands and people left behind, see section 2.1.3.2), the displacement routes and presence of refugees/migrants, as well as the presence of (or lack thereof) of other donors/organisations. Due to the limited presence of other donors, DG ECHO primarily focused on the internal dimension of the crisis, on average, two third of the funding was allocated to Venezuela over the evaluation period.<sup>96</sup> The geographical coverage included border zones (e.g. Zulia, Táchira, Apure, Amazonas and Bolívar), vulnerable peri-urban areas and large urban settlements (e.g. Caracas, Maracaibo, Valencia, and Barquisimeto). Outside Venezuela, DG ECHO covered the main affected countries and focused on hotspots, as specified in the Technical Annex (TA) 2020 *"border areas have been identified as extremely vulnerable areas requiring specific attention due to the ongoing influx of people and their higher vulnerability. These areas, usually underdeveloped across the region, are the first ones to*

---

<sup>87</sup> This issue has been resolved and as of 2021, partners can now have one agreement covering multiple aspects.

<sup>88</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (12 strongly agree and 17 agree, out of 39 responses).

<sup>89</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 5, DG ECHO partners: 3, Other EU bodies: 1) and ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>90</sup> ICF. 2022. Analysis of LAC HIPs and HIPTAs (2017-2021).

<sup>91</sup> DG ECHO. 2021. HIP Latin America and the Caribbean, p. 4: Colombia, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago (TT), Aruba, Curaçao, Costa Rica, Argentina, Paraguay, Panama, Uruguay, Mexico.

<sup>92</sup> DG ECHO funded actions in: Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Chile, Aruba, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>93</sup> ICF. 2022. Analysis of LAC HIPs and HIPTAs (2017-2021).

<sup>94</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (10 strongly agree and 18 agree, out of 39 responses).

<sup>95</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 3, DG ECHO: 2).

<sup>96</sup> ICF. 2023. VENSIT data (considers all funding to Venezuela as part of single and multi-country actions). N=68.

receive arrivals of refugees and migrants".<sup>97</sup> The majority of framework partners surveyed (77% or 30 out of 39) agreed with DG ECHO's geographic focus. However, KIIs<sup>98</sup> and the Protection and Health case studies<sup>99</sup> also noted that certain areas with significant needs, such as informal crossings, cities with a high concentration of migrants/refugees (but not as high as big cities, such as Santander or Vichada) and regions like Amazonas, Apure, and the central areas of Venezuela, did not receive sufficient attention despite identified needs, this was in part due to the Covid-19 pandemic which limited the response in certain areas. Additionally, with the limited funding available, a clear prioritisation was necessary resulting in gaps that could not be fully addressed.

**DG ECHO's strategy addressed the most pressing needs both within and outside of Venezuela. The strategy demonstrated a degree of flexibility in adapting to the evolving situation and changing needs. However, the limited funding available and the consequent strategic choices hindered DG ECHO's ability to expand and fully adjust to the realities of the situation over time (JC1.1).**

The large majority of survey respondents (90% or 35 out of 39) (strongly) agree that DG ECHO strategy and objectives in the region covered the most urgent needs,<sup>100</sup> as also confirmed by KIIs.<sup>101</sup> KIIs<sup>102</sup> also pointed out DG ECHO's collaborative approach in the development of the HIP (through surveys and exchanges), ensuring that the needs identified by partners on the ground were reflected in the strategy.

More specifically, **inside Venezuela**, the analysis of the HIPs shows a clear alignment between the needs identified and the envisaged response (Figure 22).<sup>103</sup> This is confirmed by the portfolio analysis, as the sectoral allocation of funding matches the envisaged response as described in the HIPs (Figure 23) with health, Education in Emergencies (EiE), WASH and protection being the main funded sectors. The case study also confirms that the health strategy adopted by DG ECHO in Venezuela was adequate to the country's needs.<sup>104</sup> While the availability and reliability of data was low at the onset of the crisis, over time, DG ECHO and partners were able to collect more data on needs enabling them to further refine their approach.<sup>105</sup>

Figure 22. Overview of most acute humanitarian needs and DG ECHO envisaged response in Venezuela, 2019-2021

Venezuela	2019	2020	2021
<b>Most acute humanitarian needs (HIP)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nutritional monitoring</li> <li>Health and nutrition support</li> <li>Multi-sectoral actions to prevent further deterioration of living conditions (access to health, and WASH)</li> <li>Access to education and protective spaces for children</li> <li>Protection, information and assistance to IDP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nutritional monitoring</li> <li>WASH, health, nutrition support</li> <li>Multi-sectoral actions to prevent further deterioration of living conditions (access to health, and WASH)</li> <li>Prevention and response to violence, abuse and human trafficking</li> <li>Qualitative and inclusive education and protective spaces for children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision legal aid and counselling, civil documentation, information on rights and procedures</li> <li>Protection</li> <li>Education and child protection</li> <li>Nutrition surveillance</li> <li>Food security, nutrition, health and WASH</li> </ul>

<sup>97</sup> DG ECHO. 2020. Technical Annex - Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>98</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO Partners: 4, Coordination mechanism: 1).

<sup>99</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 1 (Health interventions in Venezuela).

<sup>100</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (8 strongly agree and 27 agree, out of 39 responses).

<sup>101</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3, DG ECHO partners: 3, Coordination mechanism: 1).

<sup>102</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2, DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>103</sup> The Venezuela crisis was only referred to in the 2018 and 2019 HIPs but was not assessed in detail.

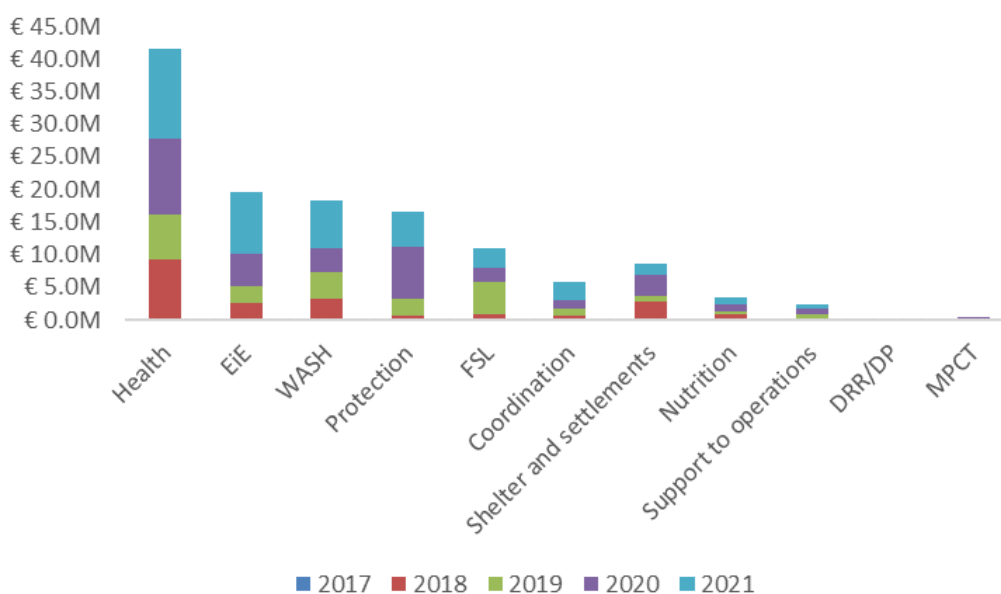
<sup>104</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 1 (Health interventions in Venezuela).

<sup>105</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 2); ICF. 2023. Review of mission reports; ICF. 2023 KIIs (DG ECHO: 2, Framework partners: 3); ICF. 2023. Case study 1 (Protection interventions in Venezuela).

Venezuela	2019	2020	2021
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psychosocial support for GBV survivors</li> <li>Multi-sectoral assistance to IDPs and all along the migratory route (protection)</li> </ul>	
<b>DG ECHO envisaged response (HIP)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most vulnerable groups: under-five, PLW, elderly, indigenous groups: multi-sectoral actions (health, WASH, education, protection, nutrition)</li> <li>Refugees and IDPs: provision of information and legal support, emergency medical services, protection, education, shelter, NFIs, food assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most vulnerable groups: under-five, PLW, people with disabilities, elderly, indigenous groups: multi-sectoral actions (health, WASH, education, protection, nutrition)</li> <li>Refugees and IDPs: provision of information and legal support, emergency medical services, protection, education, shelter, NFIs, food assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most vulnerable groups: under-five, PLW, children between 5 and 18, elderly: multi-sectoral actions (health, WASH, education, protection, nutrition)</li> <li>IDPs: health and nutrition services, food security, WASH, protection, education in emergencies and coordination</li> </ul>

Source: ICF. 2023. Analysis of HIPs and HIPTAs LAC.

Figure 23. DG ECHO funding allocation by sector and year in Venezuela



Source: ICF (2023) based on VENSIT data (considers all funding to Venezuela as part of single and multi-country actions). N=68

**Outside Venezuela**, DG ECHO's strategy (i.e. HIPs) did not present a breakdown of needs or envisaged DG ECHO response per country welcoming Venezuelan migrants and refugees, with the exception of Colombia, but it did tailor the envisaged response to refugees/migrants (i.e. multi-sectoral assistance). The 2020 and 2021 HIP Technical Annexes (HIPTAs) break down the needs and DG ECHO envisaged response in Venezuela and within the region. Within the region, protection and health were the main needs identified, in addition to multi-sectoral assistance to refugees (Table 9). HOPE data shows that protection and health were indeed the most funded sectors in the region (Figure 24) and most (89%) funded actions covered multiple sectors.<sup>106</sup> In addition, the case study on protection confirmed that, DG ECHO's response in Colombia and Ecuador covered the main

<sup>106</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases). N=80.



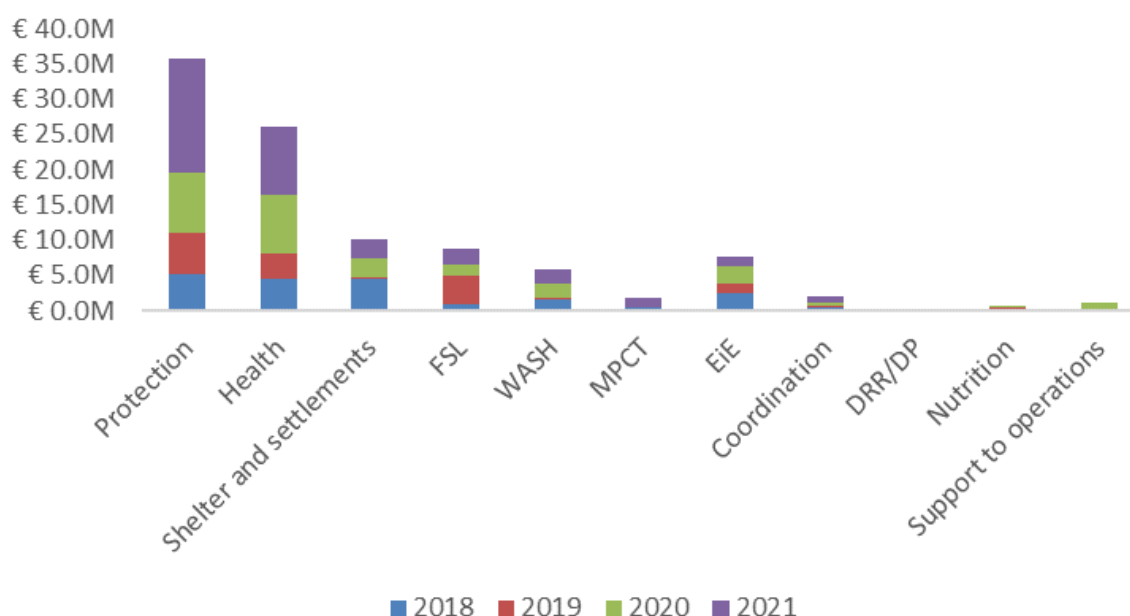
protection risks of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, with some exceptions (e.g. eviction, livelihoods).

Table 9. Overview of most acute humanitarian needs and DG ECHO envisaged response in the region, 2019-2021

Most acute humanitarian needs in the region	DG ECHO envisaged response in the region
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection (legal aid and counselling, civil documentation, information on rights and procedures)</li> <li>• Food security</li> <li>• Access to education</li> <li>• Access to essential health services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection (information linked to the provision legal aid, management of most critical cases, prevention and assistance for survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking)</li> <li>• Health (treatment of life-threatening acute conditions, referrals for cases requiring a higher level of health care, case management for high need cases as well as mental health and psychosocial support for violence victims, and sexual and reproductive health care).</li> </ul>

Source: DG ECHO. 2021. HIP LAC

Figure 24. DG ECHO funding allocation by sector and year in the region



Source: ICF (2023) based on VENSIT data (considers all funding to the region as part of single and multi-country actions. Exclude funding to Venezuela). N=54.

KIIs<sup>107</sup> and the partner survey further confirmed the appropriateness of DG ECHO strategy to the needs, in particular at the onset of the crisis, but also noted the lack of adaptation to changing needs. **Over time, the crisis evolved from requiring emergency humanitarian assistance to a more dynamic humanitarian-development approach. However, DG ECHO objectives and strategies did not shift accordingly and continued to focus on lifesaving assistance as the humanitarian needs remained high and the funding available did not enable DG ECHO to expand their operations to support broader needs and populations (JC1.1).** Although DG ECHO's strategy (i.e. HIPs) was continuously adapted throughout the years to reflect additional funding obtained, these often came with specific conditions (e.g. for COVID-19 response focusing on food assistance only) thus limiting their flexibility and broader use. Moreover, the response did not address elements such as resilience building and livelihood activities, as reported in the KIIs.<sup>108</sup> Field

<sup>107</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3, DG ECHO partners: 5, Other stakeholders: 2).

<sup>108</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3, DG ECHO partners: 3, Others: 2).

evidence further suggests that the relevance of DG ECHO's protection response in Colombia and Ecuador was limited due to its restricted scope; elements such as livelihoods and evictions were not sufficiently considered in the response.<sup>109</sup> However, DG ECHO's emphasis on lifesaving assistance was in line with its mandate, and influenced by the limited funding available. Strategic choices had to be made to prioritise the most pressing humanitarian needs and the most vulnerable people leading to missed opportunities in terms of resilience and nexus (see section 3.5). Nonetheless, some stakeholders<sup>110</sup> highlighted the necessity of reevaluating DG ECHO's definition/scope of lifesaving interventions to better align with the changing realities of the Venezuela regional crises. Section 3.4 (EQ9) provides further analysis on DG ECHO funding allocation compared to other donors and how contextual developments and altering needs led to changes in the HIPs in response to the Venezuelan regional crisis over the evaluation period.

**Funded actions were generally in line with DG ECHO strategy and priorities thanks to a clear definition of priorities as part of the HIP and HIPTAs as well as DG ECHO careful revision of partners proposals (JC1.2).** DG ECHO's strategy, as reported by framework partners, was clearly outlined in the HIP and provided clear guidance on DG ECHO priorities.<sup>111</sup> In addition, 31 respondents out of 39 stated that DG ECHO provided helpful guidance and recommendations to ensure alignment between funded actions and DG ECHO objectives and strategy. DG ECHO paid significant attention to the approach taken by framework partners to identify needs and select beneficiaries, requiring them to include detailed information in their proposals.<sup>112</sup> Evidence from the project mapping indicates that DG ECHO's review of project proposals included an assessment of whether the action was tailored to each country of interventions; this was the case for 19 actions out of 20 multi-country actions mapped.<sup>113</sup> The project mapping further confirmed that all projects mapped in more detail (40) were aligned with DG ECHO's strategy in terms of thematic, sectoral and geographical coverage.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the analysis of the FichOps indicates that out of 28 projects, 27 were rated as 'high' by DG ECHO in terms of relevance.<sup>115</sup> The level of detail provided by DG ECHO on the strategic relevance of the funded actions in the FichOps varied from one action to another but generally confirmed the alignment of the proposed actions with the HIPs priorities.

The evidence collected as part of this evaluation indicates that, in project appraisal, DG ECHO particularly valued a number of elements including: partner knowledge of the context, the inclusion of key sectors, the focus on most vulnerable, the selection of adequate geographical coverage, the continuity of work, a clear indication of responsibilities and actors to be covered, a detailed risk analysis as well as overall partner capacity and technical expertise.<sup>116</sup> On the latter, the KIIs<sup>117</sup> noted important disparity in partners' capacity across different countries. Countries where humanitarian actors had a significant presence, such as Colombia and Ecuador, rather naturally exhibited stronger capacity, but they too needed time to adapt their response from a conflict-oriented approach to one focused on mixed migration. On the other hand, countries with limited humanitarian experience, like Brazil and Peru, had lower partner capacity. Nevertheless, there was a general trend of increased partner capacity reported over the evaluation period.<sup>118</sup>

**The horizontal issues outlined in the ToC (see Section 2.2) were all considered by partners during project design and by DG ECHO during proposal review/ selection, but not in a consistent manner (JC1.2).** Figure 25 below provides an overview of the extent to which DG ECHO and framework partners considered each horizontal issue. Notably, the utilisation of markers such as the Resilience marker and the Gender & Age marker determined the importance assigned to these issues versus other horizontal issues with no such markers which were not consistently

---

<sup>109</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>110</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Coordination mechanisms: 3), Field interviews in Colombia (DG ECHO partners: 3).

<sup>111</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (12 strongly agree and 24 agree, out of 39 responses) and ICF. 2023. KIIs (Framework partners: 3); and ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>112</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela); and ICF. 2023. KIIs (5 DG ECHO).

<sup>113</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>114</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>115</sup> Criteria: How relevant is the proposed intervention and its coverage for the objectives of the HIP?

<sup>116</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases). N=57; and ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 4).

<sup>117</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 4).

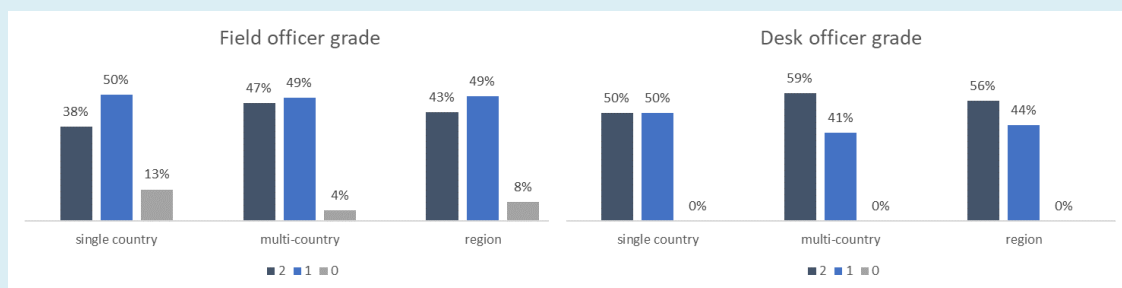
<sup>118</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 4).

considered. The analysis of the Gender and Age marker is presented in the box below while further information on the Resilience Marker can be found in Section 3.5.

### Most funded actions integrated Gender and Age to some extent

The analysis of the Gender and Age Marker indicates that **most funded actions were gender and age sensitive to some extent, although KIIs reported room for further improvement**. Based on the Field officer grade, less than half (43%) of funded actions strongly integrated Gender and Age at proposal stage while 49% integrated Gender and Age to some extent, the average grade attributed was 1.47 at proposal stage. Only 8% of funded actions did not integrate Gender and Age sufficiently (0). The Desk officer assessment presented a slightly more positive picture with 56% of funded actions assessed as strongly gender-sensitive and 44% of funded actions integrating Gender and Age to some extent, the average grade attributed was 1.56. Based on the latter, it appears that multi-country actions have a stronger Gender and Age sensitivity.

#### Gender and Age Marker

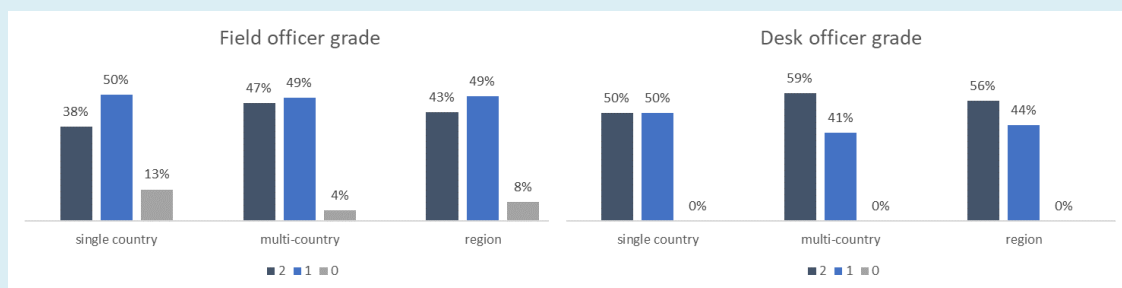


Source: ICF (2023) based on project mapping (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases). N=79 for Field officer grade and N=72 for Desk officer grade. (2= High, 1=Medium)

### Most funded actions integrated Gender and Age to some extent

The analysis of the Gender and Age Marker indicates that **most funded actions were gender and age sensitive to some extent, although KIIs reported room for further improvement**. Based on the Field officer grade, less than half (43%) of funded actions strongly integrated Gender and Age at proposal stage while 49% integrated Gender and Age to some extent, the average grade attributed was 1.47 at proposal stage. Only 8% of funded actions did not integrate Gender and Age sufficiently (0). The Desk officer assessment presented a slightly more positive picture with 56% of funded actions assessed as strongly gender-sensitive and 44% of funded actions integrating Gender and Age to some extent, the average grade attributed was 1.56. Based on the latter, it appears that multi-country actions have a stronger Gender and Age sensitivity.

#### Gender and Age Marker

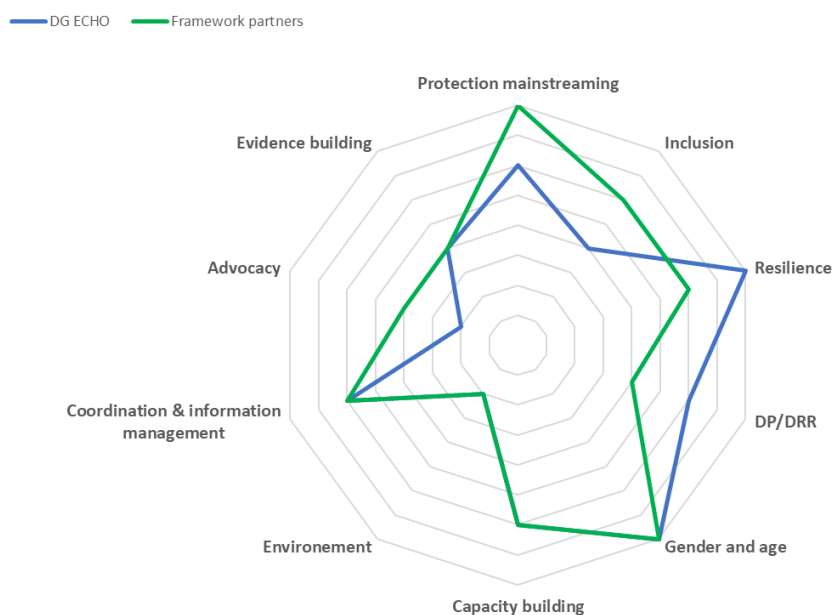


Source: ICF (2023) based on project mapping (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases). N=79 for Field officer grade and N=72 for Desk officer grade. (2= High, 1=Medium)

DG ECHO demonstrated a particular focus on capacity building, protection mainstreaming, and DP/DRR. Framework partners emphasised the integration of protection mainstreaming, inclusion, capacity building, and coordination. DG ECHO however reported that further improvements could be

made in the inclusion of protection mainstreaming.<sup>119</sup> Both DG ECHO and its partners allocated relatively less attention to environmental concerns. While environmental considerations and the green agenda gradually found their way into funded actions and proposal assessment during the evaluation period, their inclusion was not systematic. DG ECHO recognised the nascent consideration of environmental aspects and acknowledged that there is still significant progress to be made in this area.<sup>120</sup> The evaluation also found some discrepancies in the extent to which the horizontal issues were considered within DG ECHO appraisal. Based on consultation with DG ECHO, the lack of consistency was due to the involvement or not of the thematic expert in the proposal review/selection. When there was no thematic expert, horizontal issues were not always properly considered.<sup>121</sup> It is to be noted that before 2019, there were no thematic experts involved in the operations, they have been gradually involved since.<sup>122</sup>

Figure 25. Consideration of horizontal issues by DG ECHO and framework partners



Source: For framework partners analysis: ICF. 2023. Online survey of partners (Q9, N=39); and ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 projects). For DG ECHO analysis: ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 projects); ICF. 2023. Document review; and ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 6).

**The needs assessments exhibited varying levels of quality among different partners, countries, sectors, and years. However, overall, DG ECHO-funded actions were well-designed, incorporating, to the extent possible in light of the challenges faced (see Table 11), a thorough assessment of needs that considered the local context, specificities, and to some extent, lessons learned (JC1.3).** Nonetheless, DG ECHO reported notable weaknesses in the quality and robustness of risk analysis, which were also recognised by a few partners,<sup>123</sup> especially during the initial stages of the crisis, primarily attributed to a rushed response, the important flow of migrants/refugees, and a lack of capacity among the partners leading to some vulnerable groups not properly considered or included (see EQ2) and on responses based on assumptions rather than needs.<sup>124</sup>

The large majority of funded actions were based on needs assessments using a range of primary and secondary sources; 37 projects out of 40 mapped included a needs assessment undertaken by

<sup>119</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>120</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>121</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>122</sup> ICF. 2023. Draft Final Report meeting (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>123</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (1) and ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2).

<sup>124</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3); and ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

the relevant framework partners.<sup>125</sup> The types of assessments and methodologies used varied depending on the sector of intervention and included rapid assessment, single sector assessment, multi-sectoral assessment, and joint assessment as well as context analysis, risk analysis, capacity analysis and gap analysis. Primary data were collected through KIIs, surveys, focus groups, workshops, monitoring visits and observation. Secondary data included: contribution to interagency working groups, cluster reports, analysis of migrant flows, RMRP, *Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos* (GIFMM) data, HNO, Venezuela Analysis Team (VZAT) reports, R4V data, UN and NGO reports, data from previous projects and to a lesser extent national data and reports. In addition, funded actions reflected lessons learned to some extent, out of 40 actions mapped, 21 incorporated lessons learned in the design of the action<sup>126</sup> and out of 39 survey respondents, 14 (36%) reported to fully consider lessons learned in the design and implementation of the actions, 15 (38%) to a large extent, 6 (15%) to some extent.<sup>127</sup>

Based on consultation with DG ECHO and framework partners as well as the project mapping, the needs assessments conducted by framework partners were generally of high quality despite the challenges faced (see Table 11 under JC2.2).<sup>128</sup> HOPE data further confirmed that the overall methodology and feasibility of funded actions were assessed by DG ECHO as 'high' in most instances (79%) with an average grade of 1.79 across the region.<sup>129</sup> Over time, the quality and robustness of needs assessments and risk analysis improved as partners delved deeper into specific issues, had access to more data, developed stronger information management systems, and enhanced their overall capacity and expertise. However, the assessment of protection needs remained challenging. The UNHCR evaluation reported that the tools used to assess protection needs did not always align with the realities in the field or allow for adaptation to local contexts. Gaps were identified regarding certain populations and types of violations. Additionally, the assessments were not conducted rapidly or regularly enough to fully grasp the trends and challenges faced by people in transit, and there was a lack of harmonisation among assessments.<sup>130</sup>

***The rationale behind the choice of transfer modality was not systematically justified in project documentation, but feedback from framework partners suggests it was tailored to the context considering existing government restrictions and other donors' interventions (JC1.3).***

The majority of survey respondents (36 out of 39), (strongly) agreed that the choice of the modality was appropriately tailored to the specific context, risks and needs. The project mapping shows that about 17 of the 40 projects mapped included a rationale behind the modality chosen.<sup>131</sup> Most actions (75%) did not involve direct transfers to beneficiaries in the form of cash, voucher or in-kind (Figure 26).<sup>132</sup> ***The use of cash and vouchers was limited across the region.*** In Venezuela, the limited use was due to administrative and financial hurdles, government restrictions, but also, high inflation and supply shortage. When the government prohibited the use of cash in 2020, some partners were still able to use cash with a special agreement, while others provided cash to finance certain actions in the public sector, e.g. to support doctors and nurses so they could keep providing services.<sup>133</sup> Outside Venezuela, DG ECHO reported to complement the support provided by other donors (mainly the US) by focusing on sectors and modalities that were not already covered.<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>125</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions). The three remaining used secondary data from previous or other organisation assessments.

<sup>126</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>127</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners.

<sup>128</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3); ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (14 Fully agree, 15 to a large extent, 7 to some extent, N=39).

<sup>129</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (28 actions) (2= High, 1=Medium, 0=low).

<sup>130</sup> UNHCR. 2020. Evaluation of UNHCR regional refugee response to the Venezuela situation.

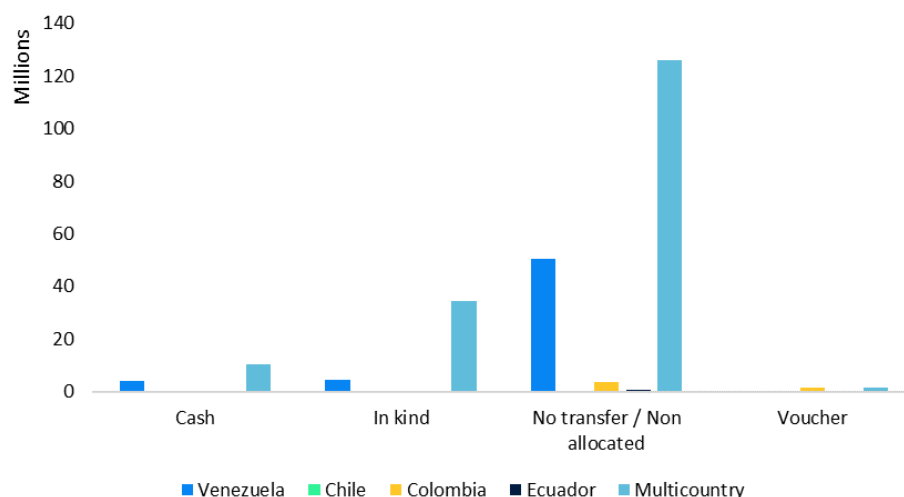
<sup>131</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>132</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (80 actions).

<sup>133</sup> ICF. 2022. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>134</sup> ICF. 2022. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 1); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2).

Figure 26. Funding allocation per modality and country, 2017-2021



Source: ICF. 2023. Data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases. N=80.

EQ2. To what extent did DG ECHO-funded actions take into account the evolving needs of the most vulnerable people affected, particularly women, children, elderly and disabled persons? To what extent were beneficiaries appropriately consulted in the design and implementation of DG ECHO-funded actions?

Table 10. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC2.1. Affected communities have been appropriately involved in the identification of the most vulnerable as well as in the design and implementation of DG ECHO-funded actions	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiaries were involved in the design and even more so in the implementation of DG ECHO-funded actions through various participatory approaches including focus group discussions, informal and targeted discussions with vulnerable groups surveys, interviews and meetings, as well as the use of registration process and feedback mechanisms.</li> <li>Over the evaluation period, there was an increasing involvement of local communities, vulnerable groups, and grassroots organisations in the design and implementation of funded action, highlighting a commitment to inclusive decision-making.</li> <li>Evidence is mixed on beneficiaries' involvement in the targeting and identification of the most vulnerable persons. While partners indicate that affected communities were largely involved in the targeting process, evidence from the project mapping and document review suggest that beneficiaries were not systematically involved in the identification of the most vulnerable persons.</li> <li>Several challenges to beneficiary involvement were identified, including language and cultural barriers, high mobility of the population in transit and pendular migration.</li> </ul>
JC2.2 DG ECHO-funded actions were based on a robust needs assessment and partners implementing them had a good understanding of the local humanitarian	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs assessments varied in quality, but overall, DG ECHO-funded actions were well-designed based on thorough needs assessment. Risk analyses were however weak, in particular at the start of the crisis (covered under JC1.3).</li> <li>Significant challenges and limitations were encountered, hindering the assessment of needs, analysis of risks, and targeting of beneficiaries. These were particularly present in Venezuela at the onset of the crisis and included: lack of</li> </ul>

<b>Judgement criteria</b>	<b>Strength of evidence</b>	<b>Key findings</b>
<p>situation and needs, and of the effects of the crisis on affected populations in a differentiated manner, e.g. by age, gender, status, location, ability/disability, ethnicity, etc.</p>		<p>reliable data, restricted humanitarian space, lack of access to communities and specific groups, security concerns, capacity and logistical issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considering the numerous challenges, partners had a relatively good understanding of the local humanitarian situation and needs, as well as the effects of the crisis on affected populations in a differentiated manner.</li> <li>DG ECHO partners considered different characteristics and related needs of affected populations in their project design, including gender, age, vulnerability, location, status, and phase of displacement indicating a good understanding of the diverse needs of the affected populations.</li> </ul>
<p>JC2.3 DG ECHO-funded actions focused their efforts on the most vulnerable groups and on the most pressing needs and trade-offs between various needs (emergency needs versus other needs) of the different groups were understood and accounted for in their design (e.g., where relevant, xenophobia was taken into account when designing and implementing the actions)</p>	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The partners' efforts to address the most pressing needs of the most vulnerable groups have been strengthened over the evaluation period through increasingly thorough and comprehensive needs assessments and a solid understanding of the local context.</li> <li>Trade-offs between various needs were understood and accounted for in the design of the funded actions to some extent. Partners were able to adapt the response to the national and local contexts, tailoring interventions to specific needs.</li> <li>However, there were limitations in the scope of the response, trade-offs in addressing various needs, and the consideration of specific vulnerable groups mainly due to the funding limitation.</li> <li>Some vulnerable groups, such as transnational indigenous populations, the LGBTIQ+ community and young migrants, while targeted by DG ECHO and partners, had their needs inadequately considered, due in part to the challenges faced in conducting comprehensive needs assessment but also due to the lack of contextualised risk analysis.</li> <li>The restricted scope of the response, driven by limited funding and a “purely” humanitarian mandate, led to a strong focus on lifesaving interventions and to a lesser extent on addressing livelihoods and linking the response to socio-economic integration. The latter also resulted from the lack of development initiatives.</li> </ul>
<p>JC2.1. Affected communities have been appropriately involved in the identification of the most vulnerable as well as in the design and implementation of DG ECHO-funded actions</p>	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG ECHO partners were able to adapt their response to the evolving situation and needs of beneficiaries. The successful adaptation of funded actions to the evolving context was facilitated by modification requests, the Crisis Modifier, and flexibility measures encouraged by DG ECHO.</li> <li>However, some shortcomings were also observed, including limitations in systematising information, difficulties in ensuring comparability of indicators, reliance on outdated or unreliable secondary data, lack of primary data and absence of reliable sectoral analysis.</li> <li>DG ECHO's monitoring visits played a crucial role in promoting adaptability, capacity-building, and addressing potential issues. Suggestions were made to simplify administrative procedures and further integrate flexibility measures into the design stage to enhance responsiveness from the beginning of actions.</li> </ul>

Overall, framework partners had a good understanding of the local humanitarian situation and needs acquired over time and focused on the most vulnerable groups. They also adapted their response to the evolving situation and needs. However, there were limitations and areas that required improvement, such as enhancing risk analysis, addressing specific needs of certain vulnerable groups, and improving information management.

**End beneficiaries were involved in the design and even more so in the implementation of DG ECHO-funded actions (JC2.1).** While a few instances of insufficient or lacking information on beneficiary participation were reported in project documentation, the vast majority of funded actions involved beneficiaries, through various participatory approaches including focus group discussions, informal and targeted discussions with vulnerable groups (e.g. woman, youth, indigenous people), surveys, interviews and meetings, as well as the use of registration process (e.g. protection, health) and feedback mechanisms.<sup>135</sup> The project mapping shows that 32 out of 40 funded actions involved beneficiaries in the design of the action while 39 out of 40 funded actions involved beneficiaries in the implementation of the actions.<sup>136</sup> The survey of partners also show beneficiary involvement (Figure 27). KIIs<sup>137</sup> and case studies<sup>138</sup> further confirmed that beneficiaries were involved in needs assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of funded actions.

Beneficiary participation helped to identify needs, align assistance with community priorities, promote accountability, build capacity, engage communities, empower individuals, address cultural factors, and enhance satisfaction.<sup>139</sup> Feedback and complaint mechanisms were also utilised for adaptive management and continuous improvement; most funded actions (36 out of 40) reviewed included feedback mechanisms.<sup>140</sup> However, in the mobile survey, about a third of respondents wished they were asked about their needs.<sup>141</sup> Several challenges were also reported on beneficiary involvement, most notably the language and cultural barriers, the high mobility of the population in transit and the pendular migration (see Table 11 for a full list of challenges).<sup>142</sup> One good practice identified in this regard was the use of centres; migrants and refugees were going through a pathway of stations set up by different UN agencies (e.g. vaccination point, nutrition point, mental health, point, etc.) which made easier to continuously assess the needs of people on the move.<sup>143</sup> Evidence further shows that the **involvement of local communities, vulnerable groups, local authorities, and grassroots organisations in the design and implementation of funded actions increased over the evaluation period**, which further highlights the commitment to inclusive decision-making.<sup>144</sup>

**Evidence is however mixed in relation to beneficiary and community involvement in the targeting (JC2.1).** While the partner survey indicates that affected communities were largely involved in the targeting process (Figure 27),<sup>145</sup> evidence from the project mapping<sup>146</sup>, document review<sup>147</sup> and case study on Health<sup>148</sup> suggest that beneficiaries were not systematically involved in

---

<sup>135</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions). ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela). ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2, DG ECHO partners: 2).

<sup>136</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>137</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3, DG ECHO partners: 5).

<sup>138</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 1 (Health interventions in Venezuela), Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>139</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions). ICF. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2).

<sup>140</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>141</sup> ICF. 2023. Mini-mobile survey for beneficiaries (107 out of 339 responses).

<sup>142</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 3, DG ECHO: 2).

<sup>143</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1).

<sup>144</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions). ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1, Framework partners: 2). ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q10, N=39).

<sup>145</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q10, N=39). ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1, Framework partners: 2).

<sup>146</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

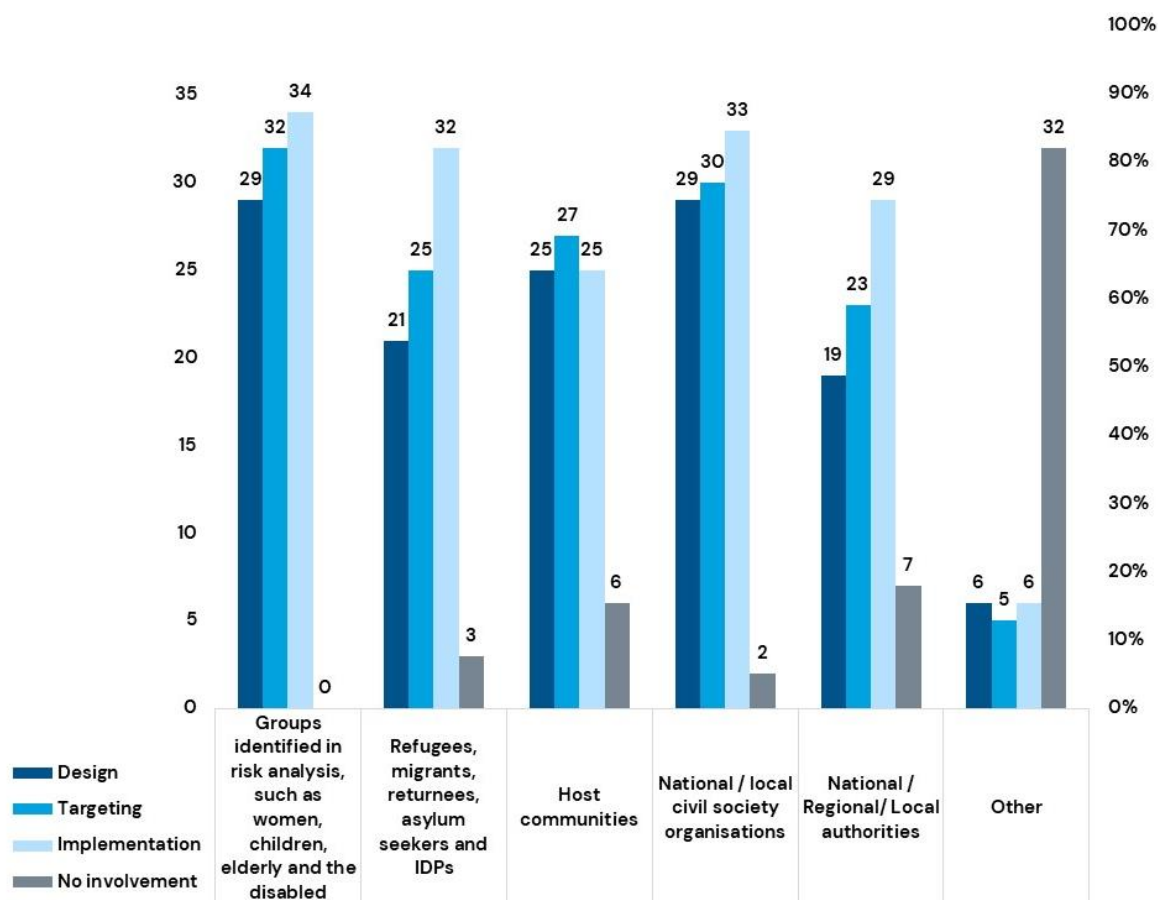
<sup>147</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of documents.

<sup>148</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 1 (Health interventions in Venezuela).



the identification of the most vulnerable persons. Nonetheless, in some funded actions, community members and groups were able to contribute and refer beneficiaries.<sup>149</sup>

Figure 27. Q10 Were the following groups involved in your action(s)? For each group, select the stage at which they were involved (n=39)



Source: ICF (2023) based on results of survey to DG ECHO framework partners.

**With regards to targeting approaches, the evidence presents a mixed landscape with variations in criteria and processes across different partners and countries of operation.**

Beneficiary targeting and selection criteria/ processes were set out in all funded actions reviewed as part of the project mapping.<sup>150</sup> Targeting was mainly based on vulnerability (economic, social, health, protection), risk, geographical location (urban, peri-urban, border areas), access to basic services (health, education), but also on nationality (Venezuela) and phase of displacement (i.e. newly arrived, in transit). The selection of beneficiaries was carried out through several means including official registry (e.g. UNHCR), referral mechanisms established with health facilities, local organisations, and schools, community council networks, screening assessment (e.g. nutrition screening, risk assessment), household surveys and identified priority territories and vulnerable areas.<sup>151</sup>

DG ECHO's appraisals highlighted the need for improvements in beneficiary targeting in some projects including the need for broader and clearer targeting criteria, the use of vulnerability-based targeting (versus nationality-based), better inclusion of specific vulnerable groups (e.g. consider the needs of male children, adolescents, and LGBTIQ+ populations in GBV response), reinforce gender and age analysis in beneficiary selection criteria (also see Gender and Age analysis under EQ1), improved verification mechanisms, better differentiation of beneficiary types, and strengthened disability inclusion.<sup>152</sup> The implementation of discriminatory targeting based on nationality prompted

<sup>149</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>150</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>151</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>152</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

apprehensions regarding the absence of a thorough *Do no harm* assessment and the associated risks.<sup>153</sup>

**There were significant challenges and limitations which hindered the assessment of needs, analysis of risks and targeting of beneficiaries, these were particularly present in Venezuela at the onset of the crisis (JC1.3, JC2.2, JC2.3).** These challenges included lack of reliable data, restricted humanitarian space, access to communities and specific groups, security concerns, capacity and logistical issues. Table below summarises the challenges identified in the document review, project mapping, case studies, partner survey and KIIs.

Table 11. Challenges and limitations to needs assessment, risk analysis and beneficiary targeting

Key challenges	Specific challenges reported
Lack of reliable data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scarcity and lack of reliability of data on needs in the country</li> <li>• Lack of official data, no update of census since 2011</li> <li>• Low levels of primary data</li> <li>• Problems to comply with monitoring indicators</li> </ul>
Limitation of the humanitarian space (Venezuela)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of internal recognition of the crisis in Venezuela</li> <li>• Politicization of humanitarian aid making access difficult</li> <li>• Lack of clear regulation of INGOs in Venezuela</li> <li>• Staff turnover due to visa restrictions and high violence levels</li> <li>• Problems to visit different locations for assessment</li> <li>• Decentralization of the humanitarian country team</li> <li>• Low visibility leading beneficiaries to think some organizations are part of the government</li> </ul>
Field capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems to recruit specialized staff</li> <li>• Lack of experience of national organizations in providing humanitarian responses</li> <li>• Same staff required to work in several locations</li> <li>• Limited presence of actors in certain territories</li> <li>• Limited involvement of local authorities</li> <li>• Change of local authorities</li> </ul>
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of violence affecting humanitarian operations</li> <li>• Presence of armed actors</li> <li>• Lack of openness about real needs due to fear</li> </ul>
Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of reliable telecommunication</li> <li>• Cost of fuel and fuel shortage</li> <li>• Shortage and delays in supply chain (emphasised by Covid-19)</li> </ul>
Access to communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties in accessing remote camps and communities</li> <li>• Isolation and long distances to some communities</li> <li>• Difficulties in accessing unpaved areas, especially during the rainy season</li> <li>• Cultural and language barriers</li> <li>• Migrants spread within cities/areas</li> <li>• Need to target beneficiaries indirectly in some areas</li> </ul>
Access to specific groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of openness and fear of disclosure for LGBTIQ+ community</li> <li>• Language and cultural barriers with indigenous populations</li> <li>• Difficulties in reaching GBV survivors individually</li> <li>• Challenges in monitoring and following up with caminantes/people on the move</li> <li>• Difficulty in reaching settled refugees and migrants in urban areas</li> <li>• Concerns for people with disabilities and need for reasonable adjustments</li> </ul>

<sup>153</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2).

Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Time constraints for in-depth risk analysis and needs assessment</li><li>• Concerns for people with disabilities and need for reasonable adjustments</li><li>• Logistical challenges</li><li>• Migration patterns</li><li>• Institutional weaknesses</li><li>• Limited analysis of health structure and engagement with relevant stakeholders</li></ul>
-------	---

The case study on Protection<sup>154</sup> further highlighted specific challenges to assess the needs of certain vulnerable groups in Colombia and Ecuador specifically:

- LGBTIQ+: several organisations reported difficulties to identify the needs of this community, which was often invisible as they were afraid of the negative consequences of disclosing their sexuality/gender identity.<sup>155</sup>
- (Transnational) indigenous populations: in addition to the language barrier, the Wayúu (Colombia-Venezuela) and the Awá (Colombia-Ecuador) are highly patriarchal societies, which made identifying their needs difficult since organisations could often only speak directly with (male) community leaders.<sup>156</sup>
- GBV survivors: who were difficult to reach individually because they often travelled with, or depended on, the perpetrators.<sup>157</sup> To overcome this challenge, several DG ECHO partners highlighted the need to separate women and men during the interviews and, in some cases, psycho-social and awareness-raising activities.<sup>158</sup>

**Considering the numerous challenges, partners had a relatively good understanding of the local humanitarian situation and needs, as well as the effects of the crisis on affected populations in a differentiated manner (JC2.2).** The evidence suggests that DG ECHO partners considered different characteristics and related needs of affected populations in their project design including gender, age (see Gender & Age marker analysis under EQ1), vulnerability, location, status, and phase of displacement indicating a good understanding of the diverse needs of the affected populations.<sup>159</sup> As reported by the majority of framework partners (97% or 38 out of 39) in the online survey, funded actions were tailored to the differentiated risks and needs of the different vulnerable groups.<sup>160</sup> In addition, funded actions were also relevant for the specific risks and needs of other vulnerable groups in the host communities (97% or 38 out of 39).<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>155</sup> Field interviews in Colombia (DG ECHO partners: 2); Field interviews in Ecuador (DG ECHO partners: 2).

<sup>156</sup> Field interviews in Colombia (DG ECHO partners: 2); Field interviews in Ecuador (DG ECHO partners: 1).

<sup>157</sup> Field interviews in Ecuador (DG ECHO partners).

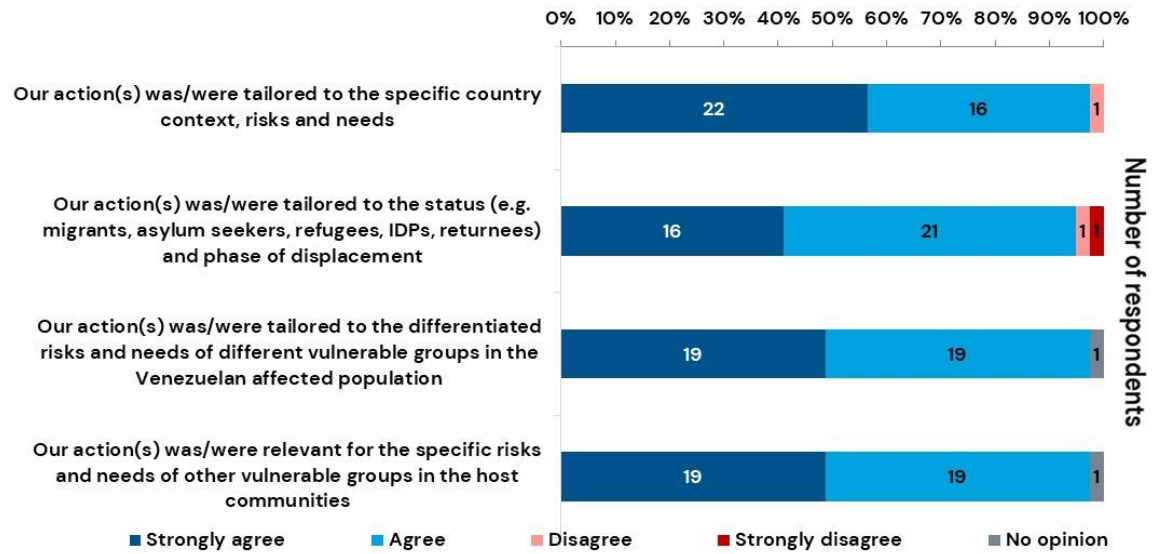
<sup>158</sup> A DG ECHO partner in Colombia explained that in the beginning, they did not separate women from men during the information sessions on protection risks and violence, and they noticed that women were less likely to speak up when the men were present.

<sup>159</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2022. Review of documents shared by DG ECHO. ICF. 2023 Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q7, N=39).

<sup>160</sup> ICF. 2023 Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q7, 19 Fully agreed, 19 To a large extent, N=39).

<sup>161</sup> ICF. 2023 Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q7, 19 Fully agreed, 19 To a large extent, N=39).

Figure 28. Q7 To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding the relevance of your funded action(s)? (n=39)

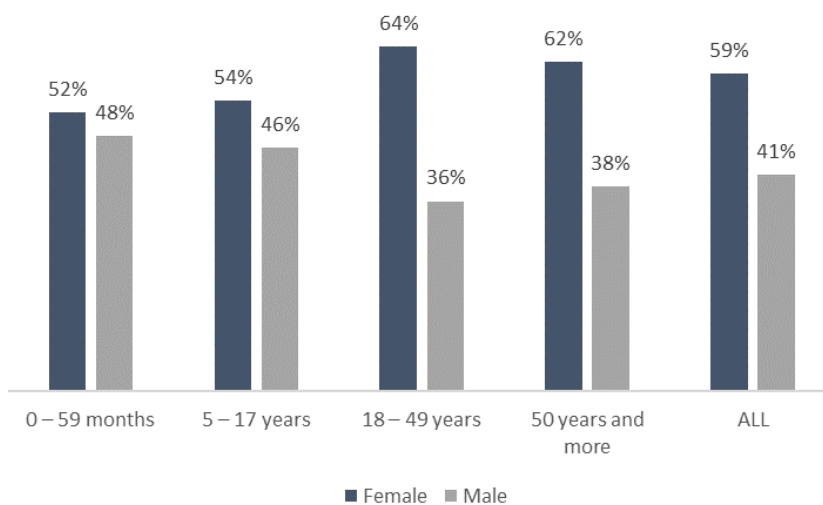


Source: ICF (2023) based on results of survey to DG ECHO framework partners

**The partners' efforts to address the most pressing needs of the most vulnerable groups have been strengthened over the evaluation period through increasingly thorough and comprehensive needs assessments and a solid understanding of the local context. However, there were limitations in the scope of the response, trade-offs in addressing various needs, and the consideration of specific vulnerable groups mainly due to the funding limitation and strategic choice in DG ECHO prioritisation (JC2.3).**

The main vulnerable groups prioritised by DG ECHO were families, pregnant and lactating women, single parents/caregivers (especially women heads of households), GBV survivors, unaccompanied and separated children, LGBTIQ+ community, indigenous communities (particularly bi-national indigenous communities), people with disabilities, elderly people, and women traveling alone.<sup>162</sup> HOPE data shows that over half (59%) of beneficiaries were woman. In terms of age, 12% were under 5, 25% between 5 and 17, and 11% focused on the elderly (>50 years old). Figure 29 presents a breakdown of gender and age groups covered by funded actions.

Figure 29. Overview of beneficiary targeted by gender and age group, 201-2021



Source: ICF. 2022. Data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases. N=46

<sup>162</sup> ICF. 2022. Analysis of LAC HIPs and HIPTAs (2017-2021).

The project mapping further indicates that 26 out of 40 funded actions specifically focused on vulnerable groups as defined in DG ECHO strategy, in particular infants and children, the elderly, as well as Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW).<sup>163</sup> These included:

- Infants and children under five years of age (15 projects)
- The elderly (13)
- PLW (12)
- Adolescent girls and boys (5)
- Unaccompanied or separated children (3)
- Indigenous people (2)
- Persons with disabilities (PwD) (2)
- Migrants (2)
- LGBTIQ+ community (1)
- Returnees (1)

Case studies<sup>164</sup>, KIIs<sup>165</sup> and the document review<sup>166</sup> suggest that some vulnerable groups, such as transnational indigenous populations, the LGBTIQ+ community and young migrants, while targeted by DG ECHO and partners, had their needs inadequately considered in project design. The shortcoming resulted in part from the challenges faced in conducting comprehensive needs assessment (see Table 11) but also from the absence of contextualised risk analysis preventing a full assessment of needs, but this improved over time. Additionally, the protection needs of Venezuelan migrants who had been in the country for a longer period and men traveling alone were identified as gaps in the response by the stakeholders consulted.<sup>167</sup>

In terms of needs, the priorities identified by DG ECHO were generally considered to reflect the most pressing needs and vulnerable groups (see EQ1 and EQ9) while funded actions were found to be in line with DG ECHO priorities (see EQ1) hence confirming the focus on the most pressing needs. Partners reported being able to adapt the response to the national and local contexts, tailoring interventions to specific needs.<sup>168</sup> In addition, partners confirmed that they understood and accounted for trade-offs between various risks and needs of the different groups.<sup>169</sup> However, there were some limitations and areas where DG ECHO's response was considered less relevant. The restricted scope of the response, driven by limited funding and a “purely” humanitarian mandate, led to a focus on lifesaving interventions and not so much on addressing livelihoods and linking the response to socio-economic integration.<sup>170</sup> The latter was also a result of the absence of development funding and initiatives in the region.

Regarding the consideration of xenophobia, the evidence does not explicitly mention whether it was taken into account when designing and implementing the actions. However, the case study on Protection highlights the need to consider some forms of violence as a specific protection need rather than including them in a transversal way, which suggests a recognition of the importance of addressing different types of violence, including xenophobia.<sup>171</sup>

---

<sup>163</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>164</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 1 (Health interventions in Venezuela), Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela)

<sup>165</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1, DG ECHO: 2).

<sup>166</sup> UNHCR. 2020. Evaluation of UNHCR regional refugee response to the Venezuela situation.

<sup>167</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela); and ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1, Framework partner: 1).

<sup>168</sup> ICF. 2023 Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q7, 22 Fully agreed, 16 To a large extent, N=39).

<sup>169</sup> ICF. 2023 Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q7, 13 Fully agreed, 22 To a large extent, N=39).

<sup>170</sup> ICF. 2023 Online survey for DG ECHO partners (comment in Q6); ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela); and ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1, Framework partner: 2, Coordination mechanism: 1).

<sup>171</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

**DG ECHO partners demonstrated a strong commitment to monitoring the humanitarian situation and needs, adapting their response to the evolving context. However, they faced several limitations in ensuring evidence-based programming (i.e. data systematisation, indicator comparability, lack of primary data, absence of reliable sectoral analysis, reliance on outdated information). DG ECHO's monitoring visits and advice played a crucial role in strengthening partners' capacity and ensuring impartiality in aid delivery (JC2.4).**

The evidence collected shows that DG ECHO partners actively monitored the humanitarian situation and needs throughout the implementation of funded actions.<sup>172</sup> Interim reports were submitted for actions lasting over 10 months, providing regular updates on the progress and implementation status.<sup>173</sup> Partners utilised a combination of official monitoring data and systems, as well as their own mechanisms, including feedback mechanisms, to monitor the evolving situation, needs, and project implementation. Partners undertook continual assessments and monitoring of beneficiary needs, regularly updating information and seeking feedback from beneficiaries. Regular situation reports, including updates on the operational context and challenges, were also published by some partners (e.g. UNICEF and ACF), further enhancing the partners' understanding of the evolving context. In addition, partners exchanged information with other organisations operating in the area through coordination mechanisms as well as informally. This facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the needs of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, enabling partners to identify changes almost in real-time and adjust their projects accordingly.

DG ECHO partners were able to adapt their response to the evolving situation and needs through the Crisis Modifier or by submitting Modification Requests (Figure 30). Out of 40 projects mapped, nine included a Crisis modifier, facilitating quick adjustments to new emergency situations.<sup>174</sup> In addition, 11 out of 21 actions mapped submitted modification requests (that were accepted by DG ECHO) to adapt the action to changes in needs or the humanitarian context.<sup>175</sup> Examples of modification requests submitted by partners underscored their responsiveness to changes in humanitarian needs. Projects were modified to address increased needs, such as the inclusion of operational activities in additional locations, increased coverage of beneficiaries, and specific focuses on COVID-19 and conflict-related displacement. Other examples of measures to ensure flexibility included: use of mobile clinics, prepositioning of stocks, local purchase of goods, feedback mechanisms, virtual systems and channels, and continuous monitoring of activities.<sup>176</sup>

---

<sup>172</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

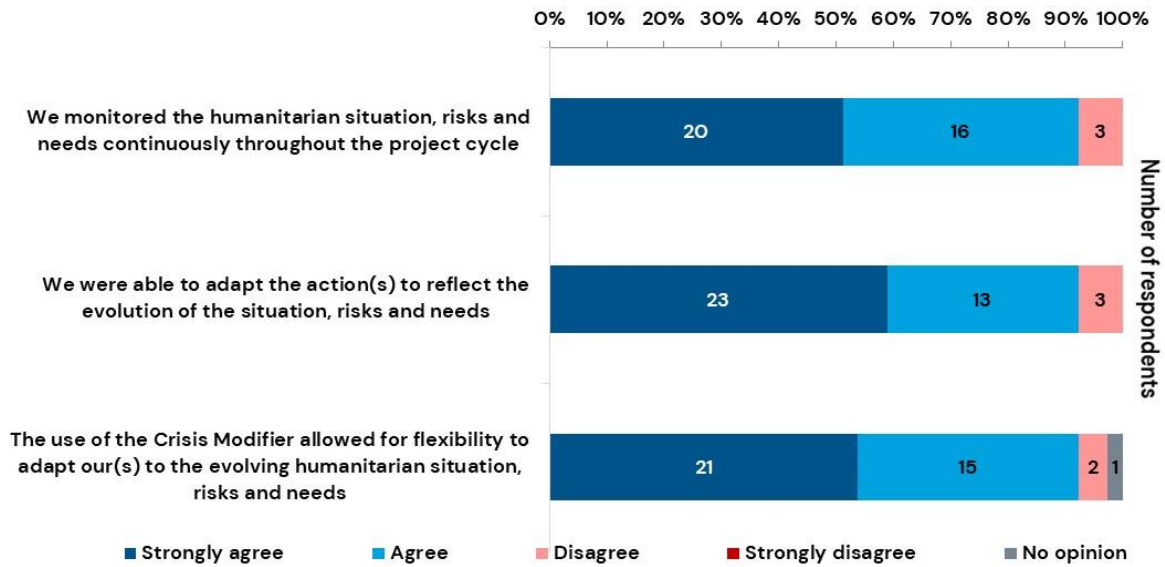
<sup>173</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023 Online survey for DG ECHO partners (comments in Q20 and Q7, 20 Fully, 16 to a large extent, out of 39 responses); Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>174</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>175</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>176</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

Figure 30. Q7 To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding the relevance of your funded action(s)? (n=39)



Source: ICF elaboration (2023) based on Online survey for DG ECHO partners.

Despite the overall strong monitoring and adaptation efforts, **several limitations were identified** in the case study on Protection<sup>177</sup> during the evaluation period:

- **Limited systematisation of information:** DG ECHO partners collected a wealth of information on protection risks. However, the data was not always systematised and shared in a manner that could be easily utilised by DG ECHO, partners, and the broader humanitarian community. Although improvements were observed, there is room for further systematisation to enhance evidence-based programming.
- **Limited comparability of indicators:** Humanitarian organisations operating in Ecuador and Colombia did not consistently use international indicators, making it difficult to compare the crisis with other humanitarian situations. Efforts to strengthen protection information management were emphasized to address this limitation and improve comparability.
- **Reliance on outdated or unreliable secondary information:** DG ECHO partners occasionally relied on outdated or unreliable secondary data in their assessments. The introduction of the ETPV in Colombia highlighted the discrepancies between official figures and the actual number of Venezuelans residing in the country, emphasizing the need for more accurate and updated data sources.

Other limitations such as the lack of primary data<sup>178</sup> and the absence of reliable sectoral assessment<sup>179</sup> were also reported. DG ECHO's monitoring visits played a crucial role in strengthening partners' capacity and ensuring the delivery of aid in line with the humanitarian principles. Feedback provided during monitoring visits focused on areas that needed improvement, such as increasing impartiality, separating humanitarian work from religious work, and addressing potential discrimination issues. DG ECHO's capacity-building efforts aimed to enhance partner skills in navigating the complexities of humanitarian work. Additionally, the evaluation acknowledges DG ECHO's role in promoting adaptability, capacity-building, and addressing potential issues during monitoring visits. Suggestions were made by partners to simplify administrative procedures and

<sup>177</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>178</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2, DG ECHO partners: 3). ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 3); ICF. 2023 Online survey for DG ECHO partners (comments in Q11).

<sup>179</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1).

integrate flexibility measures into the design stage to enhance responsiveness from the beginning of actions.<sup>180</sup>

### 3.2 Coherence

EQ3. To what extent was DG ECHO's response aligned with: the humanitarian principles; DG ECHO's relevant thematic/sector policies; and relevant global thematic/sector guidelines and standards?

Table 12. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC3.1 DG ECHO-funded actions were aligned with fundamental humanitarian principles and respected IHL and any challenges were proactively flagged and dealt with.	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Despite a few challenges, DG ECHO-funded actions in response to the Venezuelan crisis, both inside and outside Venezuela, were generally aligned with fundamental humanitarian principles. Challenges faced by DG ECHO and its partners were largely mitigated thanks to efforts of DG ECHO and the wider humanitarian community (e.g. capacity building of partners, monitoring missions and advocacy). In the case of Colombia, IHL was considered, where relevant (i.e. doble/triple affectation). Challenges were proactively identified and addressed by DG ECHO and its partners.</li> <li>Compliance with the humanitarian principles, the 'do no harm' and other Protection Mainstreaming principles were at the core of DG ECHO's humanitarian response, referred to in all HIPs and promoted among partners and other humanitarian actors, as reflected in the project documentation and reported by stakeholders.</li> <li>While DG ECHO and its framework partners committed to respecting and promoting the humanitarian principles and the Protection Mainstreaming principle, partners had to go through a strong learning curve during the first half of the evaluation period. In many countries in the region, including Venezuela, DG ECHO partners were used to operate in a development context, cooperating closely with the government, which required a shift in mindset. In addition, the unstable and rapidly changing context, as well as the politicisation of the crisis required a different modus operandi compared to disaster risks reduction and response. Partners needed to learn how to operate in a humanitarian context and what a humanitarian response entailed.</li> <li>Difficulties in delivering a principled response strongly depended on the capacity of the partner (e.g. local church partners vs international organisations) and the country context (i.e. more challenges faced in Venezuela vs Ecuador).</li> <li>Main challenges faced by DG ECHO and its partners to align with humanitarian principles included:</li> </ul>

<sup>180</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2). ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (comments in Q6)



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of reliable data impacting on the prioritisation of risks, needs and beneficiary groups.</li> <li>- Government control and politicisation of humanitarian aid, particularly in Venezuela</li> <li>- Limited capacity of local partners, with partners risks analysis and targeting not always adequately reflecting the needs of the host communities, which posed challenges to the meaningful integration of Protection Mainstreaming principles.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG ECHO's support was key to address or mitigate some of these challenges and appreciated by DG ECHO framework partners, other donors and coordination mechanisms. Challenges were mitigated by DG ECHO and its partners through advocacy efforts to bolster humanitarian space, the involvement and reliance on impartial actors, capacity building, DG ECHO monitoring missions to monitor the funded actions and collect primary data, and, in the case of Venezuela, derogations in terms of visibility in order to be able to develop actions in the field.</li> </ul>
<p>JC3.2 DG ECHO-funded actions were implemented in line with relevant DG ECHO's thematic/sector policies and as well as with relevant global guidelines and standards (as specified in relevant HIPs)</p>	<p><b>Strong</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While overall DG ECHO-funded actions considered the thematic and sectoral policies, they did not meet global humanitarian standards at the start of the evaluation period, due to limited humanitarian space (inside Venezuela), the short timeframe for implementation, and/or a lack of field capacity (i.e. lack of technical expertise, experience and resources).</li> <li>• Quality of the response improved in time, thanks to, among others, DG ECHO's support to partners (i.e. monitoring missions and thematic experts).</li> </ul>

**Despite a few challenges, DG ECHO-funded actions in response to the Venezuelan crisis were aligned with the fundamental humanitarian principles, both inside and outside**

**Venezuela (JC3.1).** In the case of Colombia, IHL was considered, where relevant,<sup>181</sup> by DG ECHO, as shown in the HIPs for 2017-2021, and its partners, both in the design and implementation of DG ECHO-funded actions.<sup>182</sup> Whereas DG ECHO and its partners faced greater challenges inside Venezuela, compared to other countries in the region, due the restrictive environment and government, the humanitarian principles where also used as a lever to open the humanitarian space in the country. Issues posing a risk to delivering a principled approach were mitigated by DG ECHO and its framework partners through awareness raising, advocacy efforts to bolster humanitarian space, the involvement and reliance on impartial actors, and capacity building of implementing partners.

Evidence shows that compliance with the humanitarian principles, the 'do no harm' and the other Protection Mainstreaming principles were at the core of DG ECHO's humanitarian response referred to in all HIPs and promoted among partners and other humanitarian actors, as reflected in the project documentation and stakeholder interviews. According to stakeholders, DG ECHO was very

<sup>181</sup> Issues related to IHL were only relevant in in the context of the Venezuelan crisis when mixed migration populations, including Venezuelans, where affected by the internal non-international armed conflict(s). Source: ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO field: 3)

<sup>182</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (36 out of 40 actions); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1, DG ECHO partners: 3)

vocal about adhering to these principles over the entire evaluation period, strongly encouraging its partners and other actors to deliver a principled response.<sup>183</sup>

The analysis of the project documentation and the survey further confirmed that DG ECHO partners aimed to design and implement their actions in line with the humanitarian principles. 36 out of 40 DG ECHO-funded actions reviewed make explicit reference to the action being implemented in full compliance with the humanitarian principles. In addition, 14 of these actions also included awareness raising activities and/or advocacy promoting the humanitarian principles, indicating efforts made by DG ECHO to mitigate any potential challenges. The great majority of DG ECHO framework partners surveyed reported that they did not encounter any challenges in aligning their actions with the humanitarian principles of humanity (99%), neutrality (90%), impartiality (95%) and independence (85%).<sup>184</sup> Similarly, other stakeholder groups interviewed during the consultation did not report any misalignments.<sup>185</sup>

Until 2021, the HIPs and HIPTAs for the LAC region only referred to the humanitarian principles in general but did not explicitly state the importance of a principled approach in the context of the Venezuelan crisis nor identified risks of misalignments with the humanitarian principles outside of Venezuela.<sup>186</sup> Only in 2021, the LAC HIP flagged some obstacles in complying with the humanitarian principles inside Venezuela, highlighting challenges in complying with the principle of neutrality due to **a high risk of politicisation of humanitarian operations in the country**. The 2021 HIP further underlined the importance of upholding core humanitarian principles to continue to secure access and acceptance.

Although no misalignments were found, various obstacles were identified during the stakeholder consultation, as already flagged in the scoping interviews.<sup>187</sup> The situation proved to be particularly challenging **inside Venezuela**, as highlighted in the LAC HIP 2021 and confirmed by interviewees.<sup>188</sup>

#### **Risks to a principled health response inside Venezuela**

DG ECHO and its partners needed to ensure a fluent and fair distribution of medicines among more than 20 hospitals. Due to the restrictive environment and limited health infrastructure, there was only one central stock from which medicines could be distributed. The limited presence on the ground and overall lack of resources made it hard for DG ECHO and its partners to monitor the fair distribution among hospitals. In addition, the military and politicalisation of assistance posed additional challenges, i.e. stealing medical equipment and medicines to distribute to other populations groups.

The main challenge related to the weary attitude of the government, denying the needs of the population and not accepting humanitarian assistance. This was especially challenging during the first half of the evaluation period.<sup>189</sup> DG ECHO and framework partners reported in the interviews and through the survey that the restrictive environment affected the principle of humanity.<sup>190</sup> DG ECHO responded to these challenges through enhancing its advocacy efforts in the country<sup>191</sup> promoting the humanitarian principles, especially targeting the military and the government, to ensure humanitarian access and put in place the humanitarian architecture, i.e. OCHA, HCT and the clusters (see EQ7 for more details on DG ECHO's advocacy efforts). This shows that, although DG ECHO and its partners faced

<sup>183</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 1, DG ECHO Field: 3, DG ECHO partners: 4, Coordination mechanisms: 1)

<sup>184</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (humanity: 38 out of 39, neutrality: 35 out of 39, impartiality: 37 out of 39, independence: 33 out of 39 responses)

<sup>185</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 1, DG ECHO field: 3, DG ECHO partners: 7, Other bodies: 1, coordination mechanisms: 2)

<sup>186</sup> ICF. 2023. HIP review.

<sup>187</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 1, DG ECHO field: 3, DG ECHO partners: 2, coordination mechanisms: 2)

<sup>188</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 1, DG ECHO field: 3, DG ECHO partners: 2)

<sup>189</sup> DG ECHO and other humanitarian actors managed to open the humanitarian space inside Venezuela, slowly increasing their activities inside the country and establishing their presence on the ground (i.e. opening of the DG ECHO office in 2019). For the second half of the evaluation period the situation improved for international organizations and UN System agencies, but the government continued to pose strong restrictions on international NGOs. Despite the improved situation for Ios and UN agencies, the political environment remained uncertain impacting donor trust.

<sup>190</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO field: 2, DG ECHO partners: 2); ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (6 out of 39 responses, of which 1 out of 39 significant challenges)

<sup>191</sup> Various DG ECHO-led missions to Venezuela were conducted to monitor the situation and the extent to which assistance was delivered in a principled way.

challenges aligning the response with the principles, they also used it to their advantage, leveraging the principles to open the humanitarian space. While DG ECHO had to keep a low profile inside Venezuela,<sup>192</sup> as highlighted during the field missions, DG ECHO was very vocal outside Venezuela, contributing to outreach and awareness raising activities using various international, regional and national fora (see Coordination and the nexus case study for more details on the establishment of humanitarian architecture inside Venezuela and coordination mechanisms used by DG ECHO to respond to the crisis).<sup>193</sup>

Other hindering factors included the politicalisation of humanitarian assistance and political polarisation linked to the lack of openness about real needs. DG ECHO and its partners had to work with the government to deliver actions (e.g. education activities), which created a risk of not being perceived as neutral.<sup>194</sup> This also posed challenges to the independence principle, as shown in the survey results (15% of surveyed framework partners indicated to have faced some or significant challenges).<sup>195</sup> Furthermore, the politicalisation created a lack of trust, making it hard to work with local implementing partners and authorities in some cases. DG ECHO mitigated these challenges by engaging more impartial actors (e.g. international organisations, such as ICRC) and conducting monitoring missions to collect reliable data and monitor the situation on the ground.

Finally, the lack of experience and limited capacity of DG ECHO partners on the ground also made it difficult to deliver a principled approach, due to the initial lack of awareness and limited knowledge about humanitarian assistance. As such, DG ECHO focused on capacity building of partners to a mitigate the risk of misalignment.

**In the wider region**, stakeholders reported similar challenges related to the lack of data and field capacity of the partners, but to a lesser degree. Many countries across the region experienced a strong learning curve aligning actions with the humanitarian principles. In **Peru, Ecuador and Brazil** DG ECHO partners were used to operate in a development context, cooperating closely with the government, which required a shift in mindset. In addition, the unstable and rapidly changing context, as well as the politicisation of the crisis required a different *modus operandi* compared to DRR response.<sup>196</sup> 15% of surveyed DG ECHO partners (6 out 33 responses) reported that they faced difficulties aligning their actions with the principle of independence because of the influence of local authorities on areas of intervention, or because of donors pushing for their own agenda, making it challenging to truly prioritise the most urgent needs. A few interviewees also flagged a lack of risk analysis, running the risk of overlooking the needs of host communities impacted by migration (see EQ2), affecting the 'do not harm' principle,<sup>197</sup> as confirmed by survey results (20% of partners faced some challenges aligning actions with the 'do no harm' principle).<sup>198</sup> Finally, initial challenges were reported working with religious implementing partners that needed to be made aware of the humanitarian principles, making the distinction between operating in the humanitarian sphere and the religious one.<sup>199</sup>

---

<sup>192</sup> DG ECHO also circulated a guidance note for partners on how to address the specific operating conditions in Venezuela and how to overcome the impediments to humanitarian aid access and delivery, setting out alternative measures and derogations allowed by DG ECHO.

<sup>193</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus)

<sup>194</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Specific challenges reported)

<sup>195</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2, DG ECHO partners)

<sup>196</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3, DG ECHO partners: 3, Coordination mechanism: 2)

<sup>197</sup> ICF. 2023. (DG ECHO partners: 1, Coordination mechanisms: 1); ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (specific challenges reported)

<sup>198</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (8 out of 39 responses)

<sup>199</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2)

### **Best practice in Brazil protecting the LGBTIQ+ community**

Partners in Brazil mitigated the risk of misaligning DG ECHO-funded actions with the 'do no harm' and Protection Mainstreaming principles. During the evaluation period host communities in Brazil were often worse off compared to the Venezuelan migrants. Implementing partners took a precautionary approach specifically assessing the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community in the area hosting Venezuelan migrants and refugees. By taking undertaking a thorough risk analysis and 'do no harm' analysis, mainstreaming the protection principles, partners managed to mitigate negative effects on the host community avoiding an increase of further inequalities (between Venezuelans and LGBTQ+ Brazilians).

In **Colombia**, partners were used to operating in a conflict context but had no experience responding to the needs of migrants and refugees, also needing to adapt their approach.<sup>200</sup> Surveyed framework partners reported that the humanitarian agenda had been driven by government's policies and priorities. According to framework partners this sometimes posed challenges to respecting the principle of independence.<sup>201</sup> A few partners highlighted the presence of politicised partners on the ground responding to the Venezuelan crisis in Colombia. These risks were overcome by DG ECHO and its partners by adopting a precautionary approach, not working with these implementing partners.<sup>202</sup>

Overall, evidence showed that DG ECHO's support was key to address or mitigate some of these challenges and highly appreciated by DG ECHO framework partners, other donors and coordination mechanisms.<sup>203</sup>

### **Note on IHL in the context of the Venezuelan crisis in Colombia**

During the evaluation period, IHL only applied to situations of recognised conflict, i.e. in Colombia. DG ECHO HIPs 2017–2019 did not refer to IHL in the context of the Venezuelan crisis (only related to the internal conflict in Colombia). However, a few stakeholders flagged that it would have been relevant for Venezuelans affected by the conflict (doble/triple affectation). Survey results showed that 17% of DG ECHO partners (7 out of 39 responses) faced challenges implementing actions in line with IHL, due to, among others, a lack of information about those affected by both the conflict and the Venezuelan crisis, as a result of DG ECHO division between VENSIT and COLSIT.

**The review of the relevant HIPs shows that DG ECHO thematic/sectoral policies<sup>204</sup> were taken into consideration in their design (JC3.2).** While project documents reviewed did not specifically mention DG ECHO policy and thematic documents, no misalignments with DG ECHO policies were identified; 27 out of 40 monitoring of final reports of the implemented actions explicitly confirming that **the actions were coherent with DG ECHO policies and guidelines.** DG ECHO partners showed familiarity with the sectoral policies and guidelines<sup>205</sup> but reported facing challenges in fully aligning with them, as shown by the survey results.<sup>206</sup> This was mainly due to the diverging internal guidelines between DG ECHO and its partners and/or high number of policies to comply with, which was also acknowledged by DG ECHO field office.

Regarding global humanitarian standards, except for one, all actions reviewed made **reference to one or more recognised international guidelines and/or standards** (39 out of 40 projects) confirming that DG ECHO partners took into account the global guidelines and standards in the design of the funded-action, with a clear intention to align actions with the global guidelines and standards.

However, stakeholder consultation reported that DG ECHO and its partners did not meet minimum standards at the start of the evaluation period. The challenges specified in JC 3.1 also affected the

<sup>200</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 4, DG ECHO partners: 4, Coordination mechanisms: 4)

<sup>201</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (6 out of 39 responses; specific challenges reported)

<sup>202</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1, DG ECHO partners: 1)

<sup>203</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3, DG ECHO partners: 6, Coordination mechanisms: 3, Other donors: 1)

<sup>204</sup> See: DG ECHO Policy guidelines, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/resources-campaigns/policy-guidelines\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/resources-campaigns/policy-guidelines_en).

<sup>205</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2, DG ECHO partners: 4)

<sup>206</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey of DG ECHO partners (11 out of 39 responses)

quality of the actions. The challenging environment and denial of needs inside Venezuela posed significant obstacles in upholding global humanitarian standards. Initially, the restricted humanitarian space had a noticeable impact on the quality of DG ECHO-funded actions. More specifically, DG ECHO partners faced issues meeting minimum standards because the government (i) controlled the types of actions allowed, (ii) limited the involvement of the partners for monitoring and follow up, and/or (iii) allowed limited time for the implementation of the projects.<sup>207</sup> To overcome this issues, DG ECHO lowered their visibility standards in order to be able to develop actions on the ground, as reported by survey respondents and found through desk research.<sup>208</sup>

In addition to these challenges, the lack of field capacity (i.e. lack of technical expertise, experience and resources) of DG ECHO partners, and the lack of data exacerbated the problem. DG ECHO addressed these challenges through enhancing the capacity of partners, teaching them how to operate in a humanitarian context and what a humanitarian response entailed, and through conducting (joint) monitoring missions with thematic experts. In addition, DG ECHO and its partners also collected their own data, which allowed partners to improve their actions addressing the real needs and meeting minimum standards.<sup>209</sup>

Stakeholders reported that DG ECHO and other donors were very insistent pushing partners to raise standards (especially through the monitoring missions).<sup>210</sup> Stakeholders were very appreciative about DG ECHO's support, especially of DG ECHO's thematic experts who help foster alignment of DG ECHO-funded actions with its policies, including horizontal issues, such as protection mainstreaming and gender (making it less abstract), as well as improving the overall quality of the response in meeting minimum standards.<sup>211</sup> As such, the evidence shows that the quality of the actions improved over time in line with the humanitarian standards and global guidelines.<sup>212</sup> Nonetheless, the field mission to Venezuela showed that DG ECHO and its partners continued to operate in a challenging environment.<sup>213</sup>

EQ4. To what extent was DG ECHO successful in coordinating its response with other donors/actors to avoid overlaps and ensure complementarities?

Table 13. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
<b>JC4.1 DG ECHO's response to the Venezuela crisis took advantage or/ contributed to existing international coordination mechanisms that promoted connectedness and meaningful collaboration in the planning, implementation and evaluation of</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over the evaluation period, DG ECHO contributed to (pre-)existing international coordination mechanisms at international, regional and national levels through funding, participation in meetings and advocacy. DG ECHO's level of engagement and its role in the various coordination mechanisms varied between countries and mechanisms, and so did the extent to which these mechanisms contributed to meaningful collaboration and coordination also differed. DG ECHO</li> </ul>

<sup>207</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 4, DG ECHO partners: 2); ICF. 2023. Field missions; ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (specific challenges reported)

<sup>208</sup> DG ECHO shared in 2019 the Guidance on best practices and minimum requirements for implementing EU-funded humanitarian aid actions in Venezuela allowing derogations from DG ECHO policies. DG ECHO acknowledged that due to the volatile Venezuelan context, some standard procedures were impossible or extremely difficult to implement presenting in some cases a direct security threat to beneficiaries and Partners. Therefore DG ECHO-funded actions could have been implemented only partly with thematic/sector policies. Derogations were allowed in terms of visibility, finance, operations and procurement.

<sup>209</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 5, DG ECHO partners: 5, Coordination mechanisms: 2)

<sup>210</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2, DG ECHO partners: 4, Other donors: 1); ICF. 2023. Project mapping.

<sup>211</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2, DG ECHO partners: 4)

<sup>212</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 5: 4, DG ECHO partners: 4, Other donors: 1)

<sup>213</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews in Venezuela (DG ECHO partners: 2; Coordination mechanisms: 3, Other EU bodies: 1)

<p><b>humanitarian and development activities</b></p>		<p>played a more prominent coordination role inside Venezuela, compared to other LAC countries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While the R4V platform, supported by DG ECHO, helped to raise awareness and align the international community, it also led to a duplication of coordination structures running in parallel with pre-existing mechanisms at regional and national levels, leading to inefficiencies and a lack of clarity amongst those intervening in the region, especially in some countries. The functioning of the R4V platform improved over time, but room for further relevance was identified.</li> <li>• Outside Venezuela, DG ECHO and its partners contributed to the simplification of the coordination structures put in place through, for example, through advocacy and funding of a merged co-lead position to boost comprehensive and joint analysis and strategy.</li> <li>• Despite efforts, little progress was made to develop longer terms strategies, adapting a durable approach. Little collaboration took place between DG ECHO and development actors, including DG INTPA (also due to factors beyond DG ECHO's control), except for inside Venezuela, where regular interaction between the two entities occurred, and some actions were implemented operationalising the nexus.</li> </ul>
<p><b>JC4.2 DG ECHO's response was designed and delivered in complementarity and coordination with all other donors to promote synergies, bridge gaps and avoid overlaps/ duplication of effort, notably in the context of the various Venezuela crisis Humanitarian Response Plans</b></p>	<p><b>Strong</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At programme level, DG ECHO sought to align its response with other donors despite not being able to integrate the RMRP/HRP into the HIPs (which led to missed opportunities for further alignment and coordination). The EU and aligned donors pursued joint advocacy efforts, namely with UN-OCHA, to reinforce humanitarian architecture and leadership, increase access and improve the operating conditions of humanitarian actors to speed up the delivery of aid. DG ECHO also played a key role at international and EU level, in raising the visibility of the crisis among EU institutions to mobilise EU funding.</li> <li>• At operational level, DG ECHO's response to Venezuela crisis was overall complementary with other donor initiatives, although partners and donors noted a lack of coordination in the design phase, where coordination remained limited to information exchange rather than active collaboration.</li> <li>• The level of donor coordination also strongly varied between countries, with DG ECHO for example taking a more leading role in Venezuela, but only making a small contribution in Colombia.</li> <li>• Coordination gaps remained in terms of linking humanitarian and development donors to work towards durable solutions for the population in Venezuela, due to the limited presence of development-oriented donors and a lack of engagement of other development actors. Mutual consultations took place at programming level but this did not generally result in collaboration at operational level, with some exceptions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>JC4.3 DG ECHO's response was designed and delivered in</b></p>	<p><b>Strong</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG ECHO continuously promoted complementarity and coordination between its funded actions and with</li> </ul>

**complementarity and coordination with all other donors to promote synergies, bridge gaps and avoid overlaps/ duplication of effort, notably in the context of the various Venezuela crisis Humanitarian Response Plans**

other programmes and projects inside Venezuela and the region.

- Coordination became increasingly complex because of the worsening of the crisis in Venezuela and subsequent increase in the number of people in need, as well as the growing number of humanitarian actors and coordination mechanisms. Hence, despite DG ECHO's efforts to enhance a coordinated response, room for improvement at field level remained.
- Parallel coordination structures hindered effective coordination between DG ECHO partners and other actors and put additional pressure on humanitarian organisations (e.g. double meetings). This was particularly problematic in some countries like Colombia. Coordination at local level through the local GIFMM/GTRM between DG ECHO partners ran more smoothly.
- Inside Venezuela DG ECHO and its partners faced more challenges, as compared to other LAC countries, especially during the first half of the evaluation period, as there was no coordination mechanisms in place because of the restrictions imposed by the government and the denial of the impact of the crisis by the government and the international community, including the UN. Additional challenges curbing coordination included the need to keep a low profile due to the weary attitude of the government vis-à-vis the humanitarian community and lack of trust among partners and the fear that partners might be affiliated to the government.

**The humanitarian aid architecture and coordination mechanisms to respond to the Venezuela (regional) crisis was complex and evolved differently across Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries over the evaluation period (JC4.1).**<sup>214</sup> In addition to existing coordination mechanisms, specific structures were established inside and outside of Venezuela to coordinate the response to the two main geographic dimensions of the crisis. The Coordination and the nexus case study provides further details the various coordination mechanisms.

- **Inside Venezuela:** Due to the restrictive environment and the denial of the needs by both the government and the UN (see EQ3), no coordination mechanisms were put in place until 2019 to respond in a coordinated way to the internal dimension of the crisis.<sup>215</sup> With the arrival of OCHA and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), and the activation of the cluster system (towards the end of 2019), humanitarian aid architecture was established, which brought together humanitarian actors, donors and government representatives. With the cluster system, the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) is responsible for developing the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) under the supervision of the HCT, with the first plan published in July 2019.<sup>216</sup> The HRP is developed in consultation with stakeholders, including the Venezuelan government and the National Assembly's Special Commission. Other coordination fora were also

<sup>214</sup> DG ECHO (2021) '2021 Latin America and the Caribbean Humanitarian Implementation Plan'.

<sup>215</sup> See:

[https://www.google.com/search?q=5w+OCHA+venezuela&ei=zljNY5e6LJWP8gKYrrHAAG&ved=0ahUKewiX2eHCwdv8AhWVh1wKHRhXDCgQ4dUDCA8&uact=5&oq=5w+OCHA+venezuela&gs\\_lcp=Cgxnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAQaziFCCEQoAEyBQghEKABOggIABCABBcWAZoiCAAQhgMQsAM6BggAEBYQHjoFCAAQhgM6BAghEUB6BwghEKABEApKBAhBGAFKBAhGGABQ5wNY1gtgvwXoAXAAeACAAYkBiAHZBpIBAZkuMZgBAKABAcgBBcABAQ&scient=gws-wiz-serp](https://www.google.com/search?q=5w+OCHA+venezuela&ei=zljNY5e6LJWP8gKYrrHAAG&ved=0ahUKewiX2eHCwdv8AhWVh1wKHRhXDCgQ4dUDCA8&uact=5&oq=5w+OCHA+venezuela&gs_lcp=Cgxnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAQaziFCCEQoAEyBQghEKABOggIABCABBcWAZoiCAAQhgMQsAM6BggAEBYQHjoFCAAQhgM6BAghEUB6BwghEKABEApKBAhBGAFKBAhGGABQ5wNY1gtgvwXoAXAAeACAAYkBiAHZBpIBAZkuMZgBAKABAcgBBcABAQ&scient=gws-wiz-serp)

<sup>216</sup> OCHA. 2019. Venezuela HRP July-December 2019.

established in Venezuela during the evaluation period, including the Foro ONGi (2018), Humanitarian Donors Group (2020), National Platform for Humanitarian Action (2021).

- **At regional level and in other LAC countries:** At regional and national level various coordination mechanisms already existed before the start of the evaluation period to coordinate the humanitarian response not related to the Venezuelan crisis, although the extent to which they were operational and well-functioning varied between countries. In Colombia, for instance, the humanitarian architecture had been already well-established by the start of the evaluation period, to coordinate the response to the internal conflict under the responsibility of the Humanitarian Country Team led by UN OCHA. In other countries, like Ecuador, Brazil and Peru, less advanced systems existed (i.e. 'light coordination'). Other coordination mechanisms existing at national level included the National Humanitarian Network (RHN) and coordination mechanisms related UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) focusing on disaster preparedness. At regional level, the LAC Coalition for Refugees, Migrants and Displaced Population (LAC RMD Coalition), an alliance of international organisations with regional coverage in Latin America and the Caribbean, coordinated the response to address the needs of refugee, migrant, and displaced populations within the framework of international and regional principles and standards of Human Rights, Law International Refugee Law and International Humanitarian Law. In 2018, the Quito Process, a technical multilateral forum was set up by eleven countries (i.e. 10 Latin American countries and the United States) to share information and agree on a common approach towards the Venezuelan crisis, in coordination with the Lima Group (established in 2017) and the LAC RMD Coalition.

In 2018, however, the UN Secretary-General requested IOM and UNHCR to co-lead and coordinate the regional response to the crisis, across 17 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, which led to the establishment of Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants for Venezuela (R4V). The coordination platform was set at regional level, supported by national and local platforms in the host countries (*Grupo de Trabajo para Refugiados y Migrantes* (GTRM) in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, and *Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos* (GIFFM) in Colombia). Similar structures were put in place at sub-regional levels too in the Caribbean, Central America (Panama and Costa Rica) & Mexico and the Southern Cone. Sectoral and transversal working groups were established to coordinate the response. The R4V platform has led the preparation of the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Venezuela (RMRP), published every year since 2019. In other Central American countries, not covered by the R4V, the response was coordinated through the pre-existing REDLAC network led by OCHA.

Over the evaluation period, DG ECHO contributed to these (pre-)existing international coordination mechanisms at international, regional and national levels. DG ECHO's level of engagement and its role in the various coordination mechanisms varied between countries and mechanisms. The extent to which these mechanisms contributed to meaningful collaboration and coordination also differed between coordination mechanisms and countries.

**Internally, DG ECHO's coordination structure to respond to crisis evolved significantly over the evaluation period. While initially it could only make limited use of and contribute to the (establishment of) various mechanisms, this improved as from 2019.**<sup>217</sup> Until 2019, DG ECHO did not have an office in Venezuela, and the programmatic and operational responsibilities with respect to the Venezuela crisis laid with DG ECHO's South America office in Bogota, Colombia. This changed in 2019, when the office in Venezuela was established and the management of the response to the external dimension of the crisis was taken on by the Regional Office in Panama, which opened that year. Before the opening of the office in Venezuela, DG ECHO

---

<sup>217</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO field: 4); DG ECHO. 2018. Mission Reports (Venezuela, February 2017 - December 2018).



already conducted monitoring missions to gather reliable information, enhance their understanding of the situation on the ground and contribute to internal coordination.<sup>218</sup>

Overall, evidence showed that **DG ECHO made continuous efforts, throughout the evaluation period, to make use of and contribute to (pre-)existing and new coordination mechanisms** to support and strengthen them, and to promote meaningful collaboration. This was especially the case for DG ECHO's response to the internal dimension of the crisis. The HIP review shows that DG ECHO considered the coordination mechanisms at programme level, and reflect the intention to contribute to strengthening international coordination mechanisms, with the aim to ensure collaboration in the planning and implementation of activities. Coordination is mentioned as one of thematic funding priorities in the 2020 and 2021 HIPs, but already at the start of the evaluation period, the need for international coordination was acknowledged. For example, the 2018 HIP flagged (for the first time) that there was an increased need for humanitarian coordination and advocacy in response to the unfolding regional effects of the crisis in Venezuela. In addition to programming, DG ECHO also contributed to strengthening coordination mechanisms, albeit to different extent across the respective LAC countries, through funding (of coordination mechanisms, sector or cluster leads and regional programmes), participation in meetings of the various mechanisms and advocacy and awareness raising (see EQ7 for more details on DG ECHO's advocacy). In terms of funding, before 2019, DG ECHO funded OCHA through, first, UNDRR projects, followed by UNICEF projects at a later stage, aiming to integrate the coordination mechanism in the country. As of 2019, DG ECHO supported the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in Venezuela and other coordination mechanisms.<sup>219</sup>

**The extent to which DG ECHO took a leading role in the various mechanisms varied across countries.** Stakeholders reported **DG ECHO's active participation** across relevant international coordination mechanisms inside Venezuela and other LAC countries,<sup>220</sup> as also supported by desk research (i.e. meeting minutes, mission reports, HIPs), but views differed on the extent to which DG ECHO used the coordination mechanisms to exploit synergies. While 56% of surveyed DG ECHO's partners (22 out of 39) agreed or strongly agreed that DG ECHO took a leading coordination role in the regional response to the Venezuela situation, 23% disagrees (9 out of 39).

**While coordination mechanisms leads, framework partners and other donors appreciated DG ECHO's commitment to participating in coordination meetings, some regretted that DG ECHO did not take a more leading role fostering collaboration in the design and implementation of the response in Venezuela and the region through the mechanisms in place.**<sup>221</sup> Contrary to the intentions stated in the HIPs,<sup>222</sup> a range of stakeholders, and in particular coordinating cluster and sector leads inside and outside Venezuela,<sup>223</sup> noted that DG ECHO focused its efforts more on bilateral coordination (with partners and/or donors) instead of multi-lateral coordination exploiting the coordination mechanisms. While DG ECHO field staff acknowledged that they could have taken a more active role in this regard, they also highlighted limitations, such as the dominant role of other donors and/or UN agencies (e.g. USAID in Colombia), and their exclusion from some coordination mechanisms (e.g. DG ECHO and other donors were excluded from GTRM in Ecuador until 2022).<sup>224</sup>

**Inside Venezuela, DG ECHO played an important role in triggering** the presence of OCHA and the establishment of Humanitarian Country Team (through DG ECHO funding and advocacy to mobilising the humanitarian community, as well as deliberately increasing its activities).<sup>225</sup> The

---

<sup>218</sup> ICF. 2023. Desk Report.

<sup>219</sup> Field interviews in Panama (DG ECHO: 1; Coordination mechanisms: 1)

<sup>220</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 4; DG ECHO partners: 4; Coordination mechanisms: 4); ICF. 2023. Case study 3 on coordination and the nexus.

<sup>221</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: Coordination mechanisms: 5; Other donors: 1; Other stakeholders: 1)

<sup>222</sup> ICF. 2022. HIP review (HIP 2020 explicitly encourages partners to coordinate their actions through the relevant mechanism in response to the regional migration crisis. HIP 2021 underlines DG ECHO's leading role in coordinating the response)

<sup>223</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Coordination mechanisms: 2; DG ECHO partner: 1; Other donors: 1)

<sup>224</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2; Coordination mechanisms: 1; DG ECHO partners: 1)

<sup>225</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 3 on coordination and the nexus; Mission Reports (Venezuela, February 2017 – December 2018).

absence of an OCHA country office and a DG ECHO office in Venezuela hindered the extent to which DG ECHO could effectively enhance coordination. Until 2019, DG ECHO coordinated humanitarian actors from the South America Office in Colombia and during field missions to Venezuela at the start of the evaluation period. Evidence collected during the field missions revealed that DG ECHO consistently worked towards improving the situation 'behind the curtains', because of the low visibility required by the government (see EQ3) with stakeholders in Venezuela claiming that DG ECHO had a leading role in terms of advocacy in the country.<sup>226</sup>

**At regional level, DG ECHO supported the regional R4V platform through funding and advocacy.** Stakeholders reported that DG ECHO contributed to raising awareness about the severity of the crisis in the run up to 2019, which helped to muster support for establishing the platform following the political decision to set it up. Evidence further shows that DG ECHO's active participation in the R4V meetings at regional level<sup>227</sup> was highly appreciated by stakeholders, and especially the R4V platform itself, highlighting the importance of DG ECHO's support to the platform.<sup>228</sup> The functioning of the R4V platform improved over time, but the platform insufficiently took account of mixed migration flows towards North America and did not contextualise Venezuelans movements within broader multi-nationality and -status mixed migration movements in the region, which reduced its relevance (see more details on the mixed nature of the Venezuelan migration movement in Section 2.1.2).<sup>229</sup>

Stakeholders also agreed that **DG ECHO made good use of the various international coordination forums to increase the visibility of its response, raise awareness and advocate towards the international donor community to align messaging and provide more resources.** A key example put forward was the organisation of several **high-level Solidarity Conferences** (see EQ7 on advocacy and EQ10 on EU Added Value).<sup>230</sup> The opening of DG ECHO's office in Panama in 2019 made it easier for DG ECHO to make use of the regional coordination mechanisms in place.

While 82% (32 out of 39) surveyed DG ECHO partners strongly agreed that **DG ECHO's response contributed to improving existing international coordination mechanisms**, the stakeholder consultation<sup>231</sup> and field missions showed that **not all these structures contributed to a coherent response**.<sup>232</sup> Stakeholders expressed contrasting views about the value of the regional and national R4V platforms. While the regional platform facilitated the alignment of messaging across the countries in the region and information exchanges between R4V regional and the national offices, it also led to a duplication of coordination structures with pre-existing mechanisms in various countries across the LAC region.<sup>233</sup> This led to some inefficiencies and a lack of clarity amongst those intervening in the region (e.g. duplication of efforts and parallel dialogues). For example, education in emergencies (EiE) during COVID-19 were discussed in the HCT and clusters, while EiE for Venezuelan children discussed within the GTRM.<sup>234</sup> Especially in Colombia, where coordination mechanisms were well-established, the duplication of structures strongly undermined efficient and effective coordination, working in siloes to address COLSIT, VENSIT and DP/DRR (more details are provided in Coordination and the nexus case study).<sup>235</sup> Against this background, **DG ECHO strongly advocated for simplification to avoid overlap from the start**.<sup>236</sup> For example, in Colombia, DG ECHO and its partners contributed to the simplification of the coordination

---

<sup>226</sup> ICF. 2023. Field report. As stated by one DG ECHO partner: "Without DG ECHO's advocacy, the coordination mechanisms in Venezuela would not exist. They were fundamental in how the situation evolved. Among the donors, DG ECHO is the one encouraging partners to coordinate, while also funding some coordination activities." As mentioned in another interview: "the only coordination body in Venezuela was DG ECHO, and meetings were held at the EU delegation until 2019."

<sup>227</sup> E.g. R4V.2020. 12th Regional Platform Meeting Report; R4V (2021) 15th Regional Platform Meeting Report.

<sup>228</sup> ICF. 2023. Field report.

<sup>229</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3; Coordination mechanism: 1)

<sup>230</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3; DG ECHO partners: 2; Coordination mechanisms: 1; Other donors: 1; Other EU bodies: 2)

<sup>231</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 5, DG ECHO partners: 4, Coordination mechanisms: 3)

<sup>232</sup> ICF. 2023. Field Report.

<sup>233</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 5; DG ECHO partners: 4; Coordination mechanisms: 2; Other donors: 1)

<sup>234</sup> ICF. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2; Coordination mechanisms: 3)

<sup>235</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3; DG ECHO partners: 2)

<sup>236</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2; DG ECHO partners: 1; Coordination mechanisms: 1); ICF. 2023. Field Report.

structures put in place through, for example, by funding a merged co-lead position to boost comprehensive and joint analysis and strategy.<sup>237</sup> In South and Central American countries not covered by the R4V, other pre-existing mechanisms continued to coordinate the response. This created, among others, discontinuity in the analysis and response to the Venezuelan crisis (see 3.1 Relevance).<sup>238</sup> More recently, the need to create further synergies between the different coordination structures dealing with the Venezuelan regional crisis and other humanitarian crises affecting the LAC region has become increasingly relevant given the co-existence of several humanitarian crises linked to mass migration and forced displacement across the region.

In terms of **DG ECHO's contribution to international coordination mechanisms to facilitate collaboration between the humanitarian response and the development response**, while the HIPs took into account other EU funding instruments (e.g. Stability and Peace Instrument (IcSP), DCI) and DG INTPA activities in the context of the Venezuela crisis (e.g. Cities of Solidarity, PROACT initiative funded by DG INTPA, Education Cannot Wait), **little evidence was found of effective cooperation through the coordination mechanisms established, except for inside Venezuela, where regular interaction between the two entities occurred through the humanitarian donor group** (as well as informally), and some actions where implemented operationalising the nexus (see further details on the operationalisation of the nexus in EQ10).<sup>239</sup> At regional level, there were efforts to align ICSP and DG ECHO funding and joint advocacy efforts by DG ECHO and EEAS to raise visibility of the crisis vis-à-vis humanitarian and development actors (through the Solidarity Conference).<sup>240</sup>

**Despite DG ECHO's intention to design and deliver its response in complementarity and coordination with other donors, coordination remained rather limited throughout the evaluation period due to, among others, limited donor availability response to the crisis, the lack of information about the severity of the crisis and the lack of structured collaboration fora. Despite this, DG ECHO managed to align its response to the Venezuela crisis with other donor initiatives, and overlaps were largely avoided. During the second half of the evaluation period, coordination among donors became more regular and effective, due to the growing number of donors present in the region and strengthened coordination structures in place. However, room for improvement remained. (JC4.2).** At programme level, DG ECHO mostly sought to ensure alignment by funding multi-donor projects. At the start of the evaluation period, the number of humanitarian donors in the LAC region was very low, and hence coordination opportunities were limited. In terms of donor availability, the 2017 HIP only referred to the USA in the context of Colombia as the main donor in terms of development and humanitarian aid, primarily addressing the impacts of the armed conflict in Colombia rather than the Venezuela crisis. From 2017 onwards DG ECHO continued to be one of the main donors in Venezuela (next to some actions funded by the Swiss Cooperation Department (COSUDE) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID)), as indicated in the 2020 HIP. Interviews with DG ECHO field offices confirmed that, at the start of the evaluation period, DG ECHO was the only donor to the crisis. Donor awareness grew, but confidence remained low. The main donors, including US, Sweden, Switzerland and Spain, depended on DG ECHO for information and advice on how to respond to the crisis. Project review shows an increasing number of donors, with a total of 18 countries contributing in response to crisis in 2021,<sup>241</sup> thanks to a growing awareness about the crisis and the increased confidence among donors with regard to the effectiveness of the humanitarian response.<sup>242</sup>

---

<sup>237</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO field: 4, DG ECHO partners: 2)

<sup>238</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO field: 2)

<sup>239</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews in Venezuela (DG ECHO partners: 3; Coordination mechanisms: 1, Other EU bodies: 1); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO field: 2)

<sup>240</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 1, DG ECHO field: 5, DG ECHO partners: 7, Other donors: 1)

<sup>241</sup> For example: ECHO-AM/BUD/2021/91000

<sup>242</sup> ICF. 2023. Field report.

DG ECHO played an important role in advocating towards the humanitarian community to raise awareness and to mobilise support, which helped to attract and align donors and the establishment of the R4V platform.<sup>243</sup> The EU and aligned donors pursued joint advocacy efforts, namely towards UN OCHA, to reinforce the humanitarian architecture and leadership, to increase access and improve the operating conditions of humanitarian actors to speed up the delivery of aid. At international and EU level, DG ECHO played a key role in raising the visibility of the crisis among EU institutions to mobilise EU funding.<sup>244</sup> Following the first International Solidarity Conference (2019, Brussels), which was co-led by DG ECHO together with UNHCR and IOM,<sup>245</sup> and the establishment of the R4V platform, the number of donors increased.<sup>246</sup> Stakeholders reported joint donor advocacy as one of the main successes (see EQ7 on Advocacy).

With the higher number of donors present in the region as of 2019, and the humanitarian architecture established, DG ECHO engaged with other donors through various formal and informal coordination mechanisms with aim to design and deliver a coherent response. In addition to the Solidarity Conferences which sought to facilitate stronger and coordinated engagement from key actors, in particular cooperating States and other donors, DG ECHO also engaged with other donors through (i) the R4V platform at regional level and the national levels (except for Ecuador), and the sectoral working groups, (ii) clusters, and (iii) Donor Coordination Group (HDG) (in Colombia and Venezuela).<sup>247</sup>

DG ECHO's role in terms of donor coordination varied between countries. Inside Venezuela, DG ECHO had been coordinating a donors group as of 2019, and joined the donors groups set up by OCHA in 2020.<sup>248</sup> In Colombia DG ECHO has been taking on a bigger role in the HDG (co-led by DG ECHO and the US), which was appreciated by the US counterparts.<sup>249</sup> In Ecuador, donors were prevented from participating in the GTRM until 2022, which undermined the potential role of DG ECHO in supporting coordination.<sup>250</sup> At regional level, DG ECHO's Regional Office aimed to strengthen donor coordination during COVID-19 pandemic, convening the international donor community online. These online meetings made it possible for a wider number of donors to participate, also those who did not have a presence in Panama, but they were subsequently not formalised (i.e. in the sense of creating a regional donor coordination group), to some donors' regret.<sup>251</sup>

DG ECHO was often perceived by framework partners and other donors as a reference donor in the region because of its technical expertise and field presence, which was explicitly appreciated inside Venezuela (see section 3.6 on EU added value). Stakeholders reported that DG ECHO could have further exploited its position by taking a more leading role in the coordination structures to exploit synergies.<sup>252</sup>

Despite DG ECHO's participation in various coordination fora with other donors, stakeholder interviews and field missions noted a lack of active programming coordination between donors. Some donors flagged the lack of structured coordination at regional level with donors (DG ECHO's Regional Office engaged in informal regular dialogues). Stakeholders stated that they would like to have been more actively involved in the development of the HIPs.<sup>253</sup> Due to a mismatch in publication timelines between the HIPs and the RMRP/HRP, DG ECHO could not integrate the RMRP/HRP into the HIPs, which led to missed opportunities to exploit synergies and bridge gaps.

---

<sup>243</sup> ICF. 2023. Survey analysis; ICF. 2023. Field Report; ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3; DG ECHO partners: 2; Coordination mechanisms: 1; Other donors: 1; Other EU bodies: 2)

<sup>244</sup> For instance, DG ECHO hosted a field mission for MEPs at the beginning of the crisis under the guise of visiting development projects in the region. This raised visibility of the humanitarian aspects of the crisis in Europe and triggered the first round of EU funding (Source: Field interviews in Panama (DG ECHO: 1)).

<sup>245</sup> International Donor Conference in Solidarity with Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in the face of COVID-19. 2020. Conference Reference Note.

<sup>246</sup> ICF. 2023. Field report

<sup>247</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO field: 5, DG ECHO partners: 2, Coordination mechanisms: 3, Other donors: 1)

<sup>248</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO field: 1)

<sup>249</sup> ICF. 2023. Field report.

<sup>250</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; Coordination mechanisms: 1)

<sup>251</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Coordination mechanism: 1; Other donors: 1)

<sup>252</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1; Coordination mechanisms: 3; Other donors: 1)

<sup>253</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other donors: 1; Coordination mechanisms: 2)

Furthermore, the lack of reliable data and hindered data flows posed challenges to the DG ECHO and other donors to ensure a coherent approach. Data issues created delays in the publishing of the HRP (due to disagreements between the government representatives and other stakeholders), and resulted in an incomplete understanding of funded activities (OCHA FTS data is no representative).<sup>254</sup> On the other hand, stakeholders also acknowledged DG ECHO's efforts to fill funding gaps in the response to the crisis and appreciated its efforts to seek complementarity with respect to what OCHA was doing at regional level, through engaging in regular dialogue before publishing the HIPs. As a result of this, no misalignment with the RMRP was identified or reported by stakeholders consulted.

At action level, DG ECHO took into consideration other donors' responses in Venezuela and the region, as shown by the project mapping and confirmed by stakeholders. When examining the relevant sample of projects funded between 2019-2021,<sup>255</sup> 17 actions stated that they were listed in the HRP, with DG ECHO partners detailing the synergies of the action with the HRP and assessing the alignment of the action with the HRP.<sup>256</sup> Despite the rather limited dialogue and lack of coordination between donors, DG ECHO managed funded actions that complemented those of other donors in Venezuela and the region. In Venezuela, interviewees explained that overlaps were probably mostly avoided because the needs were so high that all actions contributed to the overall response and risk for duplication was minimal.<sup>257</sup> In Colombia, a few stakeholders flagged the risks for duplication of efforts due to the high amount of US funding, especially during the first half of the evaluation period, when more donors started to arrive.<sup>258</sup> Some DG ECHO partners stated that they too sought to avoid that their actions would overlap with those funded by other donors, ensuring complementarity during the design phase of the proposals and the delivery.<sup>259</sup> This was also suggested by the survey results, where 47% of surveyed framework partners (19 out of 39) agreed that DG ECHO's response was designed in coordination with other donors to promote synergies, bridge gaps and avoid overlaps, while 17% (7 out of 39) disagreed, noting that room for improvement remained.<sup>260</sup>

***In terms of coordination between DG ECHO and other EU donors, good communication took place between DG INTPA and DG ECHO at HQ level.***<sup>261</sup> Internal DG ECHO documents show that DG ECHO considered other EU funding in the region provided through specific funding instruments (e.g. IcSP, DCI) or other thematic, regional or global funding programmes.<sup>262</sup> In turn, Venezuela Country Fiches produced by DG INTPA in 2021 show that DG ECHO's response was considered at the end of the evaluation period. While also the HIPs showed DG ECHO's intention to promote collaboration with DG INTPA and other EU funding instruments or donors, no common strategic vision was adopted, or coordinated actions implemented. Field missions evidenced that exchanges remained limited at field level, except for more regular interaction in Venezuela between the two entities. Internal different programmatic cycles and the limited resources from the development budget available were identified as barriers hindering a coordinated response.<sup>263</sup> Stakeholders highlighted the need for improved coordination between DG ECHO and development donors.

***DG ECHO continuously promoted complementarity and coordination between its funded actions and with other programmes and projects inside Venezuela and the region. DG ECHO supported its partners through, among others, field monitoring missions, regular meetings with partners, funding of coordination mechanisms and advocacy towards the other actors to participate in these meetings (JC4.3).***

---

<sup>254</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2; Coordination mechanisms: 1)

<sup>255</sup> The first HRP was published in 2019 following the arrival of OCHA in Venezuela

<sup>256</sup> ICF. 2023. Field report.

<sup>257</sup> KIIs (DG ECHO Field: 3; DG ECHO HQ: 1).

<sup>258</sup> ICF. 2023. Field report; ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; DG ECHO partners: 1)

<sup>259</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2)

<sup>260</sup> ICF. 2023. Survey analysis.

<sup>261</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; Other EU bodies: 1)

<sup>262</sup> DG ECHO. 2021. Venezuelan crisis in South America and Caribbean current portfolio (EU Nexus matrix)

<sup>263</sup> ICF. 2023. (DG ECHO: 2; Other EU bodies: 1)

Stakeholders reported that regular exchanges took place between DG ECHO and its framework partners and among partners through formal coordination mechanisms as well as informal bilateral discussions.<sup>264</sup> Interviewees highlighted DG ECHO's efforts to foster coordination between partners and other relevant actors, as stated in the HIPs. From 2019 onwards, DG ECHO partners were encouraged to strengthen and consolidate coordination using mechanisms in place. In addition, in the 2019, 2020 and 2021 HIPs, DG ECHO also expressed support for a unified information management systems at local, country, and regional levels. The 2020 HIP highlights that coordination of the humanitarian response is of paramount importance to avoid duplication, eliminate any form of politicisation of humanitarian aid and encourage coherent and integrated response by the key actors. Survey results confirmed DG ECHO's efforts to promote complementarity and coordination between DG ECHO-funded actions and other actors, whereas 71% of DG ECHO's framework partners (28 out of 39) agreed that DG ECHO encouraged them to cooperate and coordinate with humanitarian organisations at national and local level.

Additional positive aspects identified in terms of DG ECHO's support to partners included (i) DG ECHO's active engagement with partners, (ii) DG ECHO's openness and approachability, (iii) their technical expertise and monitoring (with thematic experts), and (iv) their strategic position as a donor. Partners relied on DG ECHO to lever its position towards other donors and escalate challenges to coordination to UN OCHA or the RC and raise it the political level (e.g. opening the humanitarian space in Venezuela).<sup>265</sup> Inside Venezuela, the monitoring missions to Venezuela organised by DG ECHO between 2017-2019 to support partners were also appreciated and helped partners to get organised. A few aspects for improvement were identified by framework partners, such as the need for technical discussions between DG ECHO and the partners at design phase.

DG ECHO partners indicated that they regularly participated in coordination meetings at regional and/or field level, making use of the coordination mechanisms specified in JC 4.1. In addition, they also made use of local coordination structures, both formal and informally (e.g. WhatsApp groups), to coordinate with each other and other relevant stakeholders, such as local authorities. Project review shows that all 22 DG ECHO partners of the 40 implemented actions reviewed were members of coordination mechanisms. DG ECHO partners also stated that DG ECHO's requirements linked to project appraisal and monitoring pushed them to coordinate, already at design stage.<sup>266</sup> This was confirmed by the analysis of project documentation and survey results. All 40 implemented actions include evidence of coordination with other key actors to promote synergies and overlap. Many of DG ECHO partners are (co-)leading the clusters strengthening the coordination mechanisms in Venezuela or the other LAC countries. 36 out of 40 actions were implemented in coordination with UN agencies, either as partners or through the clusters, in particular UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM, WHO and WFP (except for Venezuela, where WFP only April 2021 signed a MoU with the government to operate in the country <sup>267</sup>). Furthermore, 34 projects conducted joint needs assessments or reporting. 74% of surveyed partners agreed DG ECHO encouraged partners to cooperate and coordinate with relevant government institutions.

The project review shows that, overall, DG ECHO positively assessed the coordination of the implemented actions between DG ECHO partners and other relevant actors, particularly in Venezuela and Colombia, using the various (in)formal coordination mechanisms specified above. 29 out of 40 projects were considered to be adequately coordinated. While stakeholders were of the opinion that coordination improved over the evaluation, they noted that coordination also became increasingly complex because of the worsening of the crisis in Venezuela and subsequent increase in the number of people in need, as well as the growing number of humanitarian actors and coordination mechanisms. Hence, the extent to which DG ECHO and its partners were successful in delivering a coordinated response on the ground, differed between and within countries, depending on a variety of factors, such as the political context, capacity of the partners, number of people in need, complexity of the coordination structures.<sup>268</sup>

---

<sup>264</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2; DG ECHO partners: 5; Coordination mechanisms: 2)

<sup>265</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2; DG ECHO partners: 3; Coordination mechanisms: 2)

<sup>266</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2; DG ECHO partners: 5; Coordination mechanisms: 1)

<sup>267</sup> WFP. 2022. Venezuela. Available here: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/venezuela-bolivarian-republic>

<sup>268</sup> ICF. 2023. Field report.

Inside Venezuela, DG ECHO and its partners faced more difficulties delivering a coordinated and comprehensive response at national level compared to other countries in the region. This was mostly due to the restrictive environment and the lack of experience of partners.<sup>269</sup> The dominant position of the government in Brazil and Colombia were also raised as a challenge to coordination but to a lesser extent.

**Additional challenges inside Venezuela** affecting coordination included:

- DG ECHO and its partners had to keep a low profile because of attitude of the government vis-a-vis the humanitarian community. Access improved over the evaluation period, according to a few stakeholders, who mentioned the increased openness of the government following DG ECHO advocacy efforts.
- Resistance of some partners to share information because implementing partners needed to maintain a low profile to avoid being exposed.
- Lack of trust among partners and the fear that partners might be affiliated to the government.

Outside Venezuela, a range of challenges affecting coordination between DG ECHO partners were put forward. The main barrier identified by all stakeholders was the double coordination structure put in place with the establishment of the national R4V platforms (GTRM/GIFMM), which hindered effective and efficient coordination (i.e. siloed structures and lack of information exchange) and put additional pressure on partner, especially local NGOs (i.e. multiple meetings to attend, double reporting, double indicators for people affected by the crisis and those that were not). Despite these difficulties, stakeholders in Ecuador, Peru and Brazil were of the opinion that the GTRM contributed to improving coordination. It helped, for example, to enhance collaboration between partners and national authorities, the localisation of partners (across the country and the border areas between countries) and contributed to building trust among partners and other stakeholders.<sup>270</sup> A good practice was identified at national level in Peru, where DG ECHO partners (UN agencies), in collaboration with government (i.e. the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics) through the GTRM, launched a national survey<sup>271</sup> to gather reliable data on the living conditions and situation of the Venezuelan population residing in the country.<sup>272</sup>

In Colombia, the duplication of structures proved to be particularly challenging because of its pre-existing operational mechanisms (to address the internal conflict (COLSIT) and the coordinate the disaster response and preparedness), as compared to other countries in the region with no real functional mechanisms. The parallel structure led to serious ramifications related to mixed migration issues and the *doble/triple afectación* phenomenon (see case study on Coordination and the Nexus). DG ECHO and other stakeholders were very vocal from the start flagging the risks related to establishing parallel coordination structures. Instead of creating new mechanisms, stakeholders flagged that existing ones could have been reinforced.<sup>273</sup> In Colombia, some stakeholders highlighted the dominant position UN agencies coordinating and delivering the response. The lack of a neutral evaluation of the effectiveness and added value of the R4V was reported by some stakeholders, mentioning the political agenda.<sup>274</sup>

Other issues identified by stakeholders and highlighted in the survey results and the project review, included:

- **Lack of consideration of national/local organisations' agendas:** GIFMM and GTRM are led by two "operational" UN agencies, with their own agendas, which did not always allow for smaller organisations smaller NGOs to take part in negotiations, according to

---

<sup>269</sup> Field interviews Venezuela (DG ECHO Partners: 5; Coordination mechanisms: 3)

<sup>270</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2; Coordination mechanisms: 3)

<sup>271</sup> R4V. 2022. Living conditions of the Venezuelan population residing in Peru. Results of the II ENPOVE 2022. Available at: [https://www.r4v.info/es/document/INEI\\_ENPOVE\\_2022](https://www.r4v.info/es/document/INEI_ENPOVE_2022)

<sup>272</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Coordination mechanism: 1)

<sup>273</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO field: 2, other coordination mechanisms: 1)

<sup>274</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1, DG ECHO field: 3, DG ECHO partners: 1, other coordination mechanisms: 1)

stakeholders across the region. This was also mentioned by DG ECHO as a topic of concern that they tried to address over the evaluation period (moving away from UN-led system, through for example funding NGOs to co-lead clusters).<sup>275</sup>

- **Need to foster regular dialogues with partners on the nexus:** There has been a lack of coordination on DG ECHO's part to promote regular dialogue between its partners and the nexus with other donors promoting integration.
- **Uneven distribution of partners:** Especially in big countries, such as Brazil and Colombia, there are only a limited number of organisations working in the remote areas, whereas there is proliferation of partners in the border areas.<sup>276</sup>
- **Lack of reliable data and lack of access to information for new partners:** DG ECHO has been working with its partners to produce reliable comparative information, while advocating for unhindered access to data.<sup>277</sup>

At local level, coordination among DG ECHO partners seemed to work best, according to interviewees, and the survey respondents. 71% of DG ECHO's partners (28 out of 39) agreed that DG ECHO encouraged them to cooperate and coordinate with humanitarian organisations at national and local level. DG ECHO partners collaborated through the local R4V platforms and the "mesas técnicas" set up as part of the local R4V platforms. Although the quality of coordination through the local R4V platforms varied across regions,<sup>278</sup> a range of good practices were put forward. For example, in Ecuador and Peru, partners in the border areas developed a joint map to prepare Venezuelan migrants and refugees for what they can expect on the other side of the border<sup>279</sup> (more examples of best practices can be found in the Coordination and the nexus case study).

### 3.3 Effectiveness

EQ6. To what extent were DG ECHO's objectives (as defined in the HAR, the Consensus and the specific HIPs) achieved? What concrete and measurable results were achieved? What critical success or barrier factors can be distinguished?

Table 14. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC6.1 DG ECHO interventions set appropriate measurable targets in line with international standards and use baseline data were available	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited data available (or lack thereof) and international presence in Venezuela and other countries in the region made it difficult for DG ECHO and DG ECHO partners to establish baselines for their interventions, especially at the beginning of the evaluation period. Overtime, the (primary) data collected in the field and the needs assessments conducted by DG ECHO partners allowed to mitigate, to some extent, these challenges.</li> <li>• Despite these challenges, DG ECHO partners were generally able to set appropriate and realistic targets which were in line with international standards. An improvement in this regard compared to the first years of the evaluation period was noted by some DG ECHO Field staff consulted.</li> </ul>
JC.6.2 DG ECHO and DG ECHO partners successfully delivered the	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the evaluation period (2017-2021), DG ECHO funded 80 humanitarian actions to respond to the</li> </ul>

<sup>275</sup> ICF. 2023. Field Report; ICF. 2023. Survey analysis.

<sup>276</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2; DG ECHO partners: 3)

<sup>277</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 4; DG ECHO partners: 5); ICG-HA WG.2021. Minutes of the meetings.

<sup>278</sup> ICF. 2023. Field report. Some local platforms were more developed and active than others. For example, in Ecuador, GTRM Quito revealed to less developed compared to GTRM Lago Agrio and Tulcán. Similarly, in Colombia, several stakeholders explained that the GIFMM Norte de Santander (one of the first local GIFMMs set up in the country) was particularly active.

<sup>279</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; Coordination mechanisms: 2)



<p>intended outputs and contributed to achieving planned outcomes (and in some cases impacts) while ensuring quality, external obstacles and challenges were successfully anticipated and mitigated.</p>		<p>Venezuelan regional crisis. This amounted to EUR 237 million, of which approximately two thirds (58%) were allocated to respond to its internal dimension (actions targeting vulnerable populations in Venezuela).</p>
<p>JC6.4 DG ECHO's objectives as defined in the HAR, the Consensus and the specific HIPs were achieved; critical success factors (e.g. field network) were identified and exploited, while hindering factors were detected early and addressed.</p>	<p><b>Strong</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evidence suggests that most activities listed in the ToC were carried out, especially in the main prioritised sectors (Health, Protection, EiE and WASH and, in Venezuela, Nutrition). Livelihood assistance, on the other hand, was covered only to a minimal extent. Despite operational problems encountered by partners inside and outside Venezuela, most scheduled activities were carried out, although there were a few exceptions.</li> <li>• Some of the main operational obstacles that DG ECHO partners faced included limited international/humanitarian presence and/or experience (especially at the beginning of the evaluation period), difficulties to cooperate with national and local authorities in some countries and inefficient humanitarian coordination systems. Several external factors also forced DG ECHO and its partners to adapt their operations, including COVID-19, the high level of politicisation of the crisis, the volatility of the context and raising levels of insecurity in some areas. In Venezuela, obstacles to humanitarian operations in the country and logistical difficulties created additional challenges.</li> <li>• DG ECHO-funded actions reached 12.3 million beneficiaries. Partners consulted considered they had been overall successful in reaching the target population, although some groups identified as vulnerable (LGBTIQ+ community, indigenous populations, the elderly and people with disabilities) were not as effectively reached as desired.</li> <li>• Overall, DG ECHO-funded actions achieved the desired results and outcomes, with the most significant changes observed in the Protection, Health and EiE sectors. The data collected for other sectors is more limited, but it suggests some improvement as well.</li> <li>• Ultimately, DG ECHO's response was deemed to have contributed to achieving the objectives set, especially saving lives. Important limitations affecting its ability to generate a more significant impact were however identified, mostly due to the limited funding available, the lack of investment from national governments, and the continued deterioration of the socio-economic situation in Venezuela.</li> </ul>
<p>JC6.3 Unintended effects (positive or negative) that occurred as a result of DG ECHO funded interventions were relatively insignificant and manageable.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evaluation identified several unintended (positive and negative) effects stemming from DG ECHO-funded interventions. Most of the unintended effects reported by DG ECHO partners were positive, but negative effects were also identified. DG ECHO partners were able to address or mitigate some of these effects, along with other potential risks identified.</li> </ul>

**DG ECHO partners encountered difficulties establishing a baseline due to limited, or lack of, reliable data available and past presence of humanitarian actors in some countries. This was particularly true at the start of the evaluation period and was especially noticeable in Venezuela. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the evaluation found that DG ECHO partners were generally able to set appropriate and realistic targets which were in line with international standards (JC6.1).**

The project mapping and documentation reviewed point at difficulties faced by DG ECHO partners and other stakeholders to set a baseline, especially at the beginning of the evaluation period, when field presence was more limited. The project mapping shows that many DG ECHO partners established “zero” as baseline for their actions and that this was not always justified by the nature of the indicator.<sup>280</sup> The survey for DG ECHO partners confirmed these difficulties, as only just over half of 56% of respondents indicated that they had been able to use and build evidence and baseline data (fully or to a large extent).<sup>281</sup> In their responses, they referred to the limited presence in the country before the intervention, issues with accessibility of previous data as well as logistical difficulties such as poor connectivity.

The challenges were particularly prominent in, but not unique to, Venezuela, where the lack of humanitarian actors in the country during the first years of the evaluation period, combined with the unavailability of official data or reported on most key indicators, made it almost impossible to quantify the extent of the needs. This was explicitly acknowledged by DG ECHO in documentation reviewed (e.g. in the 2019-2021 HIPs) but also by other stakeholders like HumVenezuela, the CSO-led platform established in the country to produce data on the Complex Humanitarian Emergency, which noted that even formerly available data had stopped being available.<sup>282</sup> For instance, as explained in the Health case study, the last official health-related figures published by the Government of Venezuela dates back to 2016 and currently, health system information is collected by healthcare centres or private organisations directly, in a non-systematic or standardised manner.

The situation in other countries in the region was comparatively better, but feedback from DG ECHO officials and DG ECHO partners in the field also point at issues related to the unavailability or unreliability of official figures (e.g., in the number of Venezuelans present in the country) and limited use of internationally accepted indicators to establish humanitarian needs, especially in the first years of the evaluation period. This initially hindered evidence-based programming, but it also limited the ability to compare the situation with other existing humanitarian crises and, consequently, secure funding.<sup>283</sup>

Over time, DG ECHO and its partners became increasingly able to establish baselines thanks to enhanced humanitarian presence in the field and DG ECHO partners' intensive primary data collection efforts and regular needs assessments. This was noted by DG ECHO partners in project documentation reviewed as well as during field consultations, with many stating that their ability to establish baselines gradually improved thanks to the data they gathered in the context of previous actions implemented in the country/region (including through border observations and interviews with affected population) and constant needs assessment exercises.<sup>284</sup> Despite this, as noted in the Protection case study, room for further improvement regarding data management and systematisation was noted by several DG ECHO staff consulted.

**Notwithstanding the difficulties to establish baselines, the evaluation found that DG ECHO partners were generally able to set appropriate and realistic targets which were in**

---

<sup>280</sup> 24 actions (out of the 79 for which there was information on the baseline used) established baseline numbers other than zero. The detailed review of 40 actions showed that for some indicators a “zero” baseline would be appropriate as they reported on progress or number of individuals receiving assistance, but this was not the case for all indicators such as those referring, for instance, to percentage of population accessing services.

<sup>281</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (11 out of 39 respondents indicated they were fully able to use/build evidence and baseline data, 11 that they were able to do so to a large extent, 12 that they were able to do so to some extent, and 4 that they were able to do so to a limited extent).

<sup>282</sup> HumVenezuela. 2021. Informe de Seguimiento sobre los Impactos de la Emergencia Humanitaria Compleja en Venezuela con la pandemia de COVID. Actualización a Junio 2021.

<sup>283</sup> See further details in the Protection case study (CS2).

<sup>284</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (80 actions); ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela)..

**line with international standards (JC6.1).** Project documentation reviewed shows that DG ECHO partners set targets against pre-defined (as well as custom, where relevant) key result indicators (KRIs) and key outcome indicators (KOIs).<sup>285</sup> In the view of DG ECHO officials and partners consulted, the targets set were overall appropriate and realistic,<sup>286</sup> with one DG ECHO partner noting DG ECHO's insistence on the need to set achievable and realistic goals. Two DG ECHO officials, however, stated that this had not always been the case, claiming that particularly in the beginning, some of the targets set by targets had been unrealistic or irrelevant (in particular at result level), but that there had been an improvement over the evaluation period.<sup>287</sup>

The evidence collected also suggests that DG ECHO partners considered international standards when setting targets. Early evidence of this was found in the project mapping, where despite some misalignment between average KOI targets and relevant international standards,<sup>288</sup> explicit references to international standards were found, namely Sphere standards (14 actions), cluster guidelines (seven actions), INEE minimum standards (seven actions) and IASC guidelines on, for instance, mental health and psychological support and on inclusion of people with disabilities (six actions). This was further confirmed by survey and KIIs, with most survey respondents stating that they had been able to set targets and implement actions in line with international standards and one DG ECHO official interviewed further confirming that this was the case.<sup>289</sup>

**Over the evaluation period (2017-2021), DG ECHO funded 80 humanitarian actions to respond to the Venezuelan regional crisis, amounting to EUR 237 million, of which two thirds were destined to the internal dimension of the crisis. Half of the funding went towards supporting activities in the Health and Protection, followed by WASH and EiE (sectors covered both inside and outside Venezuela). The evidence collected suggests that the funded actions were overall successfully implemented and that they achieved their intended results and outcomes, although to varying degrees across sectors. The main changes triggered by DG ECHO's response can be found in the main prioritised sectors, although their long-term impact was rather limited (JC6.2).**

As depicted in Figure 31 (based on HOPE/EVA data), a majority of DG ECHO's funding to the crisis (68%) went towards multi-country projects, while nearly one third was allocated to projects implemented exclusively in Venezuela (28%). The HOPE/EVA databases do not allow to break down the funding allocated to each country under multi-country actions, but internal DG ECHO budgetary data shows that overall, approximately two thirds (58%) of the funds were allocated to respond to the internal dimension of the crisis (i.e. activities implemented in Venezuela through country or multi-country actions) (see Section 2.3.1.2).

---

<sup>285</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (80 actions).

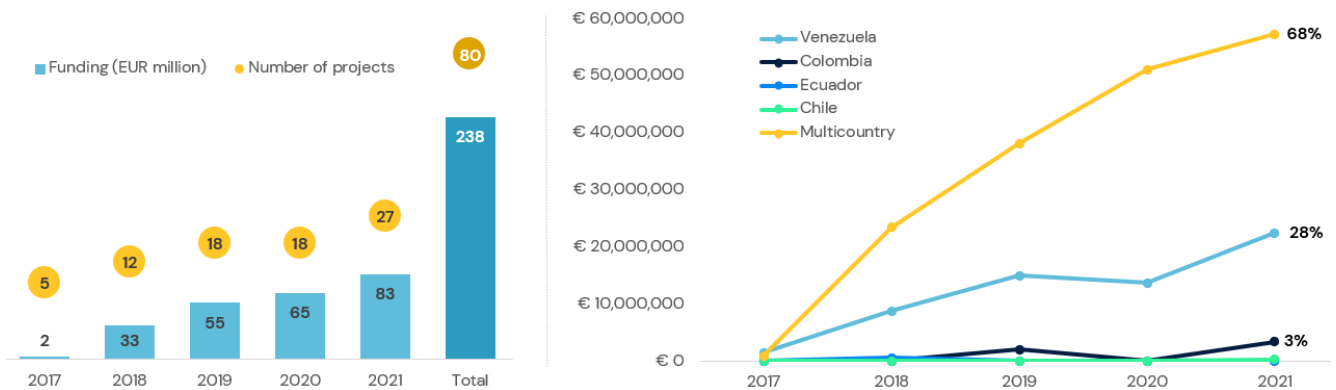
<sup>286</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (30 out of 39 respondents indicated that they were able to set appropriate and realistic targets – Q17); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2; DG ECHO partners: 2).

<sup>287</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2).

<sup>288</sup> The evaluation compared average pre-defined KOI targets against international minimum standards and found that out of the three KOIs for which there were established minimum standards, the average targets for two were slightly lower than the international standards (see Table 89 in Annex 7). This misalignment alone did not necessarily mean that targets were appropriate or uncompliant with international standards, as in most cases international standards require adaptation to the specific context.

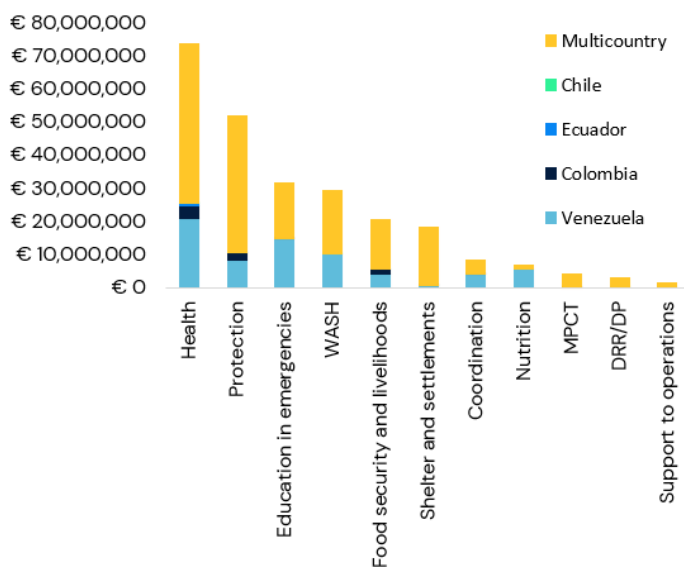
<sup>289</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (30 out of 39 respondents indicated they were able to do so fully or to a large extent (respectively, 11 and 22 respondents) – Q17. The remaining respondents indicated they were able to do so to some or to a limited extent (4 and 1 respondents, respectively); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1).

Figure 31. Funding and number of actions per year (left) and funding allocated to multi-country and country projects (right) (2017-2021)



Source: ICF (2023) based on HOPE/EVA databases.

Figure 32. Funding allocated to each sector (2017-2021)



As shown in Figure 32, the main sectors funded were Health (29%) and Protection (21%), followed by Education in Emergencies (EiE) (13%) and WASH (12%), in line with the priorities set by DG ECHO in the HIPs,<sup>290</sup>

Source: ICF (2023) based on EVA database

**The evaluation found evidence that despite operational problems encountered by partners both inside and outside Venezuela, most planned activities were implemented, although there were some exceptions.** Figure 33 shows our assessment of the level of achievement of each of the elements of the ToC, based on the full body of evidence collected by the evaluation. The degree of achievement is illustrated in the form of a traffic light assessment with the following colour code:

- **Green** represents elements that were achieved fully or to a large extent.
- **Yellow** represents elements that were partially achieved.
- **Red** represents elements that were not achieved or achieved to a very limited extent.
- **Grey** represents elements for which the information collected was insufficient to assess their level of implementation.

As shown, most types of activities envisaged were implemented during the evaluation period, especially in the prioritised sectors inside and outside of Venezuela (Health, Protection, EiE and

<sup>290</sup> Inside Venezuela, the priority sectors were Health, Food Security, Nutrition, WASH and Protection, whereas outside of Venezuela, the prioritised sectors were Protection, Health (specifically emergency medical and sexual and reproductive health – SRH – in Colombia), EiE, Shelter, non-food items and Food Security. Source: ICF. 2023. Analysis of LAC HIPs and HIPTAs (2017-2021).

WASH) as well as Nutrition in Venezuela. Shelter and Food Security activities were comparatively more limited, and few Livelihood assistance activities (a sector that was not prioritised either in Venezuela or outside) were implemented. More details on the assessment and the supporting evidence are presented in Table 89 (Annex 7), which provides a summary overview of the degree of coverage of the activities listed in the ToC and the main types of activities implemented under each sector (in Venezuela and/or the region) during the evaluation period.

The evidence collected also shows that most of the scheduled activities were implemented, despite the operational problems encountered by partners both inside and outside Venezuela (see below). There were however some exceptions, where DG ECHO partners could not implement some of the activities envisaged or had to adapt them to counter operational challenges (including COVID-19). For instance, the project mapping shows that for all completed actions (i.e. a final report was produced at the time the analysis were done), most planned activities were implemented, with a few exceptions of activities that were either not carried out (seven) or partially implemented (16).<sup>291</sup> Stakeholder consulted agreed that overall, DG ECHO partners had been able to implement the planned activities. In the survey for DG ECHO partners, most respondents (90% or 35 out of 39 responses) indicated that their organisations had been able to implement the planned results fully (49%) or to a large extent (41%).<sup>292</sup> This was further confirmed by DG ECHO partners interviewed, who stated that overall, most activities planned had been carried out, albeit in some cases with adaptations (for example, to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic).

Key examples of exceptions and adaptations identified in the project mapping or reported by stakeholders included:<sup>293</sup>

- In 2019, WFP was unable to implement any of the four activities planned with respect to the distribution of nutritious food for children under 5 in Colombia;
- In 2018, UNICEF transformed the distribution of nutritional supplies in health facilities and in schools for a school feeding programme;
- The change in finance dynamics in Venezuela forced MCE to modify a Food Assistance activity, replacing the distribution of humanitarian aid cards by in-kind assistance;
- In the context of the COVID-19 lockdowns in Colombia, humanitarian transport and psychosocial support activities implemented by OXFAM (through Fundación Mujer y Futuro) were adapted, accommodating a group of Venezuelan migrants and refugees (as well as vulnerable local population) in hotels in the city and providing them with food and psychosocial support.

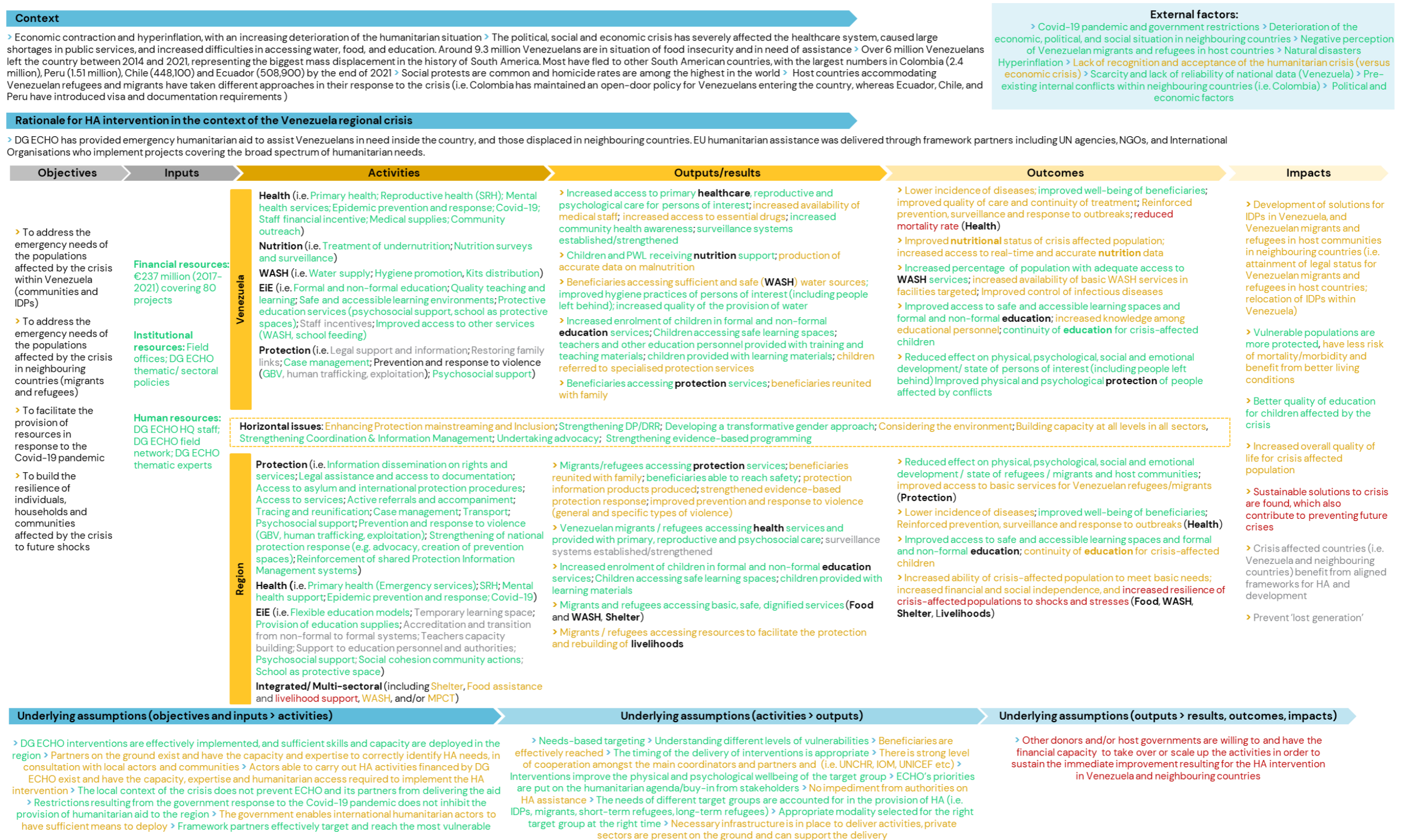
---

<sup>291</sup> The non-implemented actions concerned the Nutrition and Food Assistance sectors. Among the partially implemented actions, four corresponded to the EiE and the food security sectors (each), three in the field of protection, and one in the fields of health, WASH and shelter and settlements (each).

<sup>292</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (35 out of 39 respondents indicated their organisation had been able to implement the planned activities fully (19) or to a large extent (16), with the remaining 4 indicating that they had been able to implement them to some extent – Q17).

<sup>293</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); Field interviews (DG ECHO partners: 2).

Figure 33. Achievement of the ToC for DG ECHO's response to the Venezuelan regional crisis



**DG ECHO and its partners faced a myriad of challenges affecting the implementation of the funded actions. However, the evaluation also identified some contributing factors that reflected positively on the level of implementation of activities and the ability of DG ECHO partners to mitigate the challenges.** Evidence emerging from the project mapping and the review of documentation identifies numerous operational challenges faced by DG ECHO partners that affected the implementation of the actions, especially in Venezuela, but also in other countries of the region. Stakeholders consulted for this evaluation (surveyed and interviewed) and field observations in Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador confirmed that during the evaluation period, the implementation of the planned activities was impacted (negatively and positively) by several factors, which can largely be divided into four main groups: (i) factors related to the presence and capacity of partners, (ii) coordination-related factors, (iii) socio-economic, legal and other contextual factors, and (iv) aspects related to the relationship between DG ECHO partners and DG ECHO.<sup>294</sup>

Regarding **partner presence and capacity**, the following key hindering factors were identified:

- *Limited international presence in Venezuela and other countries, particularly at the beginning of the evaluation period* (up until 2019). This held especially true for countries with no or limited humanitarian tradition, with Venezuela being the most striking example (at the onset of the crisis, only a few humanitarian players were present in the field, mostly in the border with Colombia). The field missions in Ecuador and Colombia demonstrated, however, that even in countries with humanitarian aid tradition, the number of INGOs in the early years of the evaluation period was also limited, which hindered a more effective response (see Protection case study).<sup>295</sup> This required relying on local partners where possible,<sup>296</sup> which sometimes created difficulties for Framework partners due, for instance, to the low capacity of implementing partners and the need to negotiate budgets and strategies.<sup>297</sup>
- *Need to build humanitarian aid expertise and/or adapt their response to a different type of crisis.* This was one of the main hindering factors underlined by DG ECHO staff consulted and DG ECHO partners interviewed during field missions in Colombia and Ecuador.<sup>298</sup> In Venezuela, the lack of humanitarian tradition meant that NGOs operating in the country lacked humanitarian experience. In countries with more humanitarian tradition, like Colombia or Ecuador, humanitarian actors (including DG ECHO partners) were used to responding to other types of crises and did not always follow international humanitarian standards and therefore, they needed to adapt to the new nature of the crisis (see Protection case study). The main mitigation measures identified include actions taken by DG ECHO (i.e. prioritisation of technical capacities and expertise, providing technical support to DG ECHO partners and place a lot of focus on building capacity among humanitarian actors in the field) and DG ECHO partners (e.g. carrying out trainings/capacity-building activities targeting local partners).
- *(Increasingly) limited staff or staff turnover.* This was reported by DG ECHO partners in project documentation, the survey, KIIs and field interviews, but also in other documentation reviewed.<sup>299</sup> Some of the partners pointed to high rotation of staff, while partners in Venezuela specifically referred to a shortage of health workers. One DG ECHO partner also alluded to difficulties to mobilise staff to some (difficult) areas.<sup>300</sup> Key mitigation measures reported included hiring additional staff and, in Venezuela,

---

<sup>294</sup> DG ECHO partners also reported challenges to effectively reach targeted populations, but these are discussed below.

<sup>295</sup> From 2019, international presence in countries like Colombia grew significantly and, to some extent, so did in Venezuela.

<sup>296</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3; DG ECHO partners: 1).

<sup>297</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1); ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (1 out of 4 respondents who reported having been able to implement activities only to some extent).

<sup>298</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2; DG ECHO partners: 1); ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela)

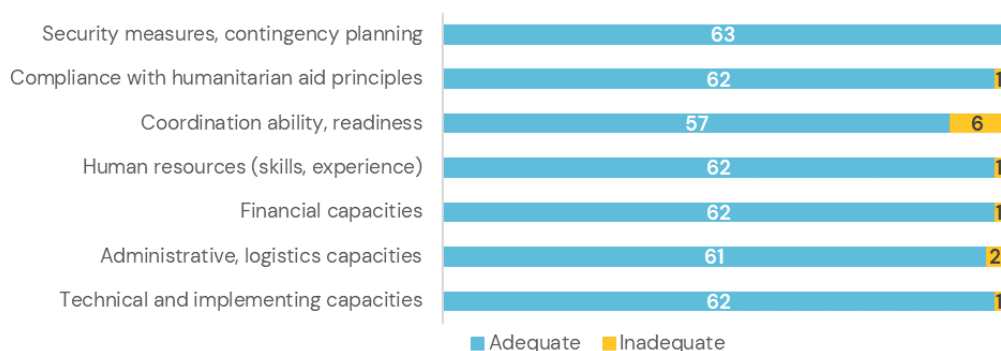
<sup>299</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (2 out of 4 respondents – Q20); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1); ICF. 2023. Case studies 1 (Health interventions in Venezuela) and 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela); DG ECHO. 2018. Field mission report (Venezuela, July 2018); ACF. 2020. Impact of Sanctions on Bureaucratic Hurdles in Venezuela's Response.

<sup>300</sup> ICF. 2023. KII (DG ECHO partners: 1)

relying on health workers from nearby health centres and providing incentives to staff to help implement the strategy.

Despite these challenges, project documentation shows that DG ECHO was overall satisfied with partners' capacities upon completion of the actions, as shown in Figure 34. In this sense, some of the key capacity-related factors that DG ECHO partners considered had facilitated the implementation of the actions included their presence and recognition in the territory,<sup>301</sup> the involvement of local organisations with relevant expertise/local acceptance,<sup>302</sup> the fact that framework partners had extensive experience,<sup>303</sup> and the possibility to rely on volunteers.<sup>304</sup>

Figure 34. DG ECHO's assessment of DG ECHO partners' capacity (Final Report) (63 completed actions)



Source: ICF (2023) based on HOPE/EVA data

Regarding **coordination**, mixed views were expressed regarding the nature (positive or negative) of the factors that affected the implementation of actions, specifically as regards cooperation with local and national authorities and with other humanitarian organisations (bilaterally or through established coordination mechanisms):

- **Collaboration with local and national authorities:** the evidence collected revealed that DG ECHO partners' experience working with local and national authorities varied; while some identified it as a contributing factor, others stated that the difficult collaboration with authorities had hindered the implementation of the actions.<sup>305</sup>
- **Collaboration with other humanitarian organisations:** field coordination was reportedly difficult in the early years of the evaluation period but improved over time and was frequently cited by DG ECHO partners consulted as one of the main factors that had facilitated the implementation of the actions, particularly from 2019 onwards. Coordination at the national and regional levels, on the other hand, was less conducive to effective and efficient operations, with some stakeholders referring to the difficulties created by the double coordination structure, especially in countries/areas where the Venezuelan migration crisis intersected with other humanitarian crises (e.g. *doble/triple afectación* phenomenon in Colombia) (see an explanation of the double coordination structure in EQ4).<sup>306</sup>

<sup>301</sup> As indicated in the Protection case study, this was mostly identified as a facilitating factor by UN agencies and a small number of NGOs in Colombia and Ecuador, but also one local NGO consulted.

<sup>302</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>303</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1).

<sup>304</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1)

<sup>305</sup> In the project mapping, some DG ECHO partners identified it as a contributing factor, while others indicated it had hindered the implementation of the actions. The online survey for DG ECHO partners seems to confirm the latter as problems with national and local authorities was the factor selected by most respondents who indicated that they had been able to implement their actions only to some extent (3 out of 4 questions – Q20).

<sup>306</sup> ICF. 2023. Case studies 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela) and 3 (Coordination and the nexus); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; DG ECHO partners: 1).



Perhaps more importantly, the implementation of activities was heavily impacted by **external factors**, i.e. linked to the context in which they were implemented. Some of these factors were common to several countries covered by the evaluation, while others were unique to Venezuela. The main external factors reported in evidence collected are the following:<sup>307</sup>

- *High level of politicisation of the crisis and numerous legislative changes.* This was particularly true for Venezuela, where both the Maduro and the opposition/Guaidó-led governments used the humanitarian crisis as a political instrument, forcing DG ECHO and its partners to be extremely cautious to remain neutral and apolitical (especially once the EU recognised the Guaidó government) in order to ensure the upholding of humanitarian standards, while staying flexible to adapt to changing needs.<sup>308</sup> The politicisation of the crisis also affected the implementation of the activities in other countries, where the crisis was used by governments to distract from other internal issues or crises (e.g. in Colombia and Brazil).<sup>309</sup> The high level of politicisation of the crisis in some of the countries receiving Venezuelan migrants and refugees also led to numerous legislative changes which affected the status of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the country (for instance, in relation to the temporary protection permit for Venezuelans in Colombia). This required DG ECHO partners to invest more efforts into advocacy before national and local governments.<sup>310</sup>
- *COVID-19 pandemic.* The pandemic was one of the main challenges reported by DG ECHO partners in project documentation and field consultations in Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador.<sup>311</sup> Along with triggering changes in migratory patterns and an overall increase of humanitarian needs (as well as protection risks faced by affected populations), it prevented DG ECHO partners from reaching some beneficiary groups and implementing many of the actions as initially planned, forcing them to adapt their response (for instance, providing intramural or remote assistance). In this sense, the main factor that DG ECHO partners considered to have allowed them to face the new reality was their willingness and ability to adapt. In fact, as further explained in the case study on Protection, several DG ECHO partners consulted in the field believed that thanks to the pandemic, they had implemented innovative practices that proved successful, which were then reflected in their post-pandemic response.
- *Volatile context and high level of insecurity in some area.* In (project)documentation reviewed, DG ECHO and its partners often referred to the high level of insecurity in certain areas (especially in Venezuela and Colombia) as an important factor that affected the implementation of activities during the evaluation period, for instance, by making it difficult to store and transport equipment and goods or by posing risks for humanitarian workers. The field missions confirmed this, suggesting that although a slight improvement could be observed in countries like Venezuela and Colombia, the level of insecurity had reportedly raised in areas of Ecuador towards the end of the evaluation period.
- *Increasing xenophobia and tensions with local populations.* Consultations with stakeholders and beneficiaries and field observations suggest that the level of xenophobia against Venezuelan migrants and refugees increased significantly over the evaluation period. Although the problem was more acute in some countries (Chile, Ecuador and Peru) than in others (Colombia), exchanges with (Venezuela) beneficiaries during the field missions and the mini-mobile survey proved that a majority had faced

---

<sup>307</sup> Further details on the factors that affected Health interventions in Venezuela and Protection interventions in Colombia and Ecuador can be found in the respective case studies.

<sup>308</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 2).

<sup>309</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela); ICF. 2023. KII s (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>310</sup> See further details in the case study in Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>311</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. Case studies 1 (Health interventions in Venezuela) and 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

discrimination due to their country of origin.<sup>312</sup> Although xenophobia and tensions with local communities mostly affected beneficiaries, the field missions in Colombia and Ecuador (especially the latter) evidenced that in areas where tensions were higher, DG ECHO partners had to adapt their response to mitigate the risk for the operations and humanitarian workers providing assistance to Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

Additional contextual challenges affected operations in Venezuela:

- *Restricted humanitarian space, administrative hurdles, and legal uncertainty for INGOs.* The document reviewed for this evaluation provides extensive evidence on the difficulties stemming from the limited humanitarian space and the complex (and uncertain) regulatory framework applicable to INGOs operating in the country. These were confirmed by stakeholders consulted and the field missions in Venezuela and Panama (see further details in the case studies on Health and Coordination). Despite advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy efforts by DG ECHO and its partners (see EQ7 and Coordination case study), the Maduro government openly opposed humanitarian interventions in the country (especially before 2019), which forced DG ECHO and DG ECHO partners to operate “behind the curtains” and carefully manage visibility in the country, with DG ECHO allowing for a complete derogation from visibility requirements in Venezuela during the first years of the evaluation.<sup>313</sup> It also posed difficulties for humanitarian organisations (and DG ECHO) to secure visas for staff.<sup>314</sup> Even after 2019, the complex regulatory framework for INGOs generated significant legal uncertainty for organisations operating in the country,<sup>315</sup> which risked being subject of discretionary governmental decisions.

In this sense, a DG ECHO official consulted who was involved in the response during the first years of the evaluation period explained that all partners had to be vetted by the government in order to operate in the country, forcing them to develop good relationships with the government and the military to avoid risking the continuity of their operations.<sup>316</sup> Additional measures reported by DG ECHO partners to mitigate the effect of these obstacles included advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the risks of discretionary practices and ensuring that these risks be adequately considered at planning stage.<sup>317</sup>

- *Logistical difficulties stemming from shortages of services and goods and the financial and economic context.* The review of (project) documentation also pointed at difficulties reported by DG ECHO and its partners to operate in the country due to logistical difficulties that were a combined result of multiple factors. On the one hand, shortages of fuel and the regular interruption of basic services (electricity, water, internet connection) across the country made it difficult for partners to deliver items and travel to meet affected communities in Venezuela.<sup>318</sup> On the other hand, difficulties to carry out bank operations (due to international sanctions and government restrictions) and hyperinflation were identified in the documents reviewed as an important obstacles to operations in the country. This was confirmed by DG ECHO partners in Venezuela, who also referred to these two issues as key hindering factors (see Health case study).

To mitigate these challenges, DG ECHO partners implemented measures that strengthened self-management (e.g. acquiring generators, providing local population with solar-powered lamps), storing fuel and ensuring that these risks are properly documented and considered

---

<sup>312</sup> ICF. 2023. Mini-mobile survey for beneficiaries (55% of respondents); FGDs with beneficiaries in Colombia and Ecuador.

<sup>313</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>314</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 1); ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (2 out of 4 respondents who reported having implemented their actions only to some extent).

<sup>315</sup> At the time of the evaluation, only UN agencies and the Red Cross Movement (ICRC and IFRC) were the only humanitarian organisations enjoying a special status in the country. INGOs operated under different models due to the lack of a clear registration process for them (an INGO registry was established in 2021 but it is not fully operational).

<sup>316</sup> ICF. 2023. KII (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>317</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>318</sup> See, for instance: IFRC. 2021. Presentation on community resilience in Venezuela.

when designing the actions. DG ECHO, on its part, also adopted measures seeking to counter the effect of these obstacles, including the approval of *Special Operating Conditions* derogating from the general operational requirements (e.g. allowing for transfers to be made via bank accounts in the US and in foreign currencies) and advocacy efforts to improve operational conditions in Venezuela (see EQ7).<sup>319</sup>

- *Supply chain difficulties in Venezuela*: the review of documentation and feedback from DG ECHO and DG ECHO partners operating in Venezuela also referred to several factors that affected the acquisition of equipment and goods, especially in line with DG ECHO's general guidelines.<sup>320</sup> Issues like corruption, the informality of markets and limited capacity of the national market, combined with the difficulties to import goods (including medicines and medical equipment) due to sanctions and restrictions on INGOs, made it difficult to find local suppliers and/or import the required items in a timely manner, leading to delays in the implementation of projects.

Mitigation measures adopted by partners included the use of foreign currencies to pay local suppliers, repairing – instead of acquiring new – equipment, acquiring good abroad (sometimes through offices in other countries) when the national market was limited, etc. In this sense, DG ECHO's *Special Operating Conditions* also allowed DG ECHO partners to better adapt to the situation.

The last group of factors concerned the ***relationship between DG ECHO and its partners***. Despite the limited funding (which was identified by several partners as a hindering factor), DG ECHO partners generally believed that DG ECHO's support had been crucial to ensure the effective implementation of activities and mitigate the impact of some of the challenges highlighted. Beyond the specific measures adopted by DG ECHO described above (i.e. advocacy, derogation of general guidelines), key aspects highlighted in the project mapping and consultations with DG ECHO partners and other stakeholders concerned DG ECHO's understanding of the context and the reality on the ground, and their continued (budgetary and technical) support.<sup>321</sup> Further details on this can be found in the discussion around the main EU added value of DG ECHO's response (see EQ5).

***Implemented DG ECHO-funded actions reached 12.3 million beneficiaries, a majority of which through multi-country actions (6.5 million) or actions implemented exclusively in Venezuela (5.2 million). Project data available does not allow for a comprehensive analysis of beneficiaries effectively reached per country or per specific population group. However, partial data from the portfolio analysis and stakeholder feedback suggest that DG ECHO partners were generally able to effectively reach the prioritised populations (vulnerable population in Venezuela and vulnerable migrants/refugees in transit or in the first stage of migration outside of Venezuela). Within these groups, the population groups most reached were children (especially children under five years old) and women (especially pregnant and lactating women).***

Figure 35 shows the temporal and geographic distribution of beneficiaries reached by completed actions, as reported by DG ECHO partners in the Final report. As illustrated, the number of beneficiaries increased significantly in 2018 compared to 2017 (from 1.7 million to 6.1 million), with most beneficiaries being reached via multi-country actions and actions that were exclusively implemented in Venezuela.

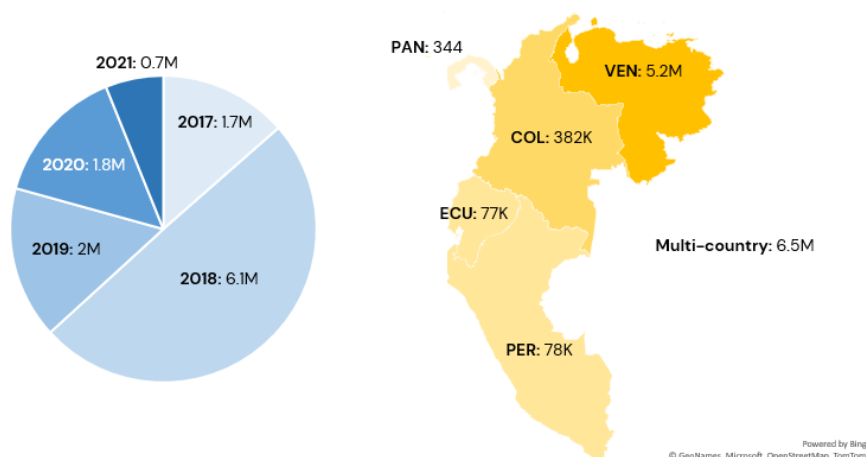
---

<sup>319</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>320</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping; ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 4); ACF. 2020. Impact of Sanctions and Bureaucratic Hurdles in Venezuela's Response; WFP. 2020. Venezuela Operational Update; Survey for DG ECHO partners (1 out of 4 respondents).

<sup>321</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1; Coordination mechanisms); ICF. 2023. Case studies 1 (Health interventions in Venezuela) and 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

Figure 35. Beneficiaries reached by completed DG ECHO-funded actions (temporal and geographic distribution)



Source: ICF elaboration, based on HOPE/EVA databases. Note: The figures presented here correspond to beneficiaries reached, as reported by DG ECHO partners in the Final Report. Therefore, they only consider actions for which there was a Final Report at the time the analysis was conducted (December 2022). This may explain the decrease in the number of beneficiaries in 2019, 2020 and 2021, as fewer actions implemented those years had submitted a Final Report. Moreover, the figures do not represent unique beneficiaries, i.e. a person receiving assistance under two or more actions will be counted as beneficiary for each action.

DG ECHO partners considered that they had been largely successful in reaching beneficiaries targeted by their actions (namely vulnerable population in Venezuela and vulnerable migrants and refugees in transit or in their first stage of migration in countries outside of Venezuela), with some exceptions (explained below).<sup>322</sup>

The analysis of gender and age markers did not produce any conclusive evidence concerning the extent to which DG ECHO partners were successful in incorporating gender and age considerations when implementing the actions (in the way that was initially foreseen), as no clear trends between the average values attributed to DG ECHO at request (RQ) and final report (FR) stages over the years could be observed (see Table 15). However, it did produce partial evidence on the main population groups effectively reached by the actions, i.e., children (specifically children under five), women (and more specifically pregnant and lactating women) and teens and adolescents. Although to a lesser extent, indigenous communities, the elderly, people with disabilities, the LGBTIQ+ community and GBV survivors were also mentioned.<sup>323</sup>

Table 15. Average initial and final gender-age marks (0 – 2)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
<b>Initial mark (RQ)</b>						
Field Expert (n=73)	1.33	1.40	1.50	1.35	1.56	1.47
Desk Officer (n=72)	1.60	1.45	1.39	1.67	1.65	1.56
<b>Final mark (FR)</b>						
Field Expert (n=65)	1.8 (↑↑)	1.4 (=)	1.4 (↓)	1.4 (↑)	1.6 (↑)	1.5 (↑)
Desk Officer (n=60)	1.6 (=)	1.5 (↑)	1.6 (↑)	1.3 (↓↓)	1.7 (↑)	1.5 (↓)

Source: ICF (2023) based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases.

The evidence collected in the field and the feedback from stakeholders confirm that children and women were indeed the main profiles assisted by DG ECHO-funded actions (both inside and outside of Venezuela) but it also points to difficulties to effectively assist some of the vulnerable groups

<sup>322</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2); ICF. 2023. Case studies 1 (Health interventions in Venezuela) and 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>323</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (65 actions).

mentioned in project documentation. The high degree of coverage of (young) women was reflected in the results of the mini-mobile survey for beneficiaries, where 77% of respondents identified as women (mainly in reproductive age).<sup>324</sup> Similarly, despite differences in the profiles assisted inside and outside Venezuela, the case studies on Health (Venezuela) and Protection (Colombia and Ecuador) show that women and children were among the main groups receiving assistance in the three countries:

- In Venezuela, the main groups targeted – and effectively assisted – by Health interventions (i.e. main priority sector) were pregnant women, adolescents, older adults, children left behind, groups of *caminantes* (especially those travelling with children), LGBTIQ+ population and indigenous populations (see further details in the Health case study).
- In Colombia and Ecuador, the main groups of Venezuelans migrants and refugees (in transit or who arrived recently) effectively reached by Protection interventions (main sector prioritised in these countries) were families with children, single parents (especially women heads of household), pregnant and lactating women, and GBV survivors (see further details in Case study 2).

### **Non-prioritised groups that received assistance outside of Venezuela**

Along with the prioritised groups, field consultations in Colombia and Ecuador revealed that two non-prioritised groups were also assisted, although to a much lesser extent. This mostly concerned vulnerable migrants of other nationalities and local populations, which became particularly important to address the increasing levels of xenophobia in some countries.<sup>325</sup> Another group that was not generally targeted, but which was supported by a small number of actions were men travelling alone, who also received support to access documentation and regularisation as these services targeted all people on the move. The efforts made by DG ECHO partners to involve men in (a small number of) actions were positively noted by DG ECHO Field in project documentation.

***In contrast, some groups identified as vulnerable, and therefore targeted by the actions (LGBTIQ+ community, indigenous populations, the elderly and people with disabilities), were not as effectively reached as desired, at least outside of Venezuela.*** On the one hand, the challenges to assess the needs of some groups (LGBTIQ+ and transitional indigenous communities; see EQ2) translated in difficulties to effectively assist them. In other cases, DG ECHO partners were able to assess, but not to effectively cover, the needs of some population groups. For instance, as further explained in the Protection case study, field interviews with partners in Colombia and Ecuador highlighted shortcomings to assist the following groups targeted by their protection actions:

- *Unaccompanied and separated children*, given that the responsibility to care for them generally belonged to the state and therefore, international organisations did not have much room for manoeuvre to cover their needs beyond facilitating family tracing and reunification.
- *People with disabilities and the elderly*, who were not always able to access the spaces where assistance was provided due to physical barriers.

In Venezuela, anecdotal evidence also points towards shortcomings to effectively assist individuals targeted by the actions, with DG ECHO partners explaining that the need to provide intramural assistance during most of the evaluation period made it challenging to reach individuals who were far away or who were not able to go to the centre where services were provided (e.g. caregivers, parents, people with disabilities).<sup>326</sup>

<sup>324</sup> ICF. 2023. Mini-mobile survey for beneficiaries (81% of (male and female) respondents were between the ages of 18-44).

<sup>325</sup> This was not shared by all DG ECHO partners consulted. In Ecuador especially, many DG ECHO partners complained about the fact that the response had focused excessively on Venezuelan migrants and refugees (see further details in Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela)).

<sup>326</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1)

### **Challenges to effectively reach certain population groups**

The review of project documentation and field consultations identified several reasons that had prevented DG ECHO partners from reaching certain areas or beneficiaries during the evaluation. The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the main challenges mentioned; it forced DG ECHO partners to provide intramural services, making it difficult to reach people who were far away. In other cases, the difficulties were linked to specific characteristics of the beneficiary groups targeted (e.g., mobile population, people with disabilities, migrants and refugees in urban settings as they tended to be dispersed, indigenous groups due to language and cultural barriers, etc.). Key mitigation measures identified in the project mapping, KIIs and field missions included the implementation of mobile interventions to reach as many of the mobile or remote people as possible (e.g. mobile Sex Truck to provide SRH services in Colombia, medical boat on the Orinoco river to reach remote populations in Venezuela, mobile registration units for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia and Ecuador), increased field presence, awareness-raising activities among local population, production of materials in different languages.

Beneficiaries consulted for this evaluation also provided feedback on the challenges they encountered that kept them from effectively benefiting from the assistance provided by humanitarian organisations on the ground. In the mini-mobile for beneficiaries, the main obstacles identified were limited resources (33% of respondents), aspects related to information availability and access (19%), failure to meet the requirements to be assisted (14%), legal and document-related issues (13%), unclear information on services or support provided by local organisations (11%) and personal circumstances (8%). Despite being overwhelmingly positive about the assistance provided, some beneficiaries participating in the FGDs organised during the field missions in Colombia and Ecuador – especially those who had just left Venezuela – complained about the amount of information they received upon arrival, claiming that it was confusing and sometimes contradictory.

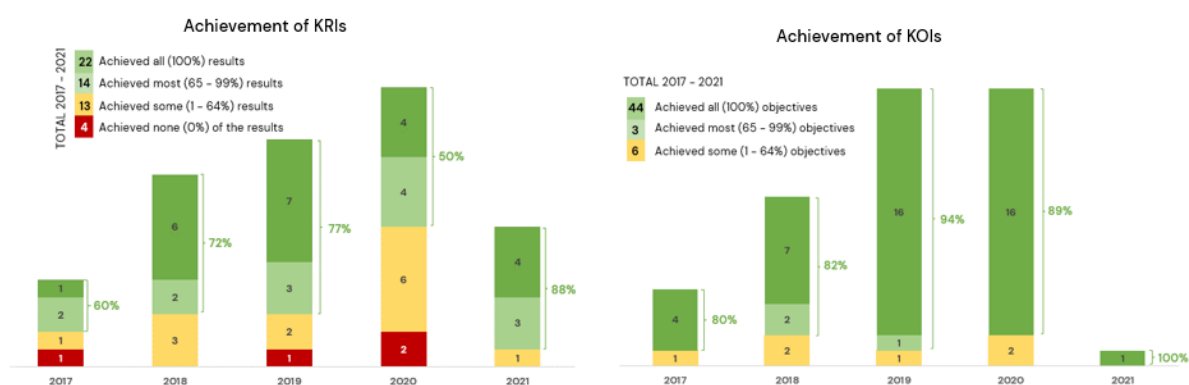
**Overall, DG ECHO funded actions achieved the desired results and outcomes. Although the data available does not allow for a detailed comparison of the level of performance across the years covered by the evaluation, feedback collected and partial evidence emerging from the portfolio analysis point to a slight improvement in the last years of the evaluation period.**

Figure 36 shows the level of achievement of KRI and KOI targets among the 53 completed actions for which this data is available. As shown in the figure, a majority (36 of 53 actions) achieved all or most of the planned results, with an average rate of success of 69% across the evaluation period. The year with the lowest rate of success was 2020 (50% or 8 actions), followed by 2017 (60% or 3 actions). At outcome level, most completed actions (47 out of 53) achieved all or most of the planned objectives, with 2017 being the year with the worst performance (80% of actions achieved all or most objectives).<sup>327</sup>

---

<sup>327</sup> This may be partially explained by the fact that, as noted under JC6.1, targets set by partners during the first years of the evaluation period were sometimes unrealistic and purportedly high to attract funding.

Figure 36. Achievement of KRI (left) and KOI (right) targets: number of (completed) actions that achieved all/most/some/none of the planned results and objectives



Source: ICF (2023) based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases (N=53)

The generally good performance of the actions is also reflected in DG ECHO's assessment at Final report stage: although only 26 out of 65 completed actions were considered to have fully achieved their expected results (the remaining 39 achieving them only partially), DG ECHO positively assessed the performance of the partners in most cases (57 of 65 actions) (see EQ8).<sup>328</sup> (Minor, medium or major) problems were identified for 20% of actions implemented in 2018 and 17% of actions implemented in 2019 and 2020.

Stakeholder feedback and field evidence further confirm that despite difficulties, planned results and outcomes were largely achieved, and beneficiaries were generally satisfied with the assistance provided.<sup>329</sup> In this sense, two DG ECHO officials further noted that the degree of success in achieving the planned results and outcomes improved over the years, which one of them partly attributing this to a better selection of partners.<sup>330</sup>

Despite limitations to compare performance across sectors based on comparable KRI and KOI data available,<sup>331</sup> the portfolio analysis and survey data allowed for a high-level comparison of performance across sectors, suggesting that the sectors with apparent better performance at result, outcome and impact level were Protection, EiE, Shelter and DRR. Health, Food Security and Livelihoods and WASH were the only sectors where some pre-defined (average) KOIs targets were not achieved (see Table 16).

Table 16. Overview of performance per sector based on achievement of pre-defined KOI targets and average survey results (i.e. respondents believing that their actions contributed to listed results, outcomes and impacts)

Sector	Results	Outcomes	Impacts
Health	Survey (average): 53% (n=23)	Survey (average): 48% (n=23)	Survey (average): 39% (n=23)
		Pre-defined KOI targets: 1/1 targets not achieved	
Nutrition	Survey (average): 22% (n=23)	Survey (average): 26% (n=23)	Survey (average): 35% (n=23)
		Pre-defined KOI targets: 2/2 achieved	

<sup>328</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (65 actions)

<sup>329</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 3; DG ECHO: 4; Coordination mechanisms: 1); ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (37 out of 39 respondents indicated that their actions had generated the expected outcomes – Q17); ICF. 2023. Mini-mobile survey for beneficiaries (70% of respondents indicated being either fairly or very satisfied); FGDs with beneficiaries in Colombia and Ecuador.

<sup>330</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2)

<sup>331</sup> KRIs and KOIs are useful to compare the performance of specific actions, but present limitations which impede a meaningful comparison of sectors. Firstly, KOIs and KRIs are sector-specific and, as noted by several stakeholders consulted, KOIs in some sectors (e.g. Nutrition) tend to be easier to achieve than in others (e.g. Health). Secondly, the analysis presented here is based on average figures and therefore, does not consider possible variations between the different actions.

<b>Protection</b>	Survey (average): 64% (n=29)	Survey (average):86% (n=29)	Survey (average): 64% (n=29)
		Pre-defined KOI targets: N/A	
<b>WASH</b>	Survey (average): 74% (n=19)	Survey (average): 74% (n=19)	Survey (average): 42% (n=19)
		Pre-defined KOI targets: 1/2 achieved	
<b>EiE</b>	Survey (average): 72% (n=8)	Survey (average): 70% (n=8)	Survey (average): 63% (n=8)
		Pre-defined KOI targets: 3/3 achieved	
<b>Shelter</b>	Survey (average): 85% (n=7)	Survey (average): 71% (n=7)	Survey: N/A
		Pre-defined KOI targets: 1/1 achieved	
<b>Food security and livelihoods</b>	Survey (average): 58% (n=12)	Survey (average): 50% (n=12)	Survey (average): 50% (n=12)
		Pre-defined KOI targets: 2/3 achieved	
<b>DRR</b>	Survey (average): 75% (n=6)	Survey (average): 75% (n=6)	Survey (average): 75% (n=6)
		Pre-defined KOI targets: 1/1 achieved	
<b>Coordination</b>	Survey (average): 65% (n=10)	Survey (average): 68% (n=10)	Survey (average): 50% (n=10)
		Pre-defined KOI targets: N/A	

The assessment of the extent to which DG ECHO's response produced the envisaged results, outcomes and impacts as reflected in the ToC is presented in Figure 33 (i.e. level of achievement of the ToC), based on the full body of primary and secondary evidence collected for the evaluation. A more detailed analysis is included in Tables 90–96 (Annex 7), along with a brief description of the main results, outcomes and impacts achieved which provides a more nuanced picture of the changes generated in each sector). Overall, the main changes were reported in the Protection, Health and Education in Emergencies sectors. In contrast, and as expected given the need to prioritise the most urgent needs, little to no progress was observed with respect to increased resilience of crisis-affected populations and the finding of sustainable solutions to the crisis which prevent future crises.

### **Unintended effects and risks of DG ECHO-funded interventions and other humanitarian interventions (JC6.3)**

The evaluation identified several unintended effects that occurred because of DG ECHO-funded interventions. While most of the unintended effects reported by DG ECHO partners were positive, negative consequences and potential risks were also identified, most of which were addressed or mitigated by DG ECHO partners. Positive unintended effects mentioned by DG ECHO partners in the survey related to the generation of data for other organisations to use and increased visibility of vulnerable groups.<sup>332</sup> FGDs with beneficiaries also suggest that a collateral effect of the support provided to GBV survivors was the creation of support networks among beneficiaries, which contributed to their sense of empowerment resulting from the intervention(s).

Key negative effects and key risks identified included:

- **Pull effect of interventions:** the concentration of humanitarian assistance in certain areas pushed people in need to move to those areas in order to receive the assistance they required. This was reported by a DG ECHO partner interviewed as well as observed during the field missions. For instance, some of the beneficiaries consulted in Colombia were (pregnant) women (pendular migrants) from Venezuela who had travelled to Colombia to access SRH services because, they claimed, the offer was better adapted to their needs. Similarly, within Venezuela, many individuals in need moved to border areas where most humanitarian assistance was being provided. The high level of prioritisation – and thereby concentration of assistance – resulted in additional population movements, exposing individuals who would have not moved from their areas of origin to additional risks and increasing their level of vulnerability.
- **Unintentionally contributing to increased levels of xenophobia:** in countries other than Venezuela, the perception that only Venezuelans were receiving assistance fed into the raising levels of

<sup>332</sup> ICF. 2023. Survey for DG ECHO partners (15 out of 39 respondents reported unintended effects, of which only one was negative – Q31).



xenophobia. DG ECHO and their partners managed to mitigate these effects, to some extent, by reducing visibility of the actions and targeting local populations as well.

- **Unintentionally putting beneficiaries at risk:** several partners admitted that some of the assistance provided (or the way it was provided) had the perverse effect of putting beneficiaries (or individuals) at risk. For instance, as further explained in the Protection case study, despite not being excluded from DG ECHO's response in the HIPs and HIPTAs, most DG ECHO partners (and other humanitarian organisations) excluded men from most assistance provided because they did not identify them as one of the most vulnerable groups. This was found to have pushed men travelling alone to get close to female *caminantes* alone or with children with the objective of qualifying for the assistance provided by pretending to be a family (putting these women and their children at risk). The Health case study also found that the narrow scope of the incentive programme in one of the hospitals in Venezuela (i.e. not all hospital staff received it) put its recipients at risk (see further details in the Health case study). Another DG ECHO partner interviewed pointed out that by giving items with big logos on them, humanitarian organisations had marked beneficiaries and put them at risk. To prevent this, the partner explained that they had carefully managed visibility when operating in problematic areas.

DG ECHO partners also reported risks that they had identified and, to some extent, managed during the evaluation period. The first risk concerned the abuse of the system by “professional” beneficiaries (i.e. individuals who would go from organisation to organisation to receive items or medicines that they would then sell). To mitigate this risk, some DG ECHO partners established internal databases to keep track of individuals who had already received assistance (and in many cases, only provided assistance to the same person once). Risks linked to the use of MPCT interventions were also identified (especially when large amounts were provided), which DG ECHO partners managed by only giving small amounts of cash (see more details in the Protection case study).

**Several factors contributed to the achievement of intended results, outcomes and impacts, namely aspects related to the appropriate design and monitoring of the actions and the support provided by DG ECHO to its partners. However, important limitations were also identified which hindered the ability of DG ECHO and its partners to generate a more significant impact, mostly as a result of the limited funding available (which forced to adopt a very narrow focus on live-saving, emergency response) and the lack of investment from national governments (in Venezuela but also in the region).** The evaluation identified three main factors that reflected positively on the ability of the achievement of planned results and objectives.<sup>333</sup>

- Appropriate design of the actions, notably thanks to the use of participatory approaches and adequate assessments of needs and the context. Some DG ECHO partners also reported that adopting integrated approaches was a key success factor as it allowed to gain a good understanding of the needs of beneficiaries and therefore, ensure the most appropriate design of the action.
- Close monitoring of the projects and the context to identify and adapt to changing needs and circumstances.
- DG ECHO's support and field knowledge, which ensured a high degree of flexibility in the implementation of the actions to adapt to the ever-evolving context.

In contrast, the following aspects impeded a more meaningful impact of the actions:

- Limited funding and short-term programming: this was one of the hindering factors that emerged from the project mapping and was often cited by stakeholders consulted as one of the main factors that limited the extent to which DG ECHO's response was able to cover existing needs and generate more meaningful, long-term results.<sup>334</sup> The lack of funding to address increasing livelihood support needs was the main failure cited by all stakeholder groups consulted, including beneficiaries. Additionally, one DG ECHO partner consulted in the

<sup>333</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. Case studies 1 (Health interventions in Venezuela) and 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>334</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; DG ECHO partners: 2; Coordination mechanisms: 1).

field argued that DG ECHO's short-term programming was not suitable to address the increasingly complex issues faced by Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the region.<sup>335</sup>

- Narrow focus on life-saving activities: as already mentioned under EQ1 (Relevance), one of the main complaints expressed by DG ECHO partners referred to the narrow focus of DG ECHO's response on life-saving activities. While acknowledging that this was the combination of DG ECHO's strict humanitarian mandate and limited funding (which forced to achieve a high level of prioritisation), they claimed that this prevented the actions from yielding longer-lasting results.
- Limited investment and engagement of governments and other EU institutions willing or able to take over and ensuring follow-up of humanitarian interventions, despite advocacy and, where relevant, capacity-building efforts by DG ECHO and its partners. This limited the sustainability of the actions and the coverage of equally relevant, albeit less urgent, needs of the affected populations (this is further discussed in the three case studies and under EQ10).
- Continued deterioration of the socio-economic situation in Venezuela: as explained in Section 2.1.1 (Context), many indicators across relevant sectors worsened during the 2017-2021 period, suggesting that the socio-economic context in Venezuela continued to deteriorate over the evaluation period, as did the overall level of humanitarian needs of Venezuelans inside and outside the country.

**Ultimately, DG ECHO's response was deemed to have contributed to achieving the objectives set in the HIPs and the HAR and Consensus, although with some limitations due to the lack of funding and high level of prioritisation.** As stated in the HIPs, the main objectives of DG ECHO's response to the crisis were to address the emergency needs of the population affected by the crisis (inside and outside Venezuela), facilitate the provision of resources in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and build resilience towards future shocks of individuals, households and communities affected by the crisis. Survey results were overwhelmingly positive about DG ECHO's contribution to the HIP objectives,<sup>336</sup> and overall, stakeholders interviewed considered that DG ECHO's response had been crucial in ensuring a rapid and continued support to the crisis during the evaluation period and that, thanks to their technical and field expertise, the response had contributed to addressing the most pressing needs. This is notwithstanding the fact that, as often mentioned by stakeholders consulted, the limited funding and subsequent high degree of prioritisation did not allow DG ECHO and its partners to cover all pressing needs and ensure enough room for building resilience towards future shocks, especially considering the extremely limited support to livelihood support interventions. This was also demonstrated in the resilience marks given by DG ECHO partners to actions funded, which ranged from 1.11 to 1.50, suggesting a modest impact on building resilience (see Table 17).

Table 17. Average initial and final resilience marks (0 – 2)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
<b>Initial mark (RQ)</b>						
Field Expert Mark (n=75)	1.50	1.50	1.44	1.44	1.11	1.33
Desk Officer Mark (n=79)	1.20	1.18	1.33	1.33	1.11	1.23
<b>Final mark (FR)</b>						
Field Expert Mark (n=64)	1.40 (↓↓)	1.27 (↓)	1.31 (↓)	1.28 (↓↓)	1.29 (↑)	1.30 (↓)
Desk Officer Mark (n=60)	1.20 (=)	1.45 (↑↑)	1.38 (↑)	1.28 (↓)	1.20 (↑)	1.32 (↑)

The same holds true with respect to contributions to HAR and Consensus objectives (i.e. saving lives, alleviating human suffering and safeguarding the integrity and human dignity of affected populations). Stakeholders consulted also assessed positively the contribution of the response towards HAR and Consensus objectives, with a great majority of DG ECHO partners answering the

<sup>335</sup> Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela)

<sup>336</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (37 out of 39 respondents believed that their actions had contributed to DG ECHO's objectives for the region fully (14) or to a large extent (23) – Q17).

survey indicating that the actions had contributed to the HAR and Consensus objectives fully or to a large extent<sup>337</sup> and several stakeholders interviewed agreeing with this. Specifically:

- Saving and preserving life during emergencies: several stakeholders and beneficiaries argued that the funded interventions had saved lives, at least in the areas covered.<sup>338</sup> Examples of activities that had been especially crucial in this included the provision of food, protection interventions that reduced exposure to risks and the assistance provided to pregnant women or GBV prevention and response activities.
- Safeguarding the integrity and human dignity of populations affected by natural and man-made disasters: some beneficiaries consulted during the field missions referred to a sense of restored dignity resulting from DG ECHO-funded assistance.<sup>339</sup>
- Prevention and alleviation of human suffering: while some stakeholders consulted provided specific examples of how DG ECHO's response had allowed to *alleviate* the suffering of affected population (e.g. reducing the level of discrimination they faced, ameliorating the health situation for many individuals in Venezuela),<sup>340</sup> the lack of livelihood support also limited its ability to *prevent* human suffering.

EQ7. How successful was DG ECHO through its direct and indirect advocacy and communication measures in influencing other actors on issues like humanitarian intervention and space, respect for IHL (International humanitarian law), addressing gaps in response, applying good practice, and carrying out follow-up actions of DG ECHO's interventions?

Table 18. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC7.1 DG ECHO's direct and indirect advocacy and communication measures (towards, for example, coordination mechanisms) were successful (i.e., timely, consistent and appropriate) in influencing other actors on issues related to humanitarian intervention and space, respect for IHL and applying good practice, global guidelines and standards	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG ECHO placed significant focus on advocacy and communication activities throughout the evaluation period, as well as in the run-up to 2017. Advocacy was done directly by DG ECHO (at HQ and Field level) and through its partners.</li> <li>• In Venezuela and the region, DG ECHO's direct advocacy and communication targeted a wide range of stakeholders but focused on raising the visibility of the crisis and mobilise funding among international and, to some extent, EU institutions) and promoting and facilitating adherence to international humanitarian standards among its partners. Inside Venezuela, DG ECHO made strong advocacy efforts to open humanitarian space and facilitating humanitarian operations and coordination in the country.</li> </ul>
JC7.2 DG ECHO's direct and indirect advocacy and communication measures were successful (i.e., timely, consistent and appropriate) in raising visibility of the crisis and in influencing other actors in addressing gaps in response and carrying out follow-up actions of DG ECHO's interventions	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG ECHO partners – supported by DG ECHO – also engaged in advocacy and communication activities, mostly focusing on raising awareness about the crisis and the needs of Venezuelan migrants, pushing national and local authorities to respond to the crisis, and battling xenophobia among local populations.</li> </ul>

<sup>337</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (35 out of 39 respondents said that the actions had contributed to the HAR and Consensus objectives fully (19) or to a large extent (16) – Q17).

<sup>338</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2; DG ECHO partners: 2); ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela); FGDs with beneficiaries (GBV survivors).

<sup>339</sup> FGDs with beneficiaries.

<sup>340</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1); ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (one open-ended response – Q31).

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During the evaluation period, some improvements could be observed (i.e. increased visibility of the crisis and wider humanitarian space and presence from 2019 onwards, improvement in the quality of the response). While these results cannot be exclusively attributed to DG ECHO, stakeholder feedback suggests that DG ECHO had played a key role in this process, particularly in Venezuela.</li> <li>The main shortcomings of DG ECHO's advocacy role related to their impact on coordination (outside of Venezuela) and the mobilisation of development funding, in relation to which DG ECHO's efforts had a limited impact.</li> <li>Certain factors limited the ability of DG ECHO and its partners to have a bigger advocacy role, namely: (i) low visibility requirement in Venezuela, and (ii) limited funding compared to the United States, especially in countries other than Venezuela.</li> </ul>

**DG ECHO placed significant focus on advocacy and communication activities throughout the evaluation period, as well as in the run-up to 2017. Advocacy was carried out directly by DG ECHO (at HQ and Field level) and through its partners (JC6.1).** The document review and feedback gathered demonstrate that even before the evaluation period, DG ECHO had already taken steps to collect data and support advocacy efforts to raise visibility about the crisis (see box below) and that, since then, substantial focus continued to be placed on advocacy and communication activities. The main objectives were to raise the visibility of the crisis and to create the conditions for (quality) humanitarian interventions to address both the internal and external dimensions of the crisis.<sup>341</sup>

#### **DG ECHO's advocacy and communication efforts in the run-up to 2017**

Prior to 2017, DG ECHO attempted to collect data to support advocacy efforts, both directly and through partners. DG ECHO undertook three field missions in Venezuela between 2014 and 2017, which allowed to get a better understanding of the situation on the ground and collect data. Through their partners, DG ECHO provided funding to projects that aimed to fill in data gaps, such as the nutritional survey that Caritas France (in collaboration with Caritas Venezuela) carried out in the context of a 2016 DG ECHO-funded project, which reportedly had significant impact on raising awareness about the crisis among governments, UN agencies, civil society and the general public.<sup>342</sup> Other advocacy efforts during that period were also reported by DG ECHO Field staff consulted. More specifically, DG ECHO Field staff took advantage of a visit that Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) conducted in the region to visit development projects, to raise awareness about the crisis.<sup>343</sup>

These activities triggered the first round of DG ECHO funding to respond to the crisis and, to some extent,<sup>344</sup> raised awareness about the crisis. However, the evaluation did not find that the qualification of the Venezuela crisis as a humanitarian crisis could be directly attributed to these efforts, as explained in the Coordination and the nexus case study.

**In Venezuela and the region, DG ECHO's direct advocacy and communication targeted a wide range of stakeholders but mostly focused on the international community and EU institutions (to raise the visibility of the crisis and mobilise funding) and DG ECHO partners (to promote and facilitate adherence to international humanitarian standards).**

<sup>341</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1)

<sup>342</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 1); DG ECHO. 2019. Mission report (Venezuela, Feb. 2019); Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus).

<sup>343</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>344</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 1); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1)

**Inside Venezuela, a key feature of DG ECHO's advocacy and communication was on opening humanitarian space and facilitating humanitarian operations and coordination in the country (JC7.1).**

As further explained under Coherence (EQ4) and the Coordination and nexus case study, the field evidence showed that DG ECHO placed significant efforts to mobilise funds and, albeit to a lesser extent, enhance donor coordination and promote field coordination (with and between partners, and with national authorities). This was done at both HQ and Field level, in the international, EU and national arenas.

At **international level**, DG ECHO focused on raising visibility and recognition of the crisis and mobilising funding to respond to it, also advocating for the establishment of a humanitarian architecture in Venezuela. Their international advocacy strategy was built around four main axes: (i) multilateral and bilateral humanitarian diplomacy, (ii) as leader of the Humanitarian Aid Working Group (HA WG) of the International Contact Group (ICG) for Venezuela, (iii) through international solidarity conferences and high-level events, and (iv) in the context of regional coordination structures.

**(i)** During the first years of the evaluation period, a main target of their *humanitarian diplomacy* actions were UN agencies. For instance, in 2017, DG ECHO advocated for the establishment of a liaison officer in Caracas, built around the UNDRR and OCHA (a position that was not established).<sup>345</sup> In the following years, as UN agencies present in the country were very cautious in their position regarding the crisis due to their close collaboration with the Government of Venezuela, DG ECHO also tried to engage with the wider UN ecosystem. For example, the DG ECHO Regional Office managed to escalate the message to the UN through OCHA ROLAC, circumventing national UN agencies inside Venezuela (see further details in CS3). Initially, advocacy was done from outside Venezuela (primarily from Colombia and Panama) and, once the DG ECHO Office in Caracas was established, from within Venezuela.<sup>346</sup>

**(ii)** DG ECHO also acted as leader of the *HA WG of the ICG* for Venezuela.<sup>347</sup> Along with advocacy activities to improve the operational conditions in Venezuela (see below), the group conducted meetings to discuss the humanitarian situation in the country and agree on a common approach to improve the conditions for humanitarian interventions in Venezuela.

**(iii)** Stakeholders consulted drew attention to DG ECHO's (co-)leading role in *solidarity conferences and other high-level events* to raise visibility, and its efforts to mobilise funding and support civil society organisations (CSOs) responding to the crisis. The EU – with DG ECHO's support – co-chaired the International Solidarity Conference on the Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant Crisis in 2019 (with UNHCR and IOM) and 2020 (with Spain, UNHCR and IOM),<sup>348</sup> and took part in the 2021 International Donors' Conference in Solidarity with Venezuelan Refugees (hosted by Canada, IOM and UNHCR). DG ECHO also organised, in collaboration with the LAC RMD Coalition, high-level dialogues with Civil society, in preparation for the pledging conferences in 2020 and 2021. The 2021 edition, for instance, was co-organised by LAC RMD, Canada and the EU.<sup>349</sup> During 2021, DG ECHO also started

---

<sup>345</sup> DG ECHO. 2017. Field mission report (Venezuela, February 2017).

<sup>346</sup> ICF. 2023. Gap analysis calls (DG ECHO: 1); Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus).

<sup>347</sup> The ICG is an informal, non-permanent body launched by the EU following the (contested) 2018 presidential elections. Its objective was to contribute to finding a sustainable solution to the political crisis in the country (meetings are attended by representatives from relevant ministries). It was originally composed of the EU and eight (then) Member States (Italy, France, Portugal, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, Germany and the United Kingdom) and four Latin American countries (Uruguay, Bolivia, Costa Rica and Ecuador, with Mexico). By the end of 2022, Panama, Argentina and Chile had also joined. The first meeting was held in February 2019, in Montevideo. The Humanitarian Aid Working Group was established by the ICG, under the leadership of DG ECHO, as a group for humanitarian diplomacy seeking to: (i) contribute to the de-politicisation of Humanitarian Aid, (ii) support the establishment and functioning of a professional humanitarian system under the leadership of the UN and, (iii) increase and secure humanitarian space. Source: ICG HA WG. 2021. Terms of Reference – ICG Humanitarian Assistance Working Group Mission to Venezuela.

<sup>348</sup> In 2022 (i.e. outside of the evaluation period), the EU also organised with Canada the Solidarity Event, which took place in March 2023). Source: ICF. 2023. Gap analysis calls (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>349</sup> DG ECHO. 2021. Agenda for a High-level meeting with Civil Society in Solidarity with Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants.

preparatory works for the 2022 Solidarity event (co-hosted by the EU and Canada) and the first European Humanitarian Forum, which took place in March 2022.<sup>350</sup>

As noted in the LAC Coordination case study, these conferences, particularly the first edition, were considered one of the biggest achievements in terms of visibility and fund mobilisation, also contributing to strengthened political support.<sup>351</sup> In this sense, although the results were the fruit of a concerted effort, stakeholders tended to agree that DG ECHO played a key role in them, with one interviewee noting that DG ECHO was also one of the main players advocating for the inclusion of civil society and the perspective of host countries.<sup>352</sup>

**(iv)** The fourth main axis of DG ECHO's international advocacy efforts was done in the context of the *regional coordination structures* established to respond to the crisis. As further detailed under Coherence (EQ4) and the Coordination and nexus case study, DG ECHO supported and, where possible and relevant, participated in the two main platforms, namely the Quito Process (through the Group of Friends of the Quito Process) and the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform (R4V) at regional level. On the other hand, DG ECHO reportedly strongly advocated towards UNHCR/IOM to clearly set clear terms of reference for the functioning of the R4V platform, to ensure a clear definition of roles and seamless collaboration with the existing, OCHA-led humanitarian coordination structures.<sup>353</sup>

DG ECHO also carried out advocacy at **EU level**, both internally (i.e. towards DG ECHO HQ) and externally (i.e. towards other institutions). However, the evidence collected suggests that their effect beyond the realm of DG ECHO was rather limited. Internally, Field and HQ staff dealing with the crisis reported having placed a lot of focus on sharing information about the situation on the ground and on DG ECHO's response to the crisis with the aim to ensure consistent awareness about the crisis and DG ECHO's response to it.<sup>354</sup> This translated in the mobilisation of DG ECHO funds, resulting in a steady increase in the level of funding allocated to the crisis over the evaluation period as explained in Section 2.1.3.1.

DG ECHO also sought to raise awareness about the crisis among other EU institutions, particularly during the first years of the evaluation period. Outside of the context of the Solidarity Conferences and the ICG (in which several EU institutions participate), the review of internal DG ECHO documentation and KIIs with representatives from DG ECHO and other institutions (DG INTPA and EEAS) showed that some actions were taken to raise visibility of the crisis. For instance, DG ECHO Field Offices took advantage of monitoring missions organised in the region by other EU institutions (e.g. European Parliament or the EEAS)<sup>355</sup> and provided DG INTPA with information collected on the crisis (including through the Venezuela Compact launched in 2018-2019), which DG INTPA representatives consulted indicated had helped them gain a better understanding of the situation and consider migration-related aspects in their programming.<sup>356</sup> The evidence collected suggests, however, that advocacy towards other EU institutions focused on raising initial visibility of the crisis and lost some momentum over the evaluation period, with one stakeholder interviewed arguing that DG ECHO could have had a more active role throughout the years covered by the evaluation.<sup>357</sup>

At national level, advocacy was also undertaken by DG ECHO Field Offices, mostly targeting national (and local) authorities, national coordination structures and DG ECHO partners. Due to the different contexts, however, the specific role and focus of the advocacy and communication efforts – especially those targeting authorities and coordination structures – differed from country to country.

---

<sup>350</sup> To prepare for the conference, the Regional Office in Panama organised several consultation rounds with relevant stakeholders in the region. Source: DG ECHO. 2021. The European Humanitarian Forum (EHF) Latin America and the Caribbean – Regional consultation on Localization. Flash Report.

<sup>351</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO Field: 2; DG ECHO partners: 1; Coordination mechanisms: 1; Other donors: 1; EU institutions: 2); ICF. 2023. Gap analysis calls (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>352</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other donors: 1).

<sup>353</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>354</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2)

<sup>355</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; Other EU institutions: 1)

<sup>356</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other EU institutions: 1).

<sup>357</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other EU institutions: 1).

In **Venezuela**, emphasis was placed on collecting data to support advocacy efforts and on advocating strongly for increased humanitarian access and an improvement in operation conditions, targeting national and local authorities, but also UN agencies present in the country. Internal HA WG documentation shows that the group – led by DG ECHO – carried out a range of specific advocacy activities in the country. For instance, between 2019 and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, DG ECHO – as the leader of the HA WG – conducted several field missions in Venezuela to meet with relevant international and national stakeholders (i.e. humanitarian actors, representatives from the government and civil society organisations). The group also sent letters to representatives of Venezuela's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in 2019) and the then-recently appointed UN Resident Coordinator / Humanitarian coordinator in Venezuela (2021) to highlight existing challenges to humanitarian aid operations and advocate for the need to facilitate operation conditions for humanitarian actors. Beyond this, field consultations in Venezuela confirmed that DG ECHO managed to have a key advocacy role in the country despite the need to keep low visibility,<sup>358</sup> engaging in bilateral and multilateral advocacy behind the curtains (see further details in the LAC Coordination case study).

As regards coordination structures, DG ECHO advocated for, and subsequently supported (financially and otherwise), the establishment and functioning of coordination mechanisms in Venezuela such as the 3W/5W platform managed by UN OCHA, the Forum for international aid organisations (Forum of INGOs) and the National Platform for Humanitarian Action (PANHAL).

In **other countries in the region**, DG ECHO played a comparatively more minor role as regards direct advocacy towards national and local authorities, often supporting its partners' efforts rather than engaging directly with authorities. In turn, field evidence collected in Colombia suggests that DG ECHO's main advocacy efforts in the country targeted coordination mechanisms, with stakeholders claiming that they were one of the actors who were most vocal about the need to simplify the double coordination structure (see LAC Coordination case study).

According to some stakeholders consulted, the limited funding provided that DG ECHO allocated to these countries compared to the United States limited its ability to have a stronger position before national governments.<sup>359</sup> Nevertheless, DG ECHO played an active advocacy role in relation to specific topics. For instance, when humanitarian transport interventions were blocked in Colombia in 2021, DG ECHO was quick to intervene and strongly advocated for their reinstatement and the need for more legal clarity regarding these activities.<sup>360</sup> Representatives from a coordination mechanism in Peru also argued that DG ECHO had an important advocacy role towards the government.<sup>361</sup>

Communication efforts targeting **DG ECHO partners** were also identified. These mostly sought to promote humanitarian principles and minimum standards (through monitoring missions, technical support, guidelines, etc.) and, where possible, make visibility and communication efforts.<sup>362</sup> In Venezuela, as already mentioned under EQ6, DG ECHO also provided specific guidelines and guidance to partners on how to best operate in the country.

**DG ECHO also supported its partners' advocacy and communication efforts. These mostly targeted national and local authorities and sought to raise awareness about the crisis and the needs of Venezuelan migrants, battle xenophobia and push national and local authorities to assume their responsibility in the response to the crisis.** The project mapping and the feedback gathered showed that, in line with DG ECHO's request that funded actions contributed to advocacy, partners actively engaged in advocacy. The project mapping showed that at least 38 of the 40 actions included advocacy activities, and the field consultations and KIIs confirmed that visibility and advocacy at national level was also done through partners.<sup>363</sup>

---

<sup>358</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; DG ECHO partners: 2); Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus).

<sup>359</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews (DG ECHO: 1; Other donors: 2; DG ECHO partners: 3)

<sup>360</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews (DG ECHO partners: 2; Other donors: 1).

<sup>361</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Coordination mechanisms: 1).

<sup>362</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1)

<sup>363</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2); Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela)

A first group of advocacy activities targeted **national and local governments**, especially in countries in the region. These activities had two main objectives:

- Raising awareness about the crisis and the risks faced by Venezuelans displaced by the crisis and pressure governments to fulfil their responsibility towards addressing the needs of Venezuelans.<sup>364</sup> Examples of such activities were identified in the project mapping (e.g. to prevent the *refoulement* of Venezuelan asylum seekers, convince governments to donate specific funding to address the crisis) and were also highlighted by DG ECHO partners consulted in Colombia and Ecuador as part of their protection response, to ensure access to basic services, take the necessary (legal) actions to reduce the risk of statelessness of children of Venezuelan migrants, refrain from blocking humanitarian transport activities, etc. (see further details in the Protection case study). Another example was provided by a DG ECHO staff member consulted, who explained that in Peru, WHO worked closely with governments to raise visibility of the crisis and ensure access to healthcare for Venezuelan migrants and refugees.<sup>365</sup>
- Building capacity and ensuring a quality response.<sup>366</sup> These included training or capacity-building activities on specific aspects (e.g. sexual exploitation and abuse, GBV, SRH minimum standards) as well as the provision of equipment to support operations (computers, mobile units, etc.).

In Venezuela, the low visibility requirement made it more difficult to implement this type of activities. Nonetheless, the project mapping found several activities undertaken by DG ECHO partners to further open of the humanitarian space in Venezuela.

The second group of advocacy/communication activities implemented by DG ECHO partners targeted **local populations** and sought to raise awareness about the crisis and the needs of Venezuelan migrants, and to battle xenophobia and discrimination to promote integration of Venezuelan migrants and refugees. This was the activity most reported in the project mapping (10 out of 40 actions) included such activities in countries receiving Venezuelan migrants and the KIIs and field consultations confirmed that this was an important focus of the advocacy undertaken by DG ECHO partners.<sup>367</sup> Examples include activities seeking to raise awareness and starting a social dialogue, sensitisation campaigns focusing on GBV issues, or efforts to tackle xenophobia and promote integration. For instance, in 2018, the German Red Cross in Colombia (supported by DG ECHO) produced a video to raise visibility of the *caminantes*, in response to the scepticism among the national population regarding the arrival of Venezuelans on foot. The video was disseminated widely and was also shown by DG ECHO at the European Parliament, helping to raise visibility of the crisis. In Colombia, UNHCR also launched a campaign under the title “*Somos Panas Colombia*” which aimed at reducing xenophobia and promote solidarity between Colombian and Venezuelan populations.<sup>368</sup>

The last main group of stakeholders targeted by DG ECHO partners' advocacy activities were their own **implementing partners and other humanitarian organisations** operating in the same country/areas. These aimed at pushing for, or facilitating, coordination and joint actions and raising awareness and improving capacities among organisations involved in the response.<sup>369</sup> To conclude, DG ECHO partners also reported wider efforts to **generate information and data to support advocacy activities**,<sup>370</sup> with several DG ECHO partners interviewed claiming that they used data generated (or lack thereof) to influence other actors.<sup>371</sup>

---

<sup>364</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. KII (DG ECHO: 1); Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela)

<sup>365</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>366</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>367</sup> Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; DG ECHO partners: 2).

<sup>368</sup> See: <https://somospanascalombia.com/>

<sup>369</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>370</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

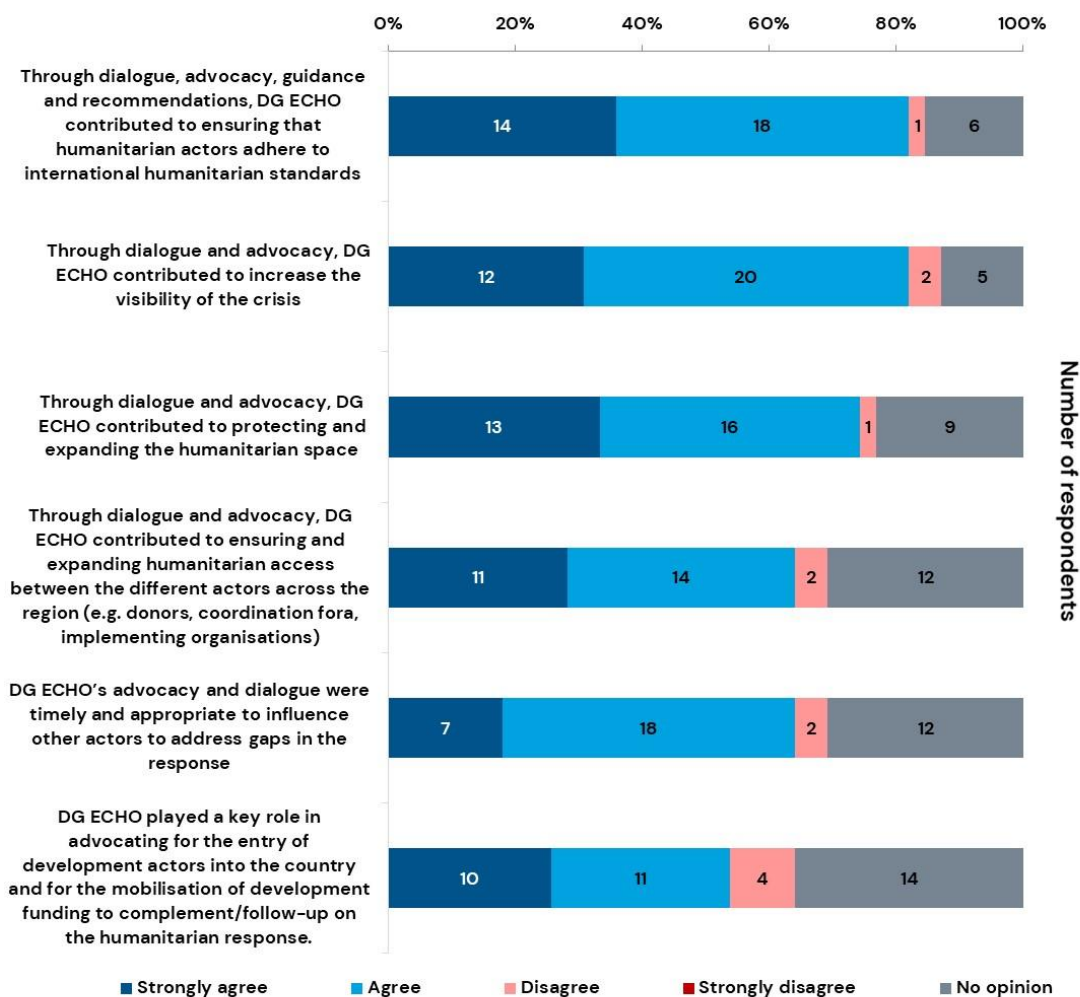
<sup>371</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews in Colombia (DG ECHO partners: 5).



**During the evaluation period, some improvements in the areas that DG ECHO advocated for were observed, notably with respect to the visibility and recognition of the crisis, wider humanitarian space in Venezuela and humanitarian/international presence in Venezuela and other countries from 2019 onwards and an improvement in the quality of the response. The evaluation found that while these results were the fruit of collaborative efforts of a wide range of stakeholders, DG ECHO played an important role in the process, especially inside Venezuela (JC7.1).<sup>372</sup>**

DG ECHO partners surveyed were asked to assess the degree to which DG ECHO's advocacy and dialogue had led to several results (see Figure 37). As shown in the figure, the main results reported concerned the visibility of the crisis and adherence to international humanitarian standards (82% or 32 out of 39 responses each), followed by the protection and expansion of humanitarian space (74% or 29 out of 39 responses), the expansion of humanitarian access between actors across the region (64% or 25 out of 39 responses each) and finally, the entry of development actors and mobilisation of development funding (53% or 21 out of 39 responses).

Figure 37. Q32 To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (n=39)



Source: ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q32).

This is largely in line with feedback provided by stakeholders consulted via KIIs and field interviews. Regarding the **increased visibility of the crisis**, as mentioned above, the solidarity/pledging conferences were often highlighted as one of the biggest achievements in terms of increased

<sup>372</sup> Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus).

visibility,<sup>373</sup> although one interview believed that they had not been sufficient to ensure continued visibility vis-à-vis other humanitarian crises.<sup>374</sup> Room for better and/or continued visibility was also identified by one coordination mechanism and two DG ECHO officials interviewed, who argued that in the last years of the evaluation period, and more prominently after 2021 (i.e. outside of the scope of the evaluation), the Venezuela crisis had lost momentum vis-à-vis other ongoing or new international (Ukraine) and national crises (e.g. armed conflict in Colombia).<sup>375</sup>

Based on KIIs and field missions, some of the advocacy that DG ECHO carried out at national level to push for measures to address pressing issues had yielded visible results. In addition to the impact on humanitarian transport in Colombia (see above), messages sent by DG ECHO (in collaboration with UNHCR and the EU Delegation) to the Resident Coordinator in Chile were deemed to have contributed in large part of the freezing of deportation of Venezuelans in the country.<sup>376</sup> In this sense, several stakeholders interviewed highlighted that advocacy efforts from partners had also been key in advocating for pressing issues, especially as they often worked closely with governments outside of Venezuela.<sup>377</sup> The shared attribution of these results was also confirmed by the LAC Coordination case study.

Field missions and KIIs also showed that another key DG ECHO contribution to the crises was towards **adherence to international standards**,<sup>378</sup> with one coordination mechanism interviewed claiming that DG ECHO's agenda had partly led to mainstreaming humanitarian principles.

As regards the **expansion of the humanitarian space in Venezuela**, the Coordination and the Health case studies found that while the evolution observed during the 2017-2021 period with respect to the opening of the humanitarian space, DG ECHO had played a key advocacy role in the country.

#### **Factors that affected positively DG ECHO's advocacy role**

Stakeholders consulted and field missions highlighted the following main aspects that allowed DG ECHO to play a key advocacy role were its presence in Venezuela<sup>379</sup> and technical expertise,<sup>380</sup> its close cooperation with partners and open communication with partners,<sup>381</sup> the fact that they are well respected and are perceived as a neutral stakeholder with no strategic interests in the country.<sup>382</sup> Another donor consulted in Colombia also believed that targeting their advocacy efforts in the country on specific topics was also a key success factor considering the limited funding their less prominent position as donor in the country, compared to the US.

**The main shortcomings of DG ECHO's advocacy role related to its limited impact on coordination outside Venezuela and the mobilisation of development funding, where DG ECHO efforts did not yield major results (JC7.2).** As explained under Coherence, DG ECHO's bilateral and multilateral advocacy in Venezuela – including, but not only, as leader of the ICG HA WG – proved crucial in the establishment and strengthening of humanitarian coordination systems in the country (see EQ4) Outside of Venezuela, however, its impact was more limited. DG ECHO was highly vocal about the need to streamline humanitarian coordination in the context of the crisis but, while field coordination reportedly improved during the evaluation period, the impact of their advocacy regarding the simplification of the double coordination structure was limited (see Coordination case study). As regards donor coordination and mobilisation of development funding, field interviews identified room for DG ECHO to advocate more strongly towards other donors and

<sup>373</sup> Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3; Coordination mechanisms: 1; Other EU institutions: 1).

<sup>374</sup> ICF. 2023. KII (Other EU institutions: 1)

<sup>375</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews (DG ECHO: 1); KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; Coordination mechanisms: 1).

<sup>376</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>377</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; DG ECHO partners: 2).

<sup>378</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; DG ECHO partners: 1; Coordination mechanisms: 1); Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela).

<sup>379</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; DG ECHO partners: 1); ICF. 2023. Gap analysis calls (DG ECHO: 1).

<sup>380</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1); Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus).

<sup>381</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1); Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus).

<sup>382</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1); Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus).

DG INTPA to ensure follow up on the humanitarian response.<sup>383</sup> This was also reflected, to some extent, in the responses from DG ECHO partners responding to the survey, as this was the impact of DG ECHO's dialogue and advocacy least reported by DG ECHO partners surveyed (as shown in Figure 37).

### 3.4 Efficiency

EQ8. To what extent did DG ECHO achieve cost-effectiveness in its response? What factors affected the cost-effectiveness of the response?

Table 19. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC8.1 DG ECHO took appropriate actions to ensure cost-effectiveness throughout the project cycle	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG ECHO considered efficiency and/or cost-effectiveness to some extent throughout the project cycle.</li> <li>All HIPs covering the Venezuela crisis stressed the need to select the most cost-effective modality and promoted an integrated / multi-sectoral approach.</li> <li>Cost-effectiveness/efficiency was one of the six criteria used by DG ECHO to assess proposals. However, various challenges prevented the assessment or limited its accuracy.</li> <li>DG ECHO monitored the implemented activities, their results and budgeted execution on an ongoing basis based on frequent dialogs with partners, missions, and on interim and final stage reporting. DG ECHO highlighted opportunities/risks related to efficiency and cost-effectiveness, where relevant.</li> </ul>
JC8.2 DG ECHO-funded actions were efficient and addressed obstacles appropriately while exploiting opportunities for efficiency gains	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response of DG ECHO to the Venezuela crisis was assessed as medium-high. This is supported by the assessment carried out by DG ECHO at proposal stage – where half of the funded actions that had their “Cost-effectiveness/efficiency” assessed by DG ECHO, were considered highly cost-effectiveness (and the remainder medium cost-effectiveness) – as well as by the views shared by the consulted partners. Nevertheless, both DG ECHO and consulted partners indicated that the assessment was very challenging, and many were not able to provide their views on the cost-effectiveness of the response.</li> <li>There were no significant cost differences between initial and financial budget of the funded actions, and the expected results were mostly achieved (see Effectiveness criterion). The average weight of indirect costs was below 7% (around 6.5%).</li> <li>External factors (e.g., inflation, restrictions to transactions, COVID) imposed challenges to the actions, which in the view of the consulted partners were often anticipated and/or appropriately and timely managed by DG ECHO.</li> <li>In addition, lessons learned were generally incorporated and opportunities for efficiency gains were explored.</li> </ul>
JC8.3 DG ECHO-funded actions were cost-effective and addressed obstacles appropriately while exploiting opportunities for cost-effectiveness gains		

<sup>383</sup> Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus).

**DG ECHO encouraged the adoption of cost-effective approaches by partners and took actions to ensure cost-effectiveness throughout the project cycle to the extent possible, in light of the constraints imposed by the context and the limited internal tools, data, and human resources to carry out a sounder cost-effectiveness analysis (JC8.1).**

DG ECHO, through the HIPs and Technical annexes<sup>384</sup>, expressed their commitment to cost-effectiveness by promoting the selection of the most cost-effective modality, the adoption of integrated approaches, the strengthening of coordination (by exploring complementarities and synergies with other actions and actors), the effectiveness of the targeting approach, and the timeliness of the response (e.g., through ERM/RRM and/or the adoption of flexible measures through crisis modifiers or multi-annual planning).

Complementary to the HIPs and TAs, in 2019 DG ECHO developed the “*Guidance on best practices and minimum requirements for implementing EU-funded humanitarian aid actions in Venezuela*”<sup>385</sup> in which it highlighted best practices and minimum requirements related to procurement, operations, finances and visibility, thus contributing to the cost-effectiveness of responses.<sup>386</sup> These efforts were acknowledged by consulted partners, with more than 87.5% (i.e., 34 out of 39) agreeing that DG ECHO encouraged approaches to promote cost-effectiveness.<sup>387</sup>

Cost-effectiveness/efficiency was one of the six criteria used by DG ECHO to assess proposals.<sup>388,389</sup> However, consultations with DG ECHO staff highlighted some differences of opinion regarding the relevance of cost-effectiveness and the capacity of DG ECHO to assess it, in light of the challenging context and limited resources (e.g., data and benchmarks, tools and human resources).

A cost-effectiveness assessment is available for half of the funded projects.<sup>390</sup> Consulted DG ECHO staff indicated that the assessment was carried out, when possible, mostly by:<sup>391</sup>

- comparing cost per beneficiary,<sup>392</sup> and total costs to those of similar activities/projects (in other countries or in the same country by the same partner),
- prioritising partners they considered to have the best capacity and expertise to deliver the response in a given sector/region, and

---

<sup>384</sup> The HIPs were informed by DG ECHO's field missions to Venezuela through which field officers identified opportunities/risks related to cost-effectiveness, namely: February 2017 mission – the potential use of the personal card “tarjeta patria” that the Venezuelan government was preparing to channel food; July 2018 mission – the identification of information systems to manage the stocks of medicines more efficiently and reduce mismanagement and corruption risks; April 2019 mission – the urgent need for data to improve needs assessments and targeting; April 2019 mission – the need for an effective coordination system between donors to improve information flows and for the simplification/harmonisation of procedures to reduce the burden on the organisations.

<sup>385</sup> DG ECHO 18/09/2019. Ref. Ares(2019)7907880 - 23/12/2019.

<sup>386</sup> For example, in these guidelines DG ECHO encourages partners to: (i) prioritise local purchases inside Venezuela and only purchase abroad if the supplies are not available, or are available but at an unreasonable cost, or at the risk of compromising humanitarian principles, distorting the local market, or imposing a burden on the population or environment, (ii) keep records and justifications of the bidding process through documentation, (iii) address shortages of medication and medical supplies by procuring them through international partners with diplomatic status and mandate, (iv) address supply problems of non-medical equipment by checking the price and conditions with two key informants.

<sup>387</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (39 responses), Q34.

<sup>388</sup> Other criteria were: relevance; capacity and expertise; methodology and expertise; coordination and post-intervention elements; other aspects.

<sup>389</sup> From 2019 onwards, the HIPTAs concretely indicated that “cost effectiveness/efficiency/ transparency” of proposals would be assessed by considering appropriateness of the relationship between the resources and the objectives to be achieved and a satisfactory efficiency ratio, and that particular attention would be given to the ratio between programme costs and support costs.

<sup>390</sup> The assessment was available for all actions in Chile, for 65% of multi-country actions, for half of actions in Colombia and for 31% of actions in Venezuela. ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases)

<sup>391</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3)

<sup>392</sup> In 11 out of the 40 actions mapped DG ECHO also assessed the cost per beneficiary of some of the actions' activities/results. ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

- selecting actions that explored synergies and complementarities with other actions/donors.<sup>393</sup>

The challenges faced when carrying out the assessment were various, including unavailability of benchmarking data on cost and cost per beneficiary per sector and for similar activities, non-adequacy of the use of cost per beneficiary given the characteristics of the project, difficulties in measuring outcomes, and difficulties in attributing results to specific activities that were part of a wider intervention. Furthermore, sometimes the lack of alternative proposals for the same beneficiary population on the same sector in the same geographical area limited the usefulness of the assessment.

Data on the availability of the assessments suggests that these were most challenging for actions in Venezuela only, and least challenging for multi-country actions.<sup>394</sup>

Throughout the project life cycle, during monitoring visits and at interim and final stage, DG ECHO monitored elements that influence cost-effectiveness, namely budget execution<sup>395</sup> and the implementation and results of the activities (see EQ6),<sup>396</sup> but the focus on cost-effectiveness per se, however, was relatively limited.<sup>397</sup> As part of the monitoring process, DG ECHO highlighted relevant aspects that, in their view, could or should be improved to increase the efficiency and/or effectiveness of the actions (see Effectiveness section for details) as confirmed by 74% of the partners surveyed. These suggestions were discussed with the partners and followed up when applicable.

Consulted DG ECHO staff also underlined that during the evaluation period they systematically sought synergies and complementarities with other actions and encouraged partners to capitalise on lessons learned, which would also benefit cost-effectiveness.<sup>398</sup>

***Actions funded by DG ECHO to respond to the Venezuela crisis were designed and implemented balancing efficiency and cost-effectiveness with other elements. Throughout the project cycle, obstacles were generally addressed or mitigated and opportunities for efficiency and effectiveness gains were explored. However, while consulted stakeholders indicate that, overall, the benefits of the portfolio of actions outweighed their costs, available data does not allow for a full assessment of their efficiency and cost-effectiveness (JC8.2 and JC8.3).***

DG ECHO's assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the 42 funded actions for which data is available<sup>399</sup> was positive, with 55% considered highly cost-effective and the remaining medium cost-effective by DG ECHO. As shown in Table 20, multi-country projects were assigned a higher mark than those in single countries, however the difference is not significant. The main strengths of the proposals with regard to cost-effectiveness highlighted by DG ECHO in the dashboard were the adoption of coordinated multi-sectoral approaches among humanitarian partners and the implementation of (joint) mechanisms for information management, analysis, and monitoring.

---

<sup>393</sup> In the beginning of the crisis/response this was not often feasible given the limited number of potential partners. As the situation and response evolved, DG ECHO was able to be more selective regarding partners, and so it became more selective in this respect, focusing on partners that in their view could perform better in a given sector/region.

<sup>394</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases)

<sup>395</sup> 70% of the consulted partners agree that DG ECHO monitored the costs of the actions.

<sup>396</sup> This has been documented in 87.5% of the actions reviewed.

<sup>397</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2); ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>398</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3)

<sup>399</sup> Data was available for 42 out of the 80 actions in the portfolio.

Table 20. DG ECHO's assessment of cost-effectiveness at proposal stage

Country	Share of funded actions per mark			Number of funded actions
	High	Medium	N/A	
Venezuela	15%	15%	69%	26
Colombia	17%	33%	50%	6
Chile	100%	0%	0%	1
Ecuador	0%	0%	100%	1
Multicountry	37%	28%	35%	46
<b>All</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>80</b>

Source: ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases)

All surveyed partners either agreed (77%, i.e., 30 out of 39) or somewhat agreed (remaining 23%, i.e., 9 out of 39) that the actions and activities carried out with DG ECHO's support were efficient and/or cost-effective.<sup>400</sup>

The large majority (87%, i.e., 31 out of 39) of the surveyed partners indicated having explored opportunities for efficiency gains and incorporated lessons learned into the design of the action,<sup>401</sup> and in 75% of the actions reviewed there was evidence that the partners considered cost-effectiveness and/or timeliness when designing the action, which included:<sup>402</sup>

- Establishing framework agreements with local/regional suppliers or procurement through international partners to explore the best value-for-money option (balancing speed, cost, and flexibility);
- Simplification of processes;
- Using available infrastructure, such as local/community health services or mobile solutions;
- exploring opportunities for localisation, capacity building of local staff and procure locally (as promoted by the HIPs);
- Using digital solutions to gather baseline and monitoring data or to carry out the biometric registration of beneficiaries;
- Using cash transfers and vouchers (as recommended in the HIPs).

During the evaluation period, less than 24% of the total funding was provided through direct transfers to the beneficiaries (while the average for the global DG ECHO portfolio was 47%) and only 6% was done through cash transfers (while the average for the global DG ECHO portfolio was 33%), as shown in Figure 38. However, consulted partners and DG ECHO considered that the selected transfer modality was generally appropriate, given the context, needs and risks (see EQ2).<sup>403</sup>

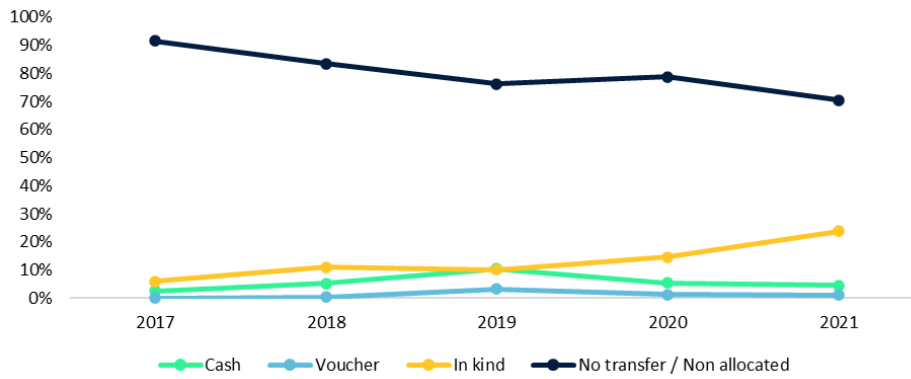
<sup>400</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (39 responses), Q34.

<sup>401</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (39 responses), Q35. 13 out of 39 fully agreed and 18 out of 39 agreed to a large extent.

<sup>402</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>403</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3). ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (36 out of 39 responses), Q7.

Figure 38. Use of cash and in-kind transfers per year, 2017-2021

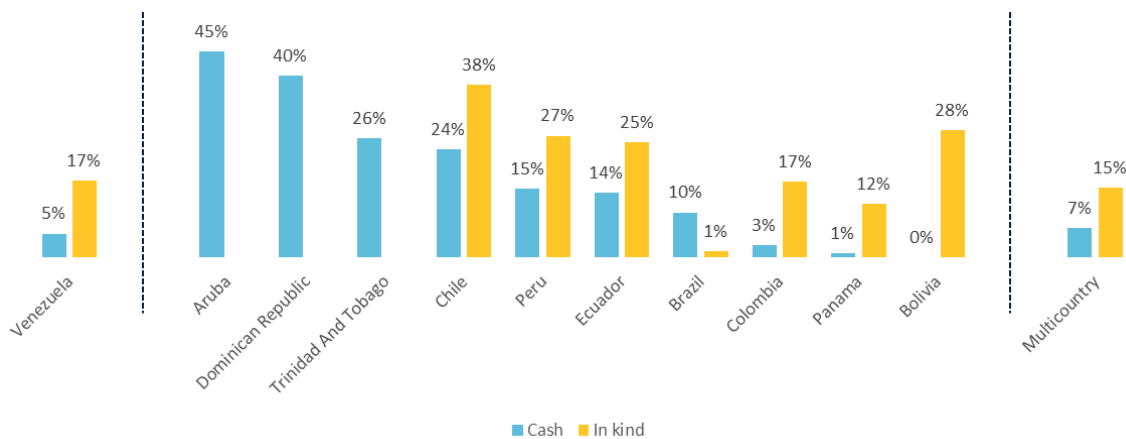


Source: ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases)

In Venezuela, cash activities were suspended by the Venezuela Government in January 2020,<sup>404</sup> while in 2019 these corresponded to more than 20% of DG ECHO's funds in the country.<sup>405</sup> In spite of efforts from the international community, very little progress has been achieved in this regard, and cash transfers in the country remained minimal.<sup>406</sup> In addition, in-kind assistance was also challenging in a context of increasingly high inflation and supply shortages as discussed in EQ2.

In the region, while the use of cash transfers was promoted in the HIPs as DG ECHO's preferred modality,<sup>407</sup> they were less extensively used (6%) than in the global DG ECHO portfolio (31%)<sup>408</sup> and below the targets set in the RMRP 2020 (around 28%) and RMRP 2021 (around 15%). The difference was particularly significant in Colombia and in Ecuador.

Figure 39. Use of cash and in-kind transfers per country, 2017-2021



Source: ICF (2023), based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases

An analysis of cash transfers per sector shows that their use by DG ECHO's response to the external dimension of the Venezuela crisis was particularly low in the food security and livelihoods sector

<sup>404</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 1). The government prohibited the use of cash in January 2020 in Venezuela. Since then, some partners are able to use cash with a special agreement or cash was used to finance certain actions in the public sector, e.g. to support doctors and nurses so they can keep providing services. The growing challenges in providing cash led to UN agencies to suspend the use of cash altogether from January 2021. See <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-aid-idUSKBN29P2XX>

<sup>405</sup> The cash transfer to Venezuela in the context of some multi-country projects are not included due to lack of disaggregated data.

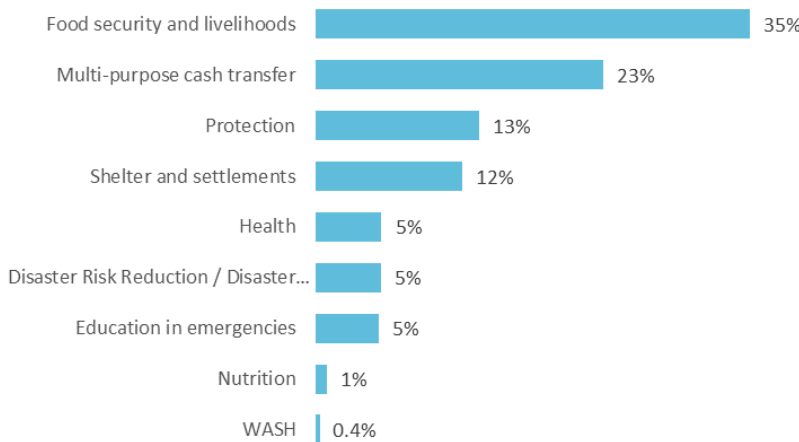
<sup>406</sup> Literature review; ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>407</sup> In line with the DG ECHO's Thematic Policy Document No. 3 on Cash Transfers, available at [Policy guidelines \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/europa.eu)

<sup>408</sup> 15% excluding the assistance in Türkiye.

when compared to the global DG ECHO portfolio (31%) and the RMRP 2020 (73%) and RMRP 2021 (57%). As detailed in EQ2, consulted DG ECHO staff indicated that, as USAID was provided significant funding to food assistance cash projects, DG ECHO decided to allocate their funds to complementary approaches/projects less focused on cash in order to optimise their impact.<sup>409</sup>

Figure 40. Share of cash transfers in total funding per sector, 2017-2021

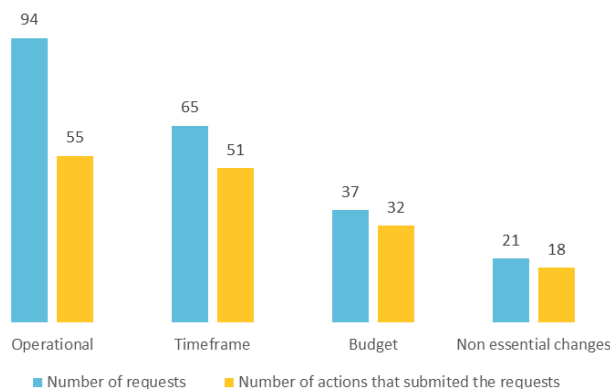


Source: ICF (2023), based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases

The limited use of cash transfers may have led to a lower efficiency of DG ECHO's response to the external dimension of the crisis, however as explained in EQ2, other important considerations justified the decision.

**Both DG ECHO and partners anticipated and/or mitigated obstacles to the efficiency and/or cost-effectiveness of actions (JC8.2 & JC8.3).** During the evaluation period, there were a total of 130 modification requests to 72 actions, of which only five were rejected. 72% of the requests included modifications to the operations, 50% modifications to the timeframe of the projects and 28% modifications to the budget.

Figure 41. Modification requests, 2017-2021



Source: ICF (2023), based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases

The project mapping showed that all projects reviewed faced obstacles, which were mitigated to some extent.<sup>410</sup> The main obstacles related to efficiency were the disruption of markets, shortages of goods and limited availability of suppliers meeting minimum quality standards, hyperinflation (particularly in Venezuela), restrictions imposed by COVID-19, insecurity and lack of humanitarian

<sup>409</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 2).

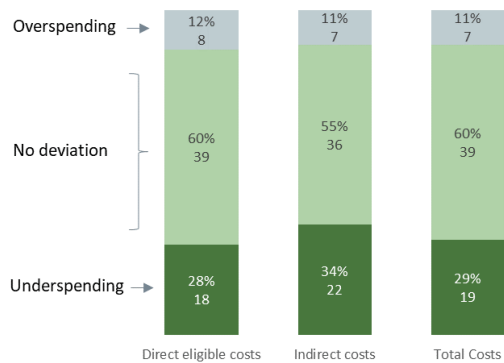
<sup>410</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).



access, challenging political contexts (particularly in Venezuela), limited data availability, the weakening of communication services and poor coordination between consortium partners.

Surveyed partners indicated having monitored costs (92%, i.e., 36 out of 39) and having managed the main cost drivers of the actions well (82%, i.e., 32 out of 39), throughout the project cycle.<sup>411</sup> The portfolio analysis shows that only seven out of the 65 actions that submitted their final report (11%) had cost overruns, with the majority (60%) not presenting significant cost deviations and about one-third with lower final costs than estimated.<sup>412</sup> Overall, the final total costs were 2% lower than expected, with the direct eligible costs reducing by 2% and the indirect costs by 4%. The final indirect costs dropped more than the direct eligible costs, which led to a change in the former's average weight from 6.89% to 6.76%, suggesting efficiency gains.<sup>413</sup>

Figure 42. Total, direct eligible and indirect costs of funded actions, 2017-2021

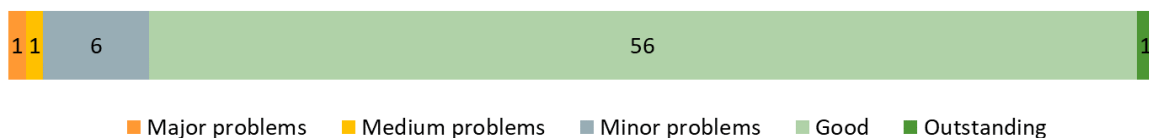


Source: ICF (2023), based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases

During the evaluation period, the share of DG ECHO's contribution reduced from about 92% of the total funding to 81%, as the contributions by other donors and/or by the applicant increased. The final total contribution of DG ECHO reduced by 2% compared to the contracted contribution.<sup>414</sup>

Overall, the portfolio analysis showed that performance of the partners/action was considered good or outstanding by DG ECHO in the vast majority of cases (88%), with only two actions (out of the 65 that are closed) presenting medium or major problems.<sup>415</sup> Some consulted partners highlighted that DG ECHO's field presence, technical expertise, deep understanding of the crisis and flexibility contributed to the cost-effectiveness of their actions.<sup>416</sup> On the other hand, some stressed that a simplification of the administrative and financial requirements, better guidance on the expected level of detail required for financial reporting, and more predictable funding could have led to efficiency gains.<sup>417</sup>

Figure 43. DG ECHO's assessment of the performance of the 65 (closed) funded actions, 2017-2021



Source: ICF (2023), based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases

<sup>411</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (39 responses), Q36.

<sup>412</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases)

<sup>413</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases)

<sup>414</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases)

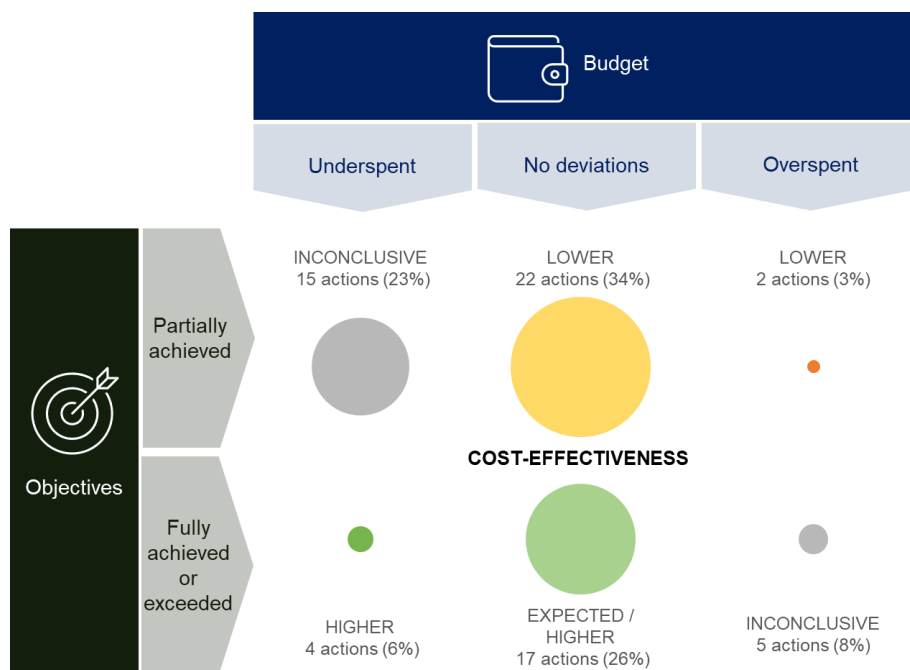
<sup>415</sup> The major problem was due to the impossibility of the partner to secure an agreement with the government of Venezuela, in order to access and exploit the data and information necessary to carry out the project as planned. The medium problem was related to the capacity of the partner to ensure a proper administrative management.

<sup>416</sup> Venezuela: ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2).

<sup>417</sup> Venezuela: ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 4).

The overall positive assessment of the performance of actions by DG ECHO in line with this evaluation's conclusions on the effectiveness of the funded actions, namely that overall DG ECHO funded actions achieved the desired results and outcomes (see EQ6), and on the budget execution. However, as shown in Figure 44, the final impact of the deviations from the original actions' objectives and budget on the overall cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO's response to the Venezuela crisis is inconclusive as, while 32% of the actions presented the same or higher cost-effectiveness than initially expected (as they achieved their results at the expected cost or at a lower cost) and 37% a lower cost-effectiveness than planned (as they achieved their results only partially consuming the budget planned to achieve the result fully), for the remainder 31% it is not possible to conclude on their final cost-effectiveness as they either spent less budget to achieve lower results or they used more budget but to deliver higher results than expected.

Figure 44. Impact of actions' execution on their cost-effectiveness, 2017-2021



Source: ICF (2023). Note: size of the circles is proportional to the number of actions.

EQ9. Was the budget allocated by DG ECHO to the Venezuelan regional crisis predictable, timely, appropriate and proportionate to what the actions were meant to achieve?

Table 21. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC9.1 DG ECHO's budget allocations were based on needs, actions of other donors and DG ECHO objectives (JC1 of the cost-effectiveness guidelines)	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence shows that DG ECHO budget allocation to projects was based on needs (see EQ2) and considered the international humanitarian response, in particular in the context of the HRP for Venezuela and the RMRP from 2019 onwards. Other considerations, such as humanitarian access and (un)availability of partners, also played a role.</li> </ul>
JC9.2 DG ECHO balanced cost in relation to effectiveness and timeliness in making strategic choices about its portfolio (JC2 of the cost-effectiveness guidelines) but also considered predictability and existing constraints to the absorption of the funding (e.g. restricted humanitarian access in Venezuela)	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG ECHO's budget made available to respond to the Venezuela crisis in the period was fully absorbed and was generally considered by the consulted stakeholders as not sufficient to address the needs.</li> <li>The size and allocation of DG ECHO's budget to the Venezuela was adjusted throughout the evaluation period to respond to the evolution of the situation</li> </ul>

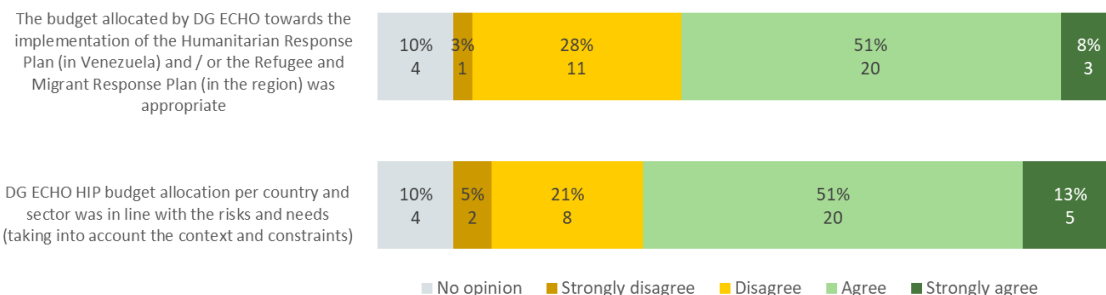
(e.g., needs and gaps). Nevertheless, evidence indicates that the unpredictability of the funding and need to combine short and long-term objectives impeded DG ECHO's capacity to balance cost and effectiveness considerations.

**The budget allocation to project to respond to the Venezuela crisis was based on needs (see EQ2) and considered the international humanitarian response (in particular in the context of the HRP for Venezuela and the RMRP from 2019 onwards) and DG ECHO's objectives. However, the size of DG ECHO's budget, to both the internal and external dimension of the crisis, not always changed proportionally to the evolution of the needs.**

DG ECHO's budget to respond to the Venezuela crisis in the period was fully absorbed. Between 2017 and 2021, DG ECHO provided around EUR 237 million of funding to respond to the Venezuela crisis (internal and external dimension), which represented 2.3% of its total global funding during that period. About 58% of the funding to the Venezuela crisis was allocated to respond to needs within Venezuela, while the remainder was allocated to respond to the external dimension of the crisis.<sup>418</sup>

While the budget was generally considered insufficient by consulted stakeholders in light of the growing needs (in particular after 2019),<sup>419</sup> a majority of the partners agreed that the allocations per sector and country were in line with the needs (taking into account the context and constraints) and that the budget was appropriate to support the implementation of humanitarian plans in Venezuela and RMRPs, as shown in the Figure 45. Nevertheless, on the last points, about one third of the consulted partners saw room for improvement.

Figure 45. Feedback from surveyed partners on the adequacy of the budget



Source: ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (39 responses)

The feedback of the surveyed partners was also that the size of the budget allocated by DG ECHO was appropriate and proportionate to what their action was meant to achieve (see Figure 45).

### Internal dimension of the crisis

The humanitarian aid flows to Venezuela reported in UN OCHA FTS<sup>420</sup> show that DG ECHO was responsible for one-quarter of the total funding to Venezuela over the evaluation period, making it the second-largest donor to the country, behind the US (37%).<sup>421</sup> In light of the growing needs and their limited coverage by other donors, in 2018 DG ECHO scaled up significantly its budget, that year becoming the main donor to the country with a contribution of 57% of the total reported

<sup>418</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases). Data provided by DG ECHO on the funding allocated to the Venezuela Situation (2017 – 2021).

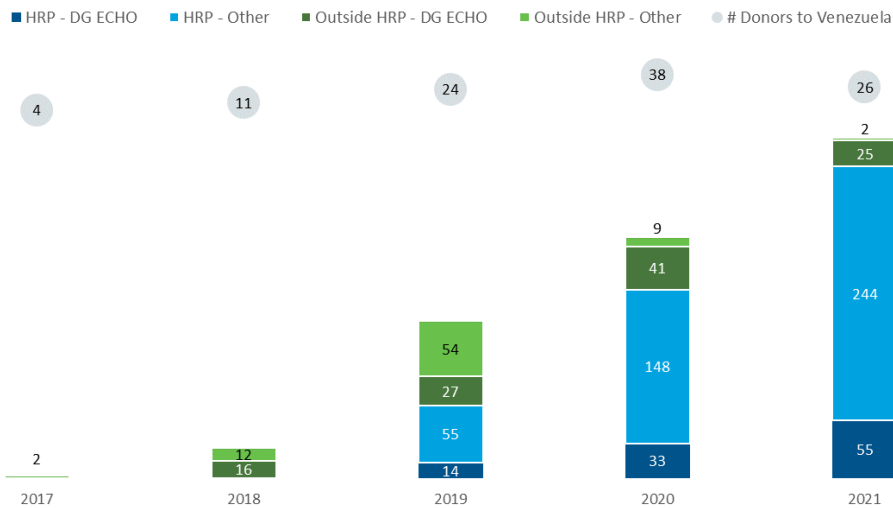
<sup>419</sup> Venezuela: ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 4, DG ECHO partners: 5, Coordination mechanisms: 1)

<sup>420</sup> There are some limitations with OCHA FTS data, related to underreporting, overreporting or misclassification of funding data. Nevertheless, overall the data provides a reasonable picture of the funding landscape worldwide and to the region.

<sup>421</sup> ICF, based on UN OCHA FTS. Some discrepancies were identified between the data reported in OCHA FTS and HOPE (likely due to different approaches to allocate funds to years). To ensure comparison between the data for the various donors, OCHA FTS data was used for this analysis.

funding, far ahead of the second biggest donor at the time, the US. In 2019 the attention of the international community to the humanitarian situation in Venezuela increased and the first Humanitarian Response Plan to Venezuela was released in August 2019, and by the end of that year the number of donors to Venezuela had more than doubled and the total funding to Venezuela increased by about 570% (compared to 2018). In 2019 DG ECHO's absolute contribution to the country grew, but to a lesser extent than that of the US, making DG ECHO the second-largest donor to Venezuela after the US with a contribution of 27% of the total reported funding. In 2020 and 2021, DG ECHO continued to increase its funding to Venezuela in absolute terms. However, in those years the difference to the biggest donor (i.e., the US) grew and by 2021, the DG ECHO's relative contribution had dropped to 20%.

Figure 46. Humanitarian aid to Venezuela by DG ECHO and other donors (inside and outside the HRP) in EUR million and number of donors, 2017-2021

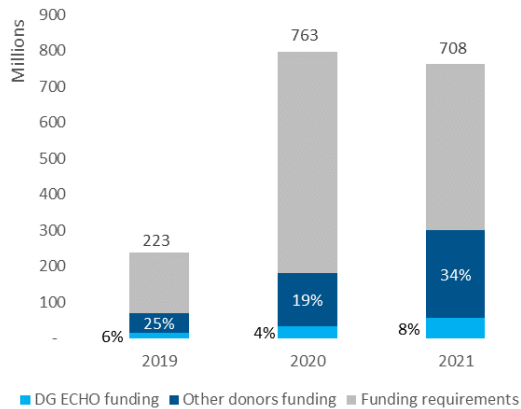


Source: ICF (2023) based on OCHA FTS data

Part of the funding (of DG ECHO and other donors) to Venezuela was specifically provided within the context of the Humanitarian Response Plans 2019 (42%), 2020 (69%) and 2021 (78%).<sup>422</sup> This only partially covered the funding needs in the period (see Figure 47), which amounted to EUR 1.7 billion. DG ECHO's humanitarian funding to the HRPs increased in the period, covering 6%, 4% and 8% of the 2019, 2020 and 2021 HRPs requirements, respectively. In total, DG ECHO contributed 19% of the total funding of HRPs between 2019 and 2021, making it the second-biggest contributor after the US (which contributed twice as much).

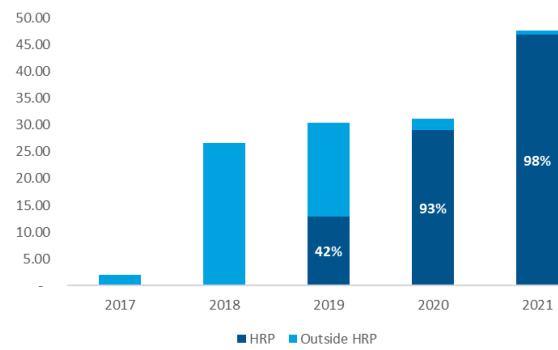
<sup>422</sup> In 2017 and 2018 there were no Humanitarian Response Plans for Venezuela and the one of 2019 was released in August 2019. Part of the funding was also done in the context of the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan but disaggregation is not possible.

Figure 47. Humanitarian aid to HRPs for Venezuela, requirements and funding, 2019-2021



Source: ICF, based on OCHA FTS data

Figure 48. DG ECHO Humanitarian aid to HRPs for Venezuela, requirements and funding, 2019-2021



Note: In 2017 and 2018 there were no Humanitarian Response Plans for Venezuela and the 2019 HRP was released in August 2019 only

Source: ICF, based on HOPE and OCHA FTS data

When considering the sectoral allocations to the HRP for Venezuela (Table 22), data suggests that the DG ECHO funding distribution per sector, in the context of the HRP and overall, was to some extent in line with the ranking of needs identified in the HRPs for Venezuela. The most notable difference was the share of funding to the food security and livelihoods sector, which was significantly lower than its relative weight in the 2019 and 2020 appeals<sup>423</sup>, with DG ECHO adjusting its allocations in May 2021 through a modification to the 2021 HIP that made EUR 40 million available to support interventions addressing the food crisis and the related humanitarian consequences.

Table 22. Comparison of HRP sectoral requirements and DG ECHO sectoral allocations

	HRP to Venezuela								All DG ECHO funding 2017-2021
	2019		2020		2021		2019-2021		
	Appeal	DG ECHO funding	Appeal	DG ECHO funding	Appeal	DG ECHO funding	Appeal	DG ECHO funding	
Health	28%	17%	27%	22%	33%	21%	30%	21%	33%
Protection	19%	17%	9%	16%	11%	17%	11%	17%	13%
Food security	16%	2%	19%	0%	13%	19%	16%	10%	9%
Education	19%	12%	14%	8%	15%	7%	15%	8%	15%
WASH	13%	20%	11%	4%	17%	2%	14%	5%	14%
Shelter Energy & NFI			5%	0%	6%	8%	5%	4%	7%
Coordination	1%	8%	1%	0.2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	4%
Nutrition	5%	3%	2%	3%	5%	0%	4%	1%	3%
Multiple Field clusters	0%	0%	0%	22%	0%	9%	0%	12%	2%
Not reported	0%	21%	0%	25%	0%	14%	0%	18%	NA

Source: ICF, based on VENSIT data and OCHA FTS data

<sup>423</sup> This was also highlighted by a KII (partner)

DG ECHO's sectoral allocation of funds to the various HRP for Venezuela presented some differences from that of the other donors as shown in Table 23, which is in line with this evaluation's conclusion that DG ECHO sought to ensure complementarity between its funded actions and actions funded by other donors (see Coherence section). However, the share of funds not allocated to any sector or allocated to more than one sector is high, hampering a more meaningful comparison between sectoral allocations across donors at this stage.

Table 23. Comparison of DG ECHO's and other donors sectoral allocations to HRP for Venezuela

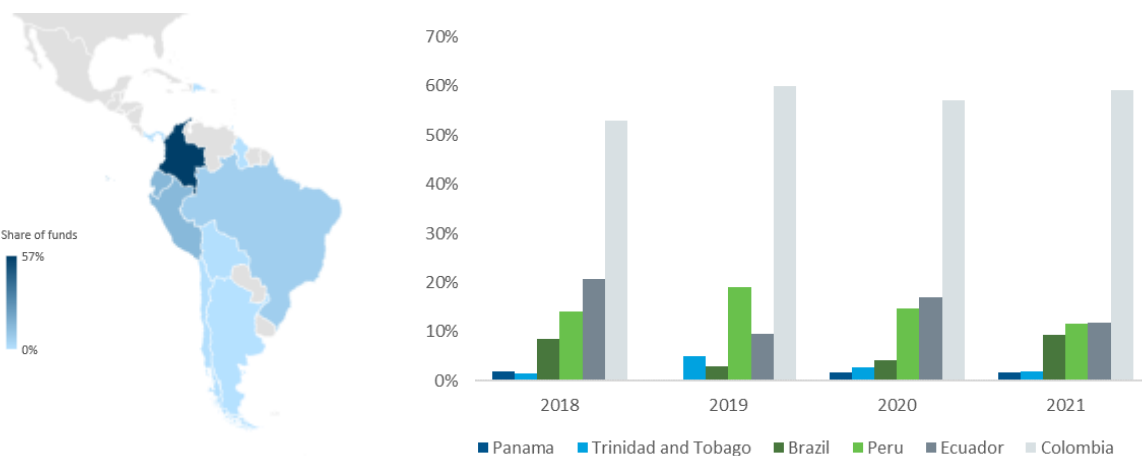
	2019		2020		2021		2019-2021	
	Other donors	DG ECHO	Other donors	DG ECHO	Other donors	DG ECHO	Other donors	DG ECHO
Health	15%	17%	67%	22%	7%	21%	18%	21%
Protection	13%	17%	17%	16%	5%	17%	8%	17%
Food security	2%	2%	3%	0%	5%	19%	4%	10%
Education	9%	12%	0%	8%	3%	7%	3%	8%
WASH	14%	20%	12%	4%	6%	2%	8%	5%
Shelter Energy & NFI			1%	0%	1%	8%	1%	4%
Coordination	0%	8%	0%	0%	1%	2%	1%	2%
Nutrition	7%	3%	0%	3%	2%	0%	2%	1%
Multiple Field clusters	24%	0%	0%	22%	26%	9%	21%	12%
Not reported	15%	21%	0%	25%	46%	14%	34%	18%

Source: ICF (2023) based on OCHA FTS data

### External dimension of the crisis

DG ECHO funding of the external dimension of the crisis began in 2018 and continued throughout the evaluation period, with most funds allocated to respond to the crisis in Colombia (57%), Ecuador (15%) and Peru (14%). While there were some variations of the geographical allocation of funds across the evaluation period, they were minor (see Figure 49).

Figure 49. DG ECHO allocation of funding to respond to the external dimension of the crisis, 2017-2021



Source: ICF (2023) based on VENSIT data

A significant share of DG ECHO funding to respond to the external dimension was provided within the context of the Regional Migrant and Refugee Response Plans 2019 and 2020 (87% and 98%, respectively). However, this changed in 2021 when the share of funding allocated to the RMRPs decreased to only 27% of the funding. In the period 2019–2021, DG ECHO was the third biggest donor to the RMRPs, however its contributions (3.5% of the total contributions) were significantly lower than those of the US (73%) and slightly lower than those of Germany (4%).

When considering the geographical allocation, DG ECHO's decisions were generally in line with the decisions of other donors and needs (see Relevance and Coherence sections). They were also mostly in line with the RMRPs' requirements per country (see Table 24), with the exception of allocations of funding to Colombia, which were significantly higher than the share of appeals for that country.<sup>424</sup> Although other donors (like DG ECHO) also assigned a higher share of their funding to Colombia, half of the RMRPs' appeals for the country remained unfunded.

Table 24. Comparison between RMRP requirements per country and funding allocations by other donors and DG ECHO (within and outside the RMRPs) in the 10 countries with the highest appeals, 2017–2021

	RMRPs			DG ECHO – all funding
	Appeals	Funding by other donors	DG ECHO - RMRPs	
Colombia	39%	53%	53%	57%
Ecuador	14%	13%	8%	15%
Peru	13%	12%	9%	14%
Brazil	7%	8%	7%	7%
Chile	3%	1%	0%	1%
Argentina	2%	1%	2%	0.1%
Trinidad and Tobago	2%	1%	0%	3%
Guyana	2%	0%	0%	1%
Panama	2%	1%	1%	2%
Dominican Republic	2%	1%	0%	0.4%
Bolivia	2%	0%	4%	1%

Source: ICF (2023) based on VENSIT data and OCHA FTS data

When considering the sectoral allocation, differences between DG ECHO funding allocations and requirements are more notable (see Table 25, in particular when considering all contributions (i.e., inside and outside the RMRPs). Protection and health, and to a lesser extent shelter and NFIs, education and WASH all received a significantly higher share of the funding compared to the distribution of requirements per sector. However, as these sectors remained underfunded, DG ECHO's allocations were still responding to urgent needs and complementing the actions of other donors, by filling funding gaps.

<sup>424</sup> A KII indicated that in their view the funds to Peru were disproportional to the needs.

Table 25. Comparison between RMRP requirements per sector and funding allocations by other donors and DG ECHO (within and outside the RMRPs), 2017-2021

	RMRPs			DG ECHO – all funding
	Appeals	Funding by other donors	DG ECHO - RMRPs	
Integration	22%	5%	2%	
Protection	13%	9%	10%	36%
Food Security	10%	14%	8%	9%
Multipurpose CBI	10%	6%	2%	2%
Health	9%	4%	5%	26%
Shelter and NFIs	6%	2%	2%	10%
Education	4%	1%	2%	8%
WASH	3%	1%	3%	6%
Nutrition	1%	0%	0%	1%
Other	8%	2%	2%	3%
Multiple Field clusters	15%	32%	39%	
Not reported	0%	24%	26%	

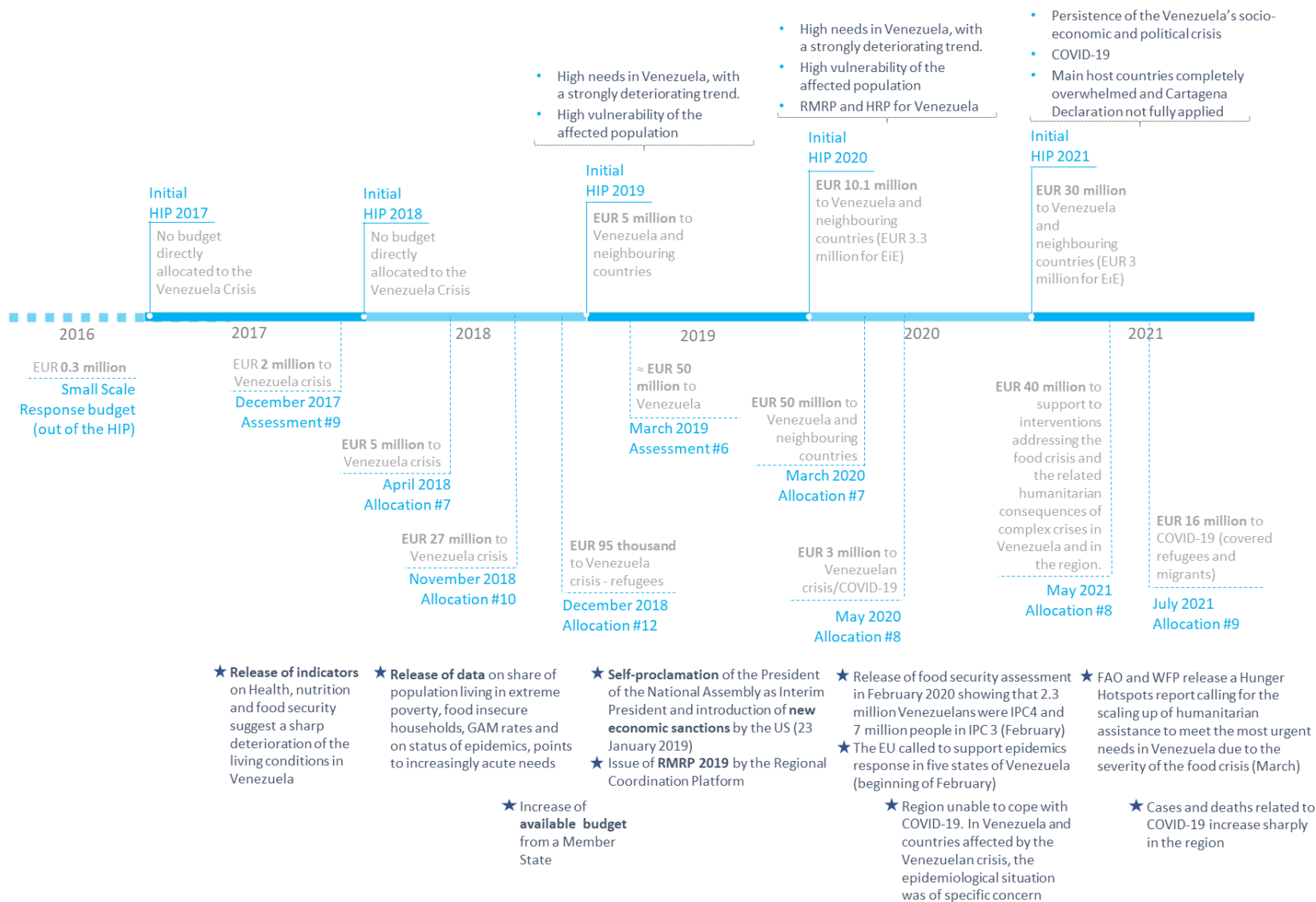
Source: ICF (2023) based on VENSIT data and OCHA FTS data

**DG ECHO decided its budget allocations to the internal and external dimension of the crisis based of various considerations, and adjusted the budget in light of evolving needs through frequent top-ups that were considered timely. However, a more strategic allocation of DG ECHO's contributions could have been achieved if the total yearly funding allocated to the crisis would have been more predictable. (JC 9.2)**

DG ECHO took into account not only the needs (using for IAF) and the actions of other donors (see JC9.1) but also other factors including strength of available data/evidence regarding needs, the humanitarian context, the national responses, the (un)availability and capacity of partners and restricted humanitarian space in Venezuela.



Figure 50. Timeline of the allocation of DG ECHO funding to respond to the Venezuela crisis: initial HIPs and HIP modifications (2016 – 2022)



Throughout the evaluation period, DG ECHO monitored the evolution of the humanitarian situation and reviewed the HIPs regularly as shown in Figure 50 above, to make more funds available in reaction to:

- The release of new evidence showing the deterioration of the humanitarian situation,
- New events such as introduction of economic sanctions or COVID-19
- Increased availability of internal funds.

Consulted stakeholders generally indicated that the allocation of budget to the crisis and the various modifications to the HIPs were timely, with 92% of the surveyed partners agreeing. Views on the predictability of the funding were however mixed. While at the level of funded actions, surveyed partners were generally positive,<sup>425</sup> DG ECHO staff and some partners indicated that the allocation of funds to the HIPs through constant top-ups (in some cases few months after the initial HIPs or a previous modification) negatively impacted the predictability of the budget and occasionally led to inefficiencies (increased administrative burden) but, more importantly, prevented a more strategic approach to the allocation of funds.

### 3.5 Sustainability

EQ10. To what extent did DG ECHO contribute to achieve longer-term planning and programming to address the protracted regional crisis (or Venezuelans' forced displacement)? What could be further done (enabling factors, tools, mechanisms, change of strategy, etc.) to promote sustainability, build resilience and strengthen the nexus?

Table 26. Key findings

<i>Judgement criteria</i>	<i>Strength of evidence</i>	<i>Key findings</i>
JC10.1 DG ECHO and other actors collaborated in finding durable solutions in light of the protracted crisis. Lessons learnt were taken into account in shaping strategies and designing programmes	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG ECHO demonstrates a strong willingness to collaborate with development actors, including the European Commission, and actively participates in coordination mechanisms and conferences. However, progress in finding durable solutions remained limited.</li> <li>• DG ECHO considered lessons learned in shaping strategies and selecting programmes, according to its partners.</li> </ul>
JC10.2 DG ECHO's strategy, tools and mechanisms contributed to promote sustainability, built resilience and strengthened the nexus; opportunities were seized while hindering factors were addressed	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG ECHO strategy endorsed integral responses that facilitated early recovery of beneficiaries' lives and livelihoods and promoted the inclusion of sustainable elements in the design of funded actions.</li> <li>• DG ECHO's promoted sustainability, resilience building and the operationalisation of the nexus through different means including localisation of aid, capacity building, participatory approaches, resilience mainstreaming, focus on DR/DPP, coordination, advocacy, etc.</li> <li>• However, DG ECHO's contribution to achieving longer-term planning and programming to address the protracted regional crisis has been limited. Although DG ECHO considered sustainability, resilience, and the nexus into its strategy and</li> </ul>

<sup>425</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (29 out of 30 responses), Q33.

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
		<p>funded actions, practical outcomes have been limited. The predominant focus has been on short-term, life-saving interventions, primarily due to the important humanitarian needs persisting, limited funding availability and lack of development initiatives. In addition, incorporating sustainability and resilience elements into the response has proven challenging, as indicated by the challenges outlined in JC10.3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities were identified to enhance the nexus approach through improved coordination, increased funding, comprehensive strategies, prioritisation of nexus-related projects, advocacy, and strengthening partnerships.</li> </ul>
<p>JC10.3 DG ECHO-funded actions to address the Venezuelan crisis included elements of sustainability, and factors (positive or negative, internal to the EU or external) that impacted (directly or indirectly) their sustainability were identified and, when possible, appropriately exploited or addressed</p>	<p><b>Strong</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability elements were included in the majority of the reviewed projects. They collectively demonstrate a multifaceted approach to sustainability, encompassing collaboration, capacity building, community engagement, infrastructure rehabilitation, and strengthening of systems and institutions.</li> <li>• Despite the efforts made by DG ECHO to promote sustainability within its strategy and funded actions, several (mostly external) challenges and limitations have been identified hindering the sustainability of the initiatives, linked to political and institutional factors, weak service provision and infrastructure, lack of human resources and capacity, limited funding and absence of strategy, lack of coordination and collaboration.</li> </ul>
<p>JC10.4 DG ECHO-funded actions were aligned and complementary to the response of other actors to the Venezuelan crisis in the context of the Nexus and humanitarian-development coordination (for example via dialogue and advocacy, participation in nexus working groups) and there were synergies and interlinkages with other EU instruments, most notably DG INTPA interventions (such as the “Cities of solidarity” and PROACT initiatives) and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)</p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The operationalisation of the nexus was limited and fragmented. However, this shortcoming cannot be attributed specifically to DG ECHO, as it was a challenge faced by the broader humanitarian community involved in the response to the Venezuelan regional crisis.</li> <li>• The most commonly identified challenges to operationalising the nexus were: lack of funding, restricted humanitarian space, lack of understanding of the nexus, unstable and changing context, politicisation of the crisis, absence of a clear strategy, differences between humanitarian and development programming, lack of collaboration, absence of development actors.</li> <li>• Although progress on the nexus was not extensive, there were some notable efforts made by DG ECHO and its partners during the evaluation period to foster collaboration and seek alignment and complementarity with development actors, including the EU.</li> <li>• DG ECHO considered initiatives of other actors when designing its strategy and selecting funded actions. Synergies were also sought, in particular with the EU, through collaboration with the EC, DG ECHO</li> </ul>

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
		<p>presence in the EUD, DG ECHO participation in donor groups, dialogue and advocacy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While DG ECHO made attempts to foster interlinkages and synergies, and complementarity could be observed through initiatives funded by the IcSP and collaboration between DG ECHO and DG INTPA, projects reviewed and stakeholders consulted did not convey apparent synergies on the ground.</li> </ul>

**DG ECHO's contribution to achieving longer-term planning and programming to address the protracted regional crisis overall appears to be limited (JC10.1).** Given the constraints of a limited budget and a persisting high level of humanitarian needs throughout the evaluation period, the focus of DG ECHO's response was primarily on short-term, lifesaving interventions. In addition, DG ECHO and partners faced several challenges in incorporating sustainability and resilience elements into the response. Nonetheless, DG ECHO made efforts to seek alignment, synergies, and interlinkages with other actors and EU instruments. There is however room for improvement in operationalising the nexus and enhancing coordination between humanitarian and development actions in response to the Venezuelan crisis.

The evidence points to a limited ability to achieve comprehensive and sustainable planning within the regional response.<sup>426</sup> The absence of comprehensive long-term strategies, durable solutions and the lack of an exit strategy, as identified in the document review<sup>427</sup> and confirmed by KIIs,<sup>428</sup> indicate a shortfall in addressing the protracted nature of the crisis. The challenges posed by the continuous movement of Venezuelan migrants, as mentioned by KIIs<sup>429</sup>, further impeded effective planning and sustained interventions. Additionally, DG ECHO emphasis on lifesaving interventions over broader livelihood support, as highlighted by framework partners<sup>430</sup> and further confirmed in the case study on Protection,<sup>431</sup> resulted in part from the limited funding available but also from the absence of development initiatives (i.e. in Venezuela the government did not allow development agencies to operate in the country and did not follow-up on initiatives).<sup>432</sup> As highlighted under EQ1 (see section 3.1), the nature of the crisis changed over time, but the humanitarian needs remained important throughout. The limited funding available hindered DG ECHO's ability to expand its operations and fully adjust to the realities of the situation.

While DG ECHO prioritised lifesaving emergency responses in the Venezuelan regional crisis context over the evaluation period, the HIP review shows that, in theory, DG ECHO strategy **endorsed integral responses that facilitated early recovery of beneficiaries' lives and livelihoods and promoted the inclusion of sustainable elements in the design of funded actions (JC10.2).**<sup>433</sup> DG ECHO's strategy promoted sustainability, resilience building and the operationalisation of the nexus through different means presented in Table 27.<sup>434</sup>

<sup>426</sup> ICF. 2022. Analysis of LAC HIPs and HIPTAs (2017-2021); ICF. 2022. Review of documents shared by DG ECHO. ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q36). ICF. 2023. Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus). KIIs (DG ECHO: 4, DG ECHO partners: 3, Coordination mechanisms: 2, Other EU bodies: 1)

<sup>427</sup> ICF. 2022. Analysis of LAC HIPs and HIPTAs (2017-2021); ICF. 2022. Review of documents shared by DG ECHO.

<sup>428</sup> KIIs (DG ECHO: 4, DG ECHO partners: 3, Coordination mechanisms: 2, Other EU bodies: 1)

<sup>429</sup> KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1, Coordination mechanisms: 1)

<sup>430</sup> KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2) and ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (comments in Q6)

<sup>431</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela)

<sup>432</sup> ICF. 2022. Scoping interviews (3)

<sup>433</sup> ICF. 2022. Analysis of LAC HIPs and HIPTAs (2017-2021).

<sup>434</sup> ICF. 2022. Analysis of LAC HIPs and HIPTAs (2017-2021), ICF. 2022. Review of mission reports (Venezuela) and review of conference and event related documents. ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2, Coordination mechanisms: 2, Other EU body: 1)

Table 27. Means promoted by DG ECHO to support sustainability, resilience building and the nexus

Category	Description
<b>Localisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Localisation of aid:</b> DG ECHO partners were encouraged to work with national and local associations, CSOs were considered strong in most countries affected by the crisis. In Venezuela, partners were requested to work to restore local markets and local provision of assistance.</li> <li>• <b>Capacity building of all actors:</b> strengthening capacity of local NGOs, institutions, community groups and communities were at the centre of DG ECHO strategy in Venezuela and within the region to some extent. To mitigate the impact of COVID-19, DG ECHO further emphasised the importance of ensuring participation of grassroots networks and local community organisations, specifically of indigenous peoples, in the elaboration of the response strategy.</li> <li>• <b>Participatory and inclusive approaches:</b> community-based approaches were encouraged to raise awareness and build resilience (e.g. community-based protection). Additionally, in order to work simultaneously with migrant populations and local communities, intercultural methods were encouraged.</li> <li>• <b>Working in support to government services:</b> DG ECHO acknowledged that the response to the Venezuelan migration crisis was not solely the responsibility of humanitarian actors, and the priorities of host governments were part of a large structural response plan which is to be covered by long-term programmes, beyond humanitarian aid. When feasible, DG ECHO encouraged close collaboration with national authorities, partnership with public institutions and working in support of local structures (e.g. supporting the emergency services of local health structures). In light of the nexus, DG ECHO also encouraged linking social protection and humanitarian actions.</li> </ul>
<b>Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Legal assistance:</b> DG ECHO's protection activities included the provision of legal assistance to ensure that the population of concern had access to regular status, thereby creating a foundation for them to access livelihood opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>Resilience and Disaster Risk Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Resilience mainstreaming:</b> building communities' resilience is critical to minimise the impact of disasters and prevent future humanitarian crises. As such, DG ECHO developed a resilience marker (see JC10.3) to ensure a systematic attention to and inclusion of resilience considerations in project proposals, implementation and assessment.</li> <li>• <b>Preparedness and disaster risk management:</b> DP/DRR actions represented a key focus of DG ECHO in the region, such actions, in countries hosting Venezuela refugees and migrants were encouraged to integrate activities focused on strengthening local capacities to face and respond to the influx of displaced populations. Forcibly displaced Venezuelans were to be considered in any disaster risk management initiatives. In addition, DP was considered a key cross-cutting theme and DP was requested to be mainstreamed in all funded actions.</li> <li>• <b>Addressing environmental concerns:</b> the environment was increasingly taken into consideration in DG ECHO strategy and funded actions in light of supporting sustainable actions.</li> </ul>
<b>Synergies and linkages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Coordination and standardisation of response:</b> coordination was a key focus of DG ECHO in response to the Venezuela crisis. DG ECHO encouraged partners to support the inclusion and strengthening of local organisations in coordination structures to better integrate all response efforts through principled actions, thus facilitating the standardisation of responses in all sectors to ensure quality and continuity.</li> <li>• <b>Linkages with development actors:</b> nexus initiatives were encouraged to promote long-lasting solutions and resilience for the most vulnerable exposed and affected populations and facilitate a proper transition where possible, focusing in particular on socio-economic integration.</li> </ul>

Category	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Synergies and complementarities with EU initiatives:</b> the EU assistance package (EU Compact for Venezuela) was conceived as a coordinated approach bringing together immediate relief assistance to the affected people with stabilisation and longer-term support to the host countries throughout the region.</li> </ul>
<b>Advocacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advocacy:</b> DG ECHO strategy promoted advocacy actions oriented towards engaging local and national authorities to fulfil their responsibilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons learned</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Consideration of lessons learned (JC10.1):</b> lessons learned were identified in project monitoring (i.e. FichOps), missions reports and final report (i.e. SingleForms).<sup>435</sup> In addition, some DG ECHO partners conducted independent assessments (e.g. ex-ante evaluation, impact evaluation) which reported on lessons learned.<sup>436</sup> Conference and events organised also included good practices and lessons learned.<sup>437</sup> Based on the partner survey, DG ECHO considered lessons learned in shaping strategies and selecting programmes.<sup>438</sup></li> </ul>

**At project level, sustainability and resilience elements were incorporated in the design of the vast majority of the reviewed actions, but funded actions were not consistently part of longer-term strategies (JC10.3).** 39 out of 40 projects reviewed included processes or mechanisms to enhance the sustainability of the activities and all projects reviewed (40) incorporated resilience building elements.<sup>439</sup> Monitoring and situation reports published by DG ECHO partners further confirmed the inclusion of sustainable approaches.<sup>440</sup> DG ECHO's assessments at proposal stage rated over half (57%) of the funded actions as High in terms of sustainability and coordination, while the remaining 43% were rated as Medium.<sup>441</sup> Nonetheless, the analysis of the Resilience Marker (see Table 17 in section 3.3) suggested a modest impact on building resilience among funded action. The average grade attributed by Field officers was 1.3 while the average grade attributed by Desk officers was 1.2.<sup>442</sup> While most funded actions incorporated an analysis of risk and vulnerabilities, adopted a do no harm and conflict sensitive approach, and included measures to strengthen local preparedness capacities, long-term strategies were only sufficiently incorporated in the design of half the funded project. The final report depicts a lower consideration of long-term strategies, in 59% of funded actions, these were not sufficiently considered.<sup>443</sup> Similarly, over half the partners surveyed (22 out of 39) reported that funded actions were fully or to a large extent designed as part of a longer-term strategy.<sup>444</sup>

### Approaches to enhance resilience

Resilience building elements incorporated into funded actions include: community-based activities, awareness raising activities (e.g. rights, available services, mental health, nutritious diet), training of communities and local actors (e.g. water consumption), creation of community structures (e.g. health committees, technical water committees), community surveillance system (i.e. early warning systems), the provision of integrated assistance as well as specific activities aiming at building resilience such as access to documentation, family planning, rehabilitation of water points.

<sup>435</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2022. Review of mission reports (Venezuela).

<sup>436</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of documents.

<sup>437</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of conference and events documents.

<sup>438</sup> ICF. 2023 Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q36, 6 strongly agree, 13 agree, 10 disagree, 1 strongly disagree, 8 no opinion, N=39)

<sup>439</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>440</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of documents shared by DG ECHO.

<sup>441</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases). N=28

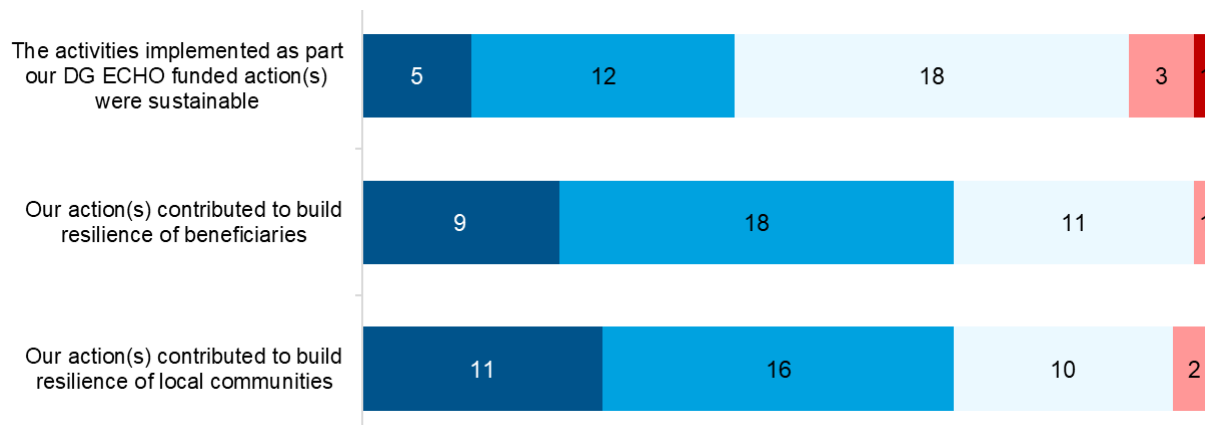
<sup>442</sup> ICF. 2022. Data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases. N=78 (2=High, 1=Medium)

<sup>443</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases). N=79.

<sup>444</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (8 Fully, 14 to a large extent, 13 to some extent, 3 not at all, out of 39 responses)

In practice, the available evidence suggests a moderate level of sustainability achieved through DG ECHO funded actions. The partner survey indicates that the activities implemented were somewhat sustainable, with most partners reporting that they contributed to build resilience of beneficiaries as well as communities (Figure 51). KIIs<sup>445</sup> and the case study on Protection<sup>446</sup> further provided anecdotal evidence of long-lasting changes in stakeholders practices.<sup>447</sup> From the beneficiary perspective, the majority of respondents (66%) to the mini-mobile survey confirmed that the support provided will help them with their future needs, which was particularly true for respondents over 55 years, currently located in Venezuela and Peru.<sup>448</sup> Over half of the respondents (54%, 180) also reported feeling integrated in the community, in particular those residing in Colombia and Peru.<sup>449</sup>

Figure 51. Q38 To what extent do you agree with the following statements (n=39)



Source: ICF (2023) based on results of survey to DG ECHO framework partners

The document review,<sup>450</sup> case studies,<sup>451</sup> KIIs<sup>452</sup> and partner survey<sup>453</sup> highlight several **factors that contributed to the sustainability of the funded actions**, some of them reflect the elements identified in DG ECHO strategy as listed above. These factors collectively demonstrate a multifaceted approach to sustainability, encompassing community engagement and empowerment, strengthening national systems, institutions and existing structures, and continuity of work.

Category	Description
<b>Community engagement and empowerment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Community engagement and community-based approaches:</b> projects emphasised community engagement and community-based approaches to build resilience and ensure sustainability. Activities such as creating committees, participatory processes, and recognising individual empowerment were implemented to strengthen the productive capacities of communities.</li> <li><b>Capacity building:</b> capacity building was a key strategy employed in all the projects mapped (40). This included training, technical guidance, dissemination of guidelines and materials, regular monitoring, information sessions, joint meetings, workshops, and distribution of educational material. Capacity building efforts targeted a wide range of stakeholders, including</li> </ul>

<sup>445</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 3, Coordination mechanism: 1)

<sup>446</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela)

<sup>447</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partner: 1) and ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela)

<sup>448</sup> ICF. 2023. Mini-mobile survey for beneficiaries (124 out of 188 responses)

<sup>449</sup> ICF. 2023. Mini-mobile survey for beneficiaries (180 out of 336 responses)

<sup>450</sup> ICF. 2022. Analysis of LAC HIPs and HIPTAs (2017-2021); ICF. 2022. Review of documents shared by DG ECHO.

<sup>451</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 1 (Health interventions in Venezuela), Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela), Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus)

<sup>452</sup> KIIs (DG ECHO: 4, Framework partners: 3)

<sup>453</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q38).

Category	Description
	<p>national and local authorities, CSOs, local NGOs, national societies, local staff, communities, and beneficiaries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Awareness raising and information provision:</b> activities that facilitated information dissemination, legal counselling, and awareness raising on rights and access to services contributed to sustainability. Empowering migrants with knowledge and assistance in navigating legal processes and accessing services fostered their integration and resilience.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthening national systems, institutions and existing structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rehabilitation of infrastructure:</b> the focus on rehabilitating key infrastructure, particularly in areas like health and education, contributed to the sustainability of the response. This approach aimed to ensure long-lasting changes and provide durable solutions to address the crisis.</li> <li>• <b>Avoidance of parallel structures:</b> to ensure sustainability, projects aimed to avoid the creation of parallel structures and instead worked through existing institutions and structures. By integrating activities into national and regional mandates, plans, and strategies, they reinforced mechanisms in place and fostered collaboration.</li> <li>• <b>Strengthening national systems and institutions:</b> efforts to strengthen national systems and institutions, such as healthcare systems and child protection systems, were identified as factors contributing to sustainability. Technical assistance, building evidence, advocacy, and capacity building supported the integration of services and practices into existing systems.</li> <li>• <b>Collaboration with national and local authorities:</b> close collaboration facilitated the integration of projects into national and regional mandates, plans, and strategies, ensuring the involvement of governmental institutions in the response.</li> <li>• <b>Partnership with CSOs and local NGOs:</b> these partnerships allowed for improved access to coordination mechanisms for local actors and strengthened their capacity.</li> </ul>
<b>Continuity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Long-term presence and continuity:</b> organisations with a long-term presence and commitment to the region, such as UNICEF and the Red Cross, emphasized the importance of sustained efforts beyond the immediate crisis. Their continued presence and engagement with institutions and communities ensured sustainability and the ability to address longer-term needs.</li> </ul>

**Several challenges and limitations hindered the sustainability of funded actions.** The main challenges and limitations have been identified in the literature, case studies, surveys, and KII and are summarised in the below table.

Table 28. Sustainability of funded actions: challenges and limitations

Type	Challenges
<b>Political and institutional factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political instability, lack of interest, and willingness of national authorities.</li> <li>• Collapse of state institutions and limited capacity for infrastructure rehabilitation.</li> <li>• Volatility of relations with national authorities and limited capacity at the local level.</li> </ul>
<b>Service provision and infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State failure in providing public services (e.g., electricity, water, connectivity).</li> <li>• Lack of resources for maintaining public infrastructure (e.g., fuel shortage, absence of renewable energy).</li> </ul>
<b>Human resources and capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of human resources, including the departure of health and education professionals.</li> </ul>



Type	Challenges
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of capacity of local NGOs and limited humanitarian experience of local partners.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding and strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient funding to implement longer-term strategies.</li> <li>Lack of development funds to ensure continuity.</li> <li>Strict focus on emergency projects of short duration (lack of multi-annual funding).</li> <li>Lack of common strategies to ensure continuity and sustainability.</li> <li>Persistent funding gaps and need for stronger linkages with nexus/development programs and funding opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of coordination and collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of alignment and synergy between EU delegations and funding mechanisms.</li> <li>Limited willingness or ability of national and local governments to ensure an adequate protection response.</li> <li>Restrictive access for NGOs in Venezuela, limiting humanitarian operating space</li> </ul>
<b>External factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and related mobilization restrictions.</li> <li>Temporary nature of Venezuelan migration (i.e. migrants leaving), making long-term planning challenging.</li> </ul>

In the context of the Venezuela crisis, the literature, case studies, surveys, and KIIs also highlighted **opportunities to enhance sustainability and long-term impact of funded actions**. At the project level, efforts could be made to further increase local capacities (building a strong civil society), strengthen protection response, fund early recovery actions, and generate evidence for advocacy and funding (i.e. utilising evidence for advocacy and diversifying funding sources). At a strategic level, combining short-term assistance with longer-term programming and strengthen the nexus would foster sustainability, particularly in areas such as water access, food security, and manufacturing and distribution of humanitarian items. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic in Colombia created an opportunity for coordinated efforts and synergies between DG ECHO and DG INTPA, allowing for the promotion of sustainability through converging priorities.

As identified earlier (Table 27), coordination and collaboration were key components of DG ECHO strategy towards ensuring sustainability through the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach which represents the EU shared vision to put into effect the synergies between members of the three communities towards building resilience. Based on the evidence collected, however, **DG ECHO's operationalisation of the nexus was limited and fragmented (JC10.2)**. It is important to note that this was not specific to DG ECHO, but rather a challenge faced by the broader humanitarian community involved in the response to the Venezuelan regional crisis. The onset of the crisis and the urgent need for humanitarian assistance led to a prioritisation of immediate humanitarian aspects, the limited funding available further resulted in a reduced focus on livelihood and longer-term actions while the lack of development counterparts, in particular in Venezuela, prevented nexus opportunities.

Although progress on the nexus was not extensive, the evaluation found that **DG ECHO demonstrated a strong willingness to collaborate with development actors, including those in the European Commission, and actively participated in coordination mechanisms and joint conferences (JC10.1)**.<sup>454</sup> While some partners acknowledged collaboration with other actors in developing durable solutions, the evaluation indicates that **only limited progress in finding durable solutions to the crisis has been achieved (JC10.1)**.<sup>455</sup> Anecdotal evidence

<sup>454</sup> ICF. 2022. Analysis of LAC HIPs and HIPTAs (2017-2021). ICF. 2023. ICF. 2022. Review of documents shared by DG ECHO. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q36).

<sup>455</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 2 (Protection interventions outside of Venezuela), Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus). KIIS (DG ECHO: 2, Coordination mechanism: 1).

suggests that the nexus, and the integration of refugees and migrants, were discussed in some events, reflecting DG ECHO's efforts, but concrete outcomes remain limited.<sup>456</sup> The case study on coordination and the nexus<sup>457</sup> further highlights some missed opportunities in this regard as little efforts were made to adopt a multi-agency approach, going beyond the collaboration between humanitarian partner organisations, which was needed to generate resilience and durable solutions; and ii. national authorities and development actors were not sufficiently involved in the response. Additional information on coordination can be found in EQ4.

**In addition, DG ECHO considered the initiatives of other actors when designing its strategy and selecting funded actions (JC10.4).** The review of the HIPs and HIPTAs indicates that the EU assistance package (EU Compact for Venezuela) was conceived as a coordinated approach, bringing together immediate relief assistance to the affected people with stabilisation and longer-term support to the host countries throughout the region.<sup>458</sup> The 2021 HIP further described possibilities of complementarity between humanitarian and development assistance in promoting the social and economic inclusion of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in host countries and communities.<sup>459</sup> Complementarity was observed through initiatives funded by the IcSP and collaboration between DG ECHO and DG INTPA in addressing the needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants (see Table 29). The scoping interviews,<sup>460</sup> and document review<sup>461</sup> reported that **alignment and synergies were sought** however, the KIIs<sup>462</sup> and partner survey<sup>463</sup> presents mixed views on the role of DG ECHO in ensuring synergies and interlinkages with other EU instruments. While DG ECHO made attempts to foster interlinkages and synergies, it appears that in practice, their success was not apparent.

Synergies were mainly sought through:

- **Collaboration with other services within the European Commission** in Venezuela, in particular DG INTPA, especially as of 2020. For instance, at the beginning of 2020, DG ECHO, DG INTPA, and other European Commission services met with Venezuelan CSOs to see how they could develop a nexus strategy with one of the key topics being access to water.<sup>464</sup> The initiative did not come to fruition, due to limited funding available. Nonetheless, DG INTPA included a condition in one of their 2021 calls for proposals which allowed all DG ECHO partners to apply for development funding, thus ensuring continuity. One successful example was reported by a DG ECHO where DG ECHO funded a project focusing on women victims of gender-based violence, which DG INTPA followed up with a project focusing on training these women to work with recycling in a cooperative as a means of becoming more economically independent.<sup>465</sup>
- **DG ECHO presence in the EU Delegation:** in 2018, the mission report identified the need to reinforce DG ECHO presence in Caracas with a more permanent position in the EU Delegation to follow the context evolution, lead the donors' coordination, maintain close relation with the different stakeholders and support the EU Delegation.<sup>466</sup> Subsequently, DG ECHO office was established within the Delegation in Caracas.
- **Alignment with other EU instruments** (see Table 29 below): There were synergies and interlinkages between DG ECHO-funded actions and other EU initiatives. For example, the

---

<sup>456</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of mission reports.

<sup>457</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 3 (Coordination and the nexus)

<sup>458</sup> DG ECHO. 2021. HIP Latin America and the Caribbean. ICF. 2023. ICF. 2022. Review of documents shared by DG ECHO.

<sup>459</sup> DG ECHO. 2021. HIP Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>460</sup> ICF. 2022. Scoping interviews (2).

<sup>461</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of mission reports. DG ECHO. 2021. HIP Latin America and the Caribbean. ICF. 2023. ICF. 2022. Review of documents shared by DG ECHO.

<sup>462</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2)

<sup>463</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q38, 7 strongly agree, 10 agree, 13 disagree, 1 strongly disagree, out of 39 responses).

<sup>464</sup> ICF. 2022. Scoping interviews.

<sup>465</sup> ICF. 2022. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 1)

<sup>466</sup> DG ECHO. 2018. Ad hoc/ Mission report. Field mission to Caracas and Colombia-Venezuelan border.

Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) provided support to local institutions in countries like Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia, complementing DG ECHO's efforts. DG INTPA interventions, such as the "Cities of Solidarity" and PROACT initiatives, also aligned with and supported DG ECHO's actions.

- **DG ECHO participation in donor groups:** DG ECHO launched an informal and low-profile humanitarian donor group to exchange information on ongoing and planned activities in Venezuela. DG INTPA was actively involved in the donor group. In Colombia, DG ECHO was part of the Humanitarian Donors Group (see EQ4 for further information on coordination).<sup>467</sup>
- **Dialogue and advocacy:** the documents reviewed demonstrate ongoing efforts from DG ECHO to attract development actors and working towards the nexus.<sup>468</sup> For instance, the 2019 International Solidarity Conference on the Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant crisis was organised with a specific focus on strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus and promoting the engagement of development actors.<sup>469</sup>
- **DG ECHO project appraisal and selection:** DG ECHO partners were requested to consider synergies with other actions as well as coordination in the design of their actions. Evidence suggests that some cooperation with development actors and authorities took place, as 35 out of 40 projects mapped reported on coordination efforts.<sup>470</sup> However, the project mapping only shows anecdotal evidence of nexus approaches, all of them involving collaborating with local and national authorities. There was only one reference to another EU instruments in the project reviewed to date, namely the Inclusive Cities, Communities of Solidarity from DG INTPA.<sup>471</sup>

The main EU initiatives complementing DG ECHO actions are presented in the Table 29 below.

Table 29. EU initiatives and alignment with DG ECHO funded actions

EU entity	Initiative	Country covered	Description	Alignment/ complementarity with DG ECHO actions
FPI	IcSP	Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Colombia	Provides support to local institutions to deal with the influx of people from Venezuela and reduce xenophobia	Supports the non-humanitarian aspects of UNHCR and IOM appeals. DG ECHO was involved in the definition of the actions to ensure complementarity. <sup>472</sup>
DG INTPA	DCI	Venezuela	Rehabilitation of basic services	Complement DG ECHO funded actions in providing basic services to IDPs.
DG INTPA	DCI	Ecuador, Peru	Promote access to free health services (including for migrants and refugees)	Complement DG ECHO funded actions in ensuring access to quality healthcare for migrants and refugees.
DG INTPA	PRO-ACT	Venezuela	EU's flagship resilience initiative	Covers the livelihood aspect of DG ECHO interventions focusing on nutrition. <sup>473</sup> Supports the resilience of communities in areas where DG ECHO partners provide

<sup>467</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of mission reports (Venezuela).

<sup>468</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of documents shared by DG ECHO.

<sup>469</sup> International Solidarity Conference on the Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant crisis, 2019

<sup>470</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>471</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>472</sup> DG ECHO. 2018. Ad hoc/ Mission report. Field mission to Caracas and Colombia-Venezuelan border.

<sup>473</sup> DG ECHO. 2018. Ad hoc/ Mission report. Field mission to Caracas and Colombia-Venezuelan border.

EU entity	Initiative	Country covered	Description	Alignment/ complementarity with DG ECHO actions
				relief assistance. <sup>474</sup> Was developed in collaboration between DG ECHO and DG INTPA.
DG INTPA	Inclusive Cities, Communities of Solidarity	Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Dominican Republic	Designed to show that migrants and refugees can make a real contribution to socio-economic and cultural diversity in their host cities and communities across Latin America	Supports acceptance and integration of migrants and refugees in DG ECHO areas of interventions.
DG INTPA	Education Cannot Wait	Ecuador, Peru	Increasing Access to Quality Education for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela and Host Communities	Potential complementarity with DG ECHO funded EiE activities. <sup>475</sup>

**The case study on Coordination and the nexus highlights complementarity of funding humanitarian and development funding mechanisms in the region to address gaps in the response**

At the start of the of the evaluation period most of DG ECHO funding was allocated to Colombia and Venezuela (and a lesser extent to Ecuador). To fill the funding gap and address the needs of Venezuelans in Brazil, UNHCR – in collaboration with UNFPA – launched a project in 2018 funded by the EU through its IcSP. Through the IcSP, the first humanitarian actions supporting Venezuelan refugees in Brazil could be delivered. Similarly, thanks to good coordination in Colombia, IcSP also shifted its activities to complement DG ECHO's actions in Colombia and provided institutional support for the regularisation of migrants and refugees. This helped to strengthen the regulatory framework through promoting registration procedures, improving the protection environment for Venezuelans and contributing to peaceful coexistence between displaced Venezuelans and the host communities.

Although efforts were made to address the Venezuelan crisis through complementary actions, the evidence also shows some **missed opportunities**.<sup>476</sup> Limited interaction was reported between DG ECHO and DG INTPA, except in Venezuela where regular exchanges between the two entities occurred. Additionally, the lack of alignment with EU delegations in terms of political interests and priorities and insufficient engagement of other EU services (e.g. EEAS) and EU funding mechanisms in the response hindered the operationalisation of the nexus.

More generally, **challenges to operationalising the nexus** as part of the Venezuelan regional crisis were identified through the case study on Health and KIIs (Table 30).<sup>477</sup> These challenges highlight the need for increased funding, improved coordination, enhanced understanding of the nexus, and stronger collaboration between humanitarian and development actors to address the Venezuelan regional crisis.

<sup>474</sup> DG ECHO. 2021. HIP Latin American and the Caribbean.

<sup>475</sup> DG ECHO. 2021. HIP Latin American and the Caribbean.

<sup>476</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3)

<sup>477</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 1 (Health interventions in Venezuela). ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 4, Framework partners: 3, Coordination mechanisms: 2, Other EU bodies: 1, Other donor: 1)

Table 30. Challenges to the operationalisation of the nexus

Type	Challenges
<b>External factors</b>	
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Unstable and changing context:</b> The unstable and changing context in both Colombia and Venezuela added complexity to the implementation of the nexus. The evolving crisis and its dynamics required adaptability and flexibility in coordinating humanitarian and development actions.</li> <li>• <b>Politicisation of the crisis:</b> The politicisation of the crisis acted as a barrier, preventing effective collaboration between humanitarian and development actors. This challenge hampered the integrated response and coordination efforts.</li> <li>• <b>Restricted humanitarian space:</b> In Venezuela, the restricted humanitarian space was identified as a barrier to implementing the nexus. This limitation affected the ability of humanitarian actors to effectively collaborate with development actors and deliver integrated assistance.</li> </ul>
<b>Counterpart</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Absence of development actors:</b> The absence of development partners present in the region poses a challenge to achieving the nexus. Collaborative efforts require the active involvement of development actors.</li> <li>• <b>Lack of capacity and follow-up:</b> Organisations or government entities in the region lack the capacity to follow up on projects once DG ECHO's intervention ends. The absence of stable financing lines and longer-term planning also affects consistent engagement and support.</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding of the concept</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of understanding and alignment:</b> The lack of understanding of the nexus and limited alignment between frameworks such as the UNDAF (United Nations Development Assistance Framework) and HRP (Humanitarian Response Plan) posed challenges. There is a need for better clarity on potential areas for cooperation and a stronger promotion of the nexus concept.</li> </ul>
<b>Internal factors</b>	
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of funding:</b> Insufficient funding from both humanitarian and development sides was a major barrier to implementing the nexus in Colombia and Venezuela. There was also a lack of dedicated funding for nexus initiatives, such as early recovery actions, which hindered the integration of humanitarian and development efforts.</li> </ul>
<b>Procedure/ administration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Differences between humanitarian and development programming:</b> Important differences between humanitarian and development programming hindered joint actions and collaboration (timing, process, mandate). These differences need to be addressed to foster effective integration.</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration/ complementarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of motivation and collaboration:</b> The lack of motivation from the EU Delegation to collaborate and align with DG ECHO-funded actions, along with differences between countries, hampers the implementation of the nexus.</li> <li>• <b>Lack of synergies:</b> Synergies with other Directorates-General (DGs) within the European Commission were not evident, which limits the potential for collaboration and integrated approaches.</li> <li>• <b>Absence of clear strategy and action plan:</b> The absence of a clear strategy and common plans of action were identified as a challenge. The lack of a comprehensive integration plan for migrants and refugees further complicated efforts to achieve the nexus.</li> </ul>

- **Lack of integration focus:** Some stakeholders express that the focus on integration was not strong enough in DG ECHO's response.

Over half of partners surveyed (20 out of 39) reported that DG ECHO could have done more to promote the operationalisation of the nexus.<sup>478</sup> **Opportunities were identified to foster a nexus approach in response to the Venezuelan regional crisis** and are summarised in Table 31.<sup>479</sup>

Table 31. Opportunities to foster the nexus

Type	Challenges
<b>Funded actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase funding for dedicated nexus actions and extend the duration of funded projects. Seek more predictable, flexible, and multi-year financing.</li> <li>• Prioritise projects that include nexus aspects and where partners can work with complementary resources and strategies. Consolidate and reinforce actions of social cohesion and peacebuilding in communities to facilitate transition. Allocate financial resources to livelihoods activities.</li> <li>• Ensure that the response is duly institutionalized and systematized. Introduce Key Results Indicators (KRI) and Key Output Indicators (KOI) to measure the scope of nexus actions.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulate a comprehensive nexus strategy and develop a more comprehensive response to address multiple crises occurring in the same territory. Collaborate with humanitarian, development, and national/local actors to develop a national plan for the economic and social integration of migrants and refugees.</li> </ul>
<b>Coordination and collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish tripartite meetings between NGOs, DG ECHO, and the EUD at the country level. Improve planning between donors and work with small municipalities and health centres. Create spaces for coordination and inter-learning with already established local development institutions.</li> <li>• Enhance coordination and alignment between DG ECHO and INTPA approaches, including regular trilateral meetings between DG ECHO, the EUD, and NGOs. Foster better alignment with EU delegations or explore alternative strategies for long-term exit strategies. Enhance collaboration and regular discussions between DG ECHO and the EEAS.</li> <li>• Carry out a mapping of development actors present in the areas where humanitarian actions are implemented. Promote dialogue and create synergies with development actors to identify opportunities for nexus programming.</li> </ul>
<b>Advocacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase nexus-related advocacy and awareness raising. Mobilise development funding and generate greater political incidence to increase recognition and response to humanitarian crises by national governments for future development processes. Advocate for the integration of DRR in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.</li> <li>• Further raise awareness about the political root causes of the crisis and escalate relevant issues to a political level. Strengthen integration between the Group of the Representative of the Migrant and Refugee Response (GTRM) and national humanitarian response mechanisms.</li> </ul>

<sup>478</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (Q37, 20 out of 39 responses).

<sup>479</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (comments in Q37). ICF. 2022. Review of conference and events documents. DG ECHO. 2021. ECHO LAC – Partner's Consultation HIP 2022 | KoboToolbox. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1, DG ECHO partner: 1, Coordination mechanisms: 3, Other EU bodies: 2, Other donor: 1)

### 3.6 EU added value

Q5. To what extent has DG ECHO's use of their mandate and resources in responding to the Venezuelan crisis generated a measurable added value?

Table 32. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC5.1 There were identifiable elements of DG ECHO's added value in terms of influence, scale and continuity of support, its role as an impartial and principled donor, as well as in terms of gap-filling (sectors, local areas and needs not covered by others), expertise and local presence (field network), partnership network and overall approach.	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG ECHO's response was overall perceived as having generated significant added value, both for budgetary reasons (i.e. amount, timing and nature of the funding) and as a result of DG ECHO's comparative advantage vis-à-vis other donors. These mostly related to DG ECHO's field and technical expertise and principled humanitarian approach.</li> <li>In the view of a small number of stakeholders consulted, DG ECHO could add further value by playing a larger role in boosting donor coordination, broadening targeting criteria in some sectors and further simplifying processes.</li> </ul>
JC 5.2 A vast majority of DG ECHO-funded actions would either not have gone forward at all or only gone forward with changes in scope, timing etc. without DG ECHO funding	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Despite the presence of other donors funding the response to the Venezuelan regional crisis, most DG ECHO partners consulted admitted that without DG ECHO's funding, the actions would have been implemented, or their scope or scale would have been reduced.</li> </ul>

**The evaluation found that DG ECHO's response was overall perceived as having generated significant added value, both for budgetary reasons (i.e. amount, timing and nature of the funding) and as a result of DG ECHO's comparative advantage vis-à-vis other donors (JC5.1).**

One of the main elements to which stakeholders referred when asked about the added value of DG ECHO's response in the region was the funding provided. Three main aspects were highlighted:

- **Scale:** Although the amount of DG ECHO funding was significantly lower than the one provided by the US, especially as regards the external dimension of the crisis (where US concentrated most resources), DG ECHO was the second largest donor to the Venezuelan regional crisis during the evaluation period (see EQ9 under Efficiency). DG ECHO's role as one of the main donors to the crisis (especially in Venezuela) was considered by several stakeholders to have generated important added value given the high level of needs.<sup>480</sup>
- **Timing:** beyond the scale of funds, several stakeholders interviewed underlined the importance of the timing of the funding, claiming that one of the things that set DG ECHO apart from other donors was that it was among the first that responded to the crisis, facilitating a quick response.<sup>481</sup>
- **Destination:** DG ECHO funded projects in areas that were not being prioritised or covered by other donors. An example of this was the greater focus that DG ECHO placed on the internal dimension to the crisis as opposed to its external dimension, a strategic decision that according to several DG ECHO officials consulted, considered the fact that

<sup>480</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (27 out of 39 responses – Q45); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; DG ECHO partners: 1; Other donors: 1).

<sup>481</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; DG ECHO partners: 2; Coordination mechanisms: 1); Field interviews (DG ECHO partners: 3).

other donors were focusing on its external dimension.<sup>482</sup> Similarly, the field mission in Colombia showed that both in the Health and Protection sectors, DG ECHO funded activities (e.g. humanitarian transport and voluntary termination of pregnancy) and areas (i.e. regions most affected by the non-international armed conflict, the Amazonas) that the other main donor (the US) struggled to cover.<sup>483</sup> A majority (56%) of DG ECHO partners answering to the survey also indicated that by focusing on immediate risks had generated added value.<sup>484</sup>

- **Budget flexibility:** another key feature of DG ECHO funded frequently cited by stakeholders consulted concerned the flexibility of the budget, which DG ECHO partners claimed had proved crucial during the evaluation period given the ever-evolving context and needs.<sup>485</sup> In Colombia, DG ECHO budget flexibility also allowed to tackle issues related to the *doble/triple afectación* phenomenon in a way that other donors could not, giving DG ECHO partners more room for manoeuvre to address situations related to the Venezuelan crisis and the internal conflict in Colombia as compared to other donors.<sup>486</sup>

### **Likely consequences of the absence of DG ECHO's funding (JC5.2)**

In the survey, DG ECHO partners were asked about the likely consequences for the action had they not received DG ECHO funding. A majority of respondents (79% or 31 out of 39 respondents) indicated that in the absence of DG ECHO funding, they would have not been able to implement the actions (50% or 18 out of 39 respondents) or would have been forced to reduce their scope (29% or 13 out of 39 respondents). Only two respondents indicated that the action would have gone ahead unchanged, with funding from an alternative source. This is in line with the feedback provided by DG ECHO partners interviewed, as half of those who provided comments on this indicated that they would have not been able to implement the actions, while the others said they would have obtained funding from other donors but would have probably not been able to achieve all the results.<sup>487</sup>

**Other key comparative advantages identified by the evaluation concerned DG ECHO's field and technical expertise and principled humanitarian approach (JC5.1).** Concerning its expertise, three (related) elements were found to have added significant added value:

- **Extended (and active) field presence:** this was the most referred (non-budgetary) element in the survey for DG ECHO partners (61% of respondents) and it was also mentioned by DG ECHO partners, DG ECHO officials and other donors interviewed.<sup>488</sup> DG ECHO has a larger field presence than any of the other EU Member States that provided significant humanitarian assistance in response to the crisis (e.g. Spain, Sweden, Germany or France).<sup>489</sup> More notably, unlike most EU Member States, DG ECHO has offices both in Bogotá and Caracas and officials, which enabled DG ECHO officials to better grasp the situation on the ground and, as a result, ensure a timely and appropriate response.<sup>490</sup>

<sup>482</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews (DG ECHO: 3); KIIs (DG ECHO: 2).

<sup>483</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews (Other donors: 2; DG ECHO partners: 2); ICF. 2023 (DG ECHO partners: 1)

<sup>484</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (22 out of 39 responses – Q45).

<sup>485</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 3; Other donors: 1); ICF. 2023. Field interviews (DG ECHO partners: 4).

<sup>486</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews (Other donors: 1; DG ECHO partners: 5).

<sup>487</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 4).

<sup>488</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (24 out of 39 in the survey – Q45); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2; DG ECHO partners: 1; Other donors: 1); ICF. 2023. Field interviews (DG ECHO partners: 2).

<sup>489</sup> The Member State with the most extended field network in the Latin America and the Caribbean region are Spain (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador). Germany has offices in seven countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru), Sweden in five countries (Colombia, Bolivia, Cuba, Venezuela and Guatemala) and France has two regional offices, one covering Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, and the other one covering the remaining South American countries.

<sup>490</sup> ICF. 2023. KII (DG ECHO partners: 1); ICF. 2023. Field interviews (DG ECHO partners: 2).



- **Technical expertise and accompaniment:** although this was only mentioned by a third of DG ECHO partners surveyed,<sup>491</sup> it was often highlighted by stakeholders interviewed.<sup>492</sup> Field missions in Colombia and Venezuela (where DG ECHO is most active) also suggest that the regular monitoring missions and the support provided by Thematic Experts was highly appreciated by DG ECHO partners and considered an element that set them apart from other donors.
- **Understanding of the context:** linked to the two previous elements, feedback from key informants pointed to DG ECHO's experience in the region and understanding of the context and key needs as an important aspect that added value compared to other donors. In the survey, half of DG ECHO partners believed this was the case, and this was also often highlighted by DG ECHO officials and DG ECHO partners interviewed.<sup>493</sup> Several DG ECHO partners explained that, unlike other donors, DG ECHO gathered a lot of information directly from the ground and through their partners.

The other main group of EU added value features most frequently highlighted related to DG ECHO's principled humanitarian response. Several stakeholders consulted for the evaluation explained that unlike the US, DG ECHO was seen as a neutral party with no political agenda and, as a result, was widely heard and respected by the international community in the region.<sup>494</sup> DG ECHO's commitment to ensuring a principled response was also reflected in its insistence on requiring specialisation of the response which, in the view of one DG ECHO partner consulted, was key to guarantee an effective and quality response.<sup>495</sup>

**Room for further added value was identified by some stakeholders consulted.** This mostly concerned a potential bigger role promoting donor coordination (also to further strengthen sustainability, as further explained under EQ7 (under Effectiveness), further broadening the targeting for food assistance and the need to simplify the processes further.<sup>496</sup>

---

<sup>491</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (13 out of 39 respondents referred to DG ECHO's expertise and support in the design and implementation of the action, and 14 out of 39 indicated that DG ECHO's thematic approach was a distinguishing feature).

<sup>492</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 5; Coordination mechanisms: 1, Other stakeholders: 1).

<sup>493</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey for DG ECHO partners (18 out of 39 respondents); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2; DG ECHO partners: 3); ICF. 2023. Field interviews (DG ECHO partners: 3).

<sup>494</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2; Coordination mechanisms: 1; Other donors: 1); ICF. 2023. Field interviews in Colombia (DG ECHO partners: 3).

<sup>495</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 1).

<sup>496</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO partners: 2; Coordination mechanisms: 1).

## 4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarises the main conclusions from the evaluation of DG ECHO's response to the Venezuelan regional crisis, based on the findings reported in Section 3 of the report. The conclusions are presented by evaluation criterion.

### 4.1 Conclusions

**Relevance:** DG ECHO strategy and funded actions were relevant and adapted to the context of the Venezuelan crisis. The adoption of a regional approach was sensible considering cross-borders aspects and common needs, but its operationalisation faced several challenges such as complex administration and coordination, variations in national contexts and response, limited funding, and unsuitable reporting systems. In addition, separating the two dimensions of the crisis was appropriate to adequately consider the specific context, challenges and needs faced inside Venezuela and in neighbouring countries. The evaluation found that DG ECHO's strategy addressed the most pressing needs both within and outside of Venezuela and demonstrated a degree of flexibility in adapting to the evolving situation and changing needs. However, the constraints of limited funding and consequent strategic choices hindered DG ECHO's ability to expand and fully adjust to the protracted nature of the crisis over time.

At project level, funded actions were generally aligned to DG ECHO strategy, well-designed, and tailored to the specific context and needs, taking into account the effects of the crisis on affected populations in a differentiated manner. Funded actions gradually addressed the most pressing needs of the most vulnerable groups over the evaluation period through increasingly thorough and comprehensive needs assessments, the inclusion of risk analysis and increased capacity and knowledge. However, there were limitations in the scope of the response, trade-offs in addressing various needs, and the consideration of specific vulnerable groups mainly due to the funding limitation.

Beneficiaries were actively involved in both the design and implementation of these actions through various participatory approaches. Similarly, local communities, vulnerable groups, and grassroots organisations were increasingly involved in the design of funded actions over the evaluation period, demonstrating a commitment to inclusive decision-making. However, there were challenges in involving beneficiaries (e.g. language and cultural barriers, high mobility, pendular movements), and the needs of certain groups targeted by DG ECHO and partners, such as transnational indigenous populations, the LGBTIQ+ community, and young migrants, could not be fully assessed at design stage. These were found to be mainly due to the challenges faced in conducting needs assessments (including the lack of reliable data, restricted humanitarian space, lack of access to communities and specific groups, security concerns, capacity and logistical issues) and the weaknesses reported in conducting risk analyses.

DG ECHO partners were able to adapt their response to the evolving situation and needs of beneficiaries. The successful adaptation of funded actions to the evolving context was facilitated by modification requests, the Crisis Modifier, and flexibility measures encouraged by DG ECHO. However, there were some shortcomings, including difficulties in organising information, ensuring indicator comparability, relying on outdated or unreliable secondary data, and lacking primary data and reliable sectoral analysis. DG ECHO's monitoring visits were found to be instrumental in promoting adaptability, capacity-building, and addressing potential issues.

**Coherence:** Compliance with the humanitarian principles, the 'do no harm' and other Protection Mainstreaming principles were at the core of DG ECHO's humanitarian response. In the case of Colombia, IHL was considered, where relevant (i.e. *doble/triple afectación*). Despite a few challenges, DG ECHO-funded actions in response to the Venezuelan crisis, both inside and outside Venezuela, were generally aligned with fundamental humanitarian principles. Challenges faced by DG ECHO and its partners were mitigated and risks proactively flagged and dealt with. Especially the restrictive environment inside Venezuela and the politicalisation of the crisis posed significant barriers to delivering a principled approach. In the wider region, the lack of reliable data and the lack of experience of partners operating in a humanitarian response posed challenges to alignment. Mitigation measures included capacity building of (local) partners, monitoring missions and data

collection, and advocacy. These challenges also made it difficult for partners to meet global humanitarian standard, especially at the start of the evaluation period. Quality of DG ECHO-funded actions improved in time, thanks to, among others, DG ECHO's support to partners (i.e. monitoring missions and thematic experts).

DG ECHO and its partners coordinated their response with other actors using various coordination mechanisms put in place at international (Solidarity Donor Conference), regional (e.g. R4V Platform, OCHA ROLAC, LAC RMD Coalition) and national (e.g. Humanitarian Country Teams, Donor coordination groups, Clusters, GTRM, GIFMM). Coordination also took place informally, through (bilateral) information exchange. DG ECHO's level of engagement and its role in the various coordination mechanisms varied between countries and mechanisms. Compared to other LAC countries DG ECHO played a more prominent role inside Venezuela enhancing and steering coordination, coordinating the humanitarian actors in the country before the arrival of OCHA and the establishment of Humanitarian Country Team in 2019, which was triggered by DG ECHO's funding and advocacy.

Outside Venezuela, the establishment of R4V platform, led to a duplication of coordination structures running in parallel with pre-existing mechanisms at regional and national level such as the OCHA REDLAC, National Humanitarian Network, Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, and the clusters. This led to some inefficiencies and a lack of clarity amongst those intervening in the region. Especially in Colombia, where coordination mechanisms were well-established, the duplication of structures undermined efficient and effective coordination. In other countries, which lacked a coordination mechanism, the R4V platform helped to improve the response to some extent. Overall, DG ECHO and its partners were vocal about the need for simplification of the humanitarian coordination structures.

Overall, while overlaps in the response were largely avoided, and DG ECHO's response was aligned with other donors', synergies could have been better exploited, as coordination in many cases remained limited to information exchange.

**Effectiveness:** Over the evaluation period, DG ECHO funded 80 humanitarian actions to address the Venezuelan regional crisis (amounting to EUR 237 million, of which 58% was dedicated to respond to the internal dimension of the crisis, while the remaining 42% funded activities that addressed the needs of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the region). The evaluation found that most activities planned under the funded actions were implemented, despite numerous operational challenges faced by DG ECHO and its partners in Venezuela and countries in the region. The actions implemented covered most types of activities illustrated in the ToC, especially for the four sector that received most funding (Health, Protection, Education in Emergencies and WASH). Shelter and Food Security activities were comparatively more limited, and few Livelihood assistance activities were included in the DG ECHO-funded actions. Some improvements concerning coordination and the strengthening of the humanitarian response were also observed.

Several internal and external factors affected the implementation of the actions during the evaluation period, including a limited international/humanitarian experience in Venezuela and other countries (especially at the onset of the crisis) and difficulties faced by some partners to cooperate with national and local authorities in Venezuela and, to some extent, other countries or areas in the region. The existence of a double coordination structure resulting from the creation of the R4V platform also generated operational challenges for some DG ECHO partners, who argued that it had led to inefficiencies and excessive burden on humanitarian organisations. Several external factors also forced DG ECHO and its partners to adapt their operations, namely the high level of politicisation of the crisis in Venezuela and the region, the COVID-19 pandemic, the high degree of insecurity in some areas covered, and increasing xenophobia and tensions with local populations in some countries. In Venezuela, DG ECHO and its partners faced additional obstacles due to barriers to humanitarian operations in the country and numerous logistical difficulties. According to most partners consulted, DG ECHO's support was crucial to mitigate these obstacles and ensure the effective implementation of activities.

In terms of results, outcomes and impacts, the assessment is also overall positive, and feedback collected points to a slight improvement in the performance of partners over the evaluation period.

The main changes were reported in the Protection, Health and Education in Emergencies sectors. In contrast, and as expected given the need to prioritise the most urgent needs, little to no progress was observed with respect to increased resilience of crisis-affected populations and the finding of sustainable solutions to the crisis which prevent future crises. Ultimately, DG ECHO's response was deemed to have contributed to achieving the objectives set (i.e. saving lives, alleviating human suffering and safeguarding the integrity and human dignity of affected populations). Important limitations affecting its ability to generate a significant impact were however identified, mostly due to the limited funding available (which forced to adopt a very narrow focus on live-saving, emergency response), the lack of investment from national governments (in Venezuela but also in the region), and the continued deterioration of the socio-economic situation in Venezuela.

Beyond the financial and technical support to activities implemented by its partners, DG ECHO also placed significant focus on advocacy and communication activities throughout the evaluation period, as well as in the run-up to 2017. Advocacy was done directly by DG ECHO (at HQ and Field level) and through its partners. DG ECHO's direct advocacy and communication focused on raising the visibility of the crisis and mobilising funding among the international community – and to some extent, EU institutions – and on promoting and facilitating adherence to international humanitarian standards among DG ECHO partners. In Venezuela, DG ECHO also placed a lot of emphasis on the opening of the humanitarian space and facilitating humanitarian operations and coordination in the country, engaging in extensive bilateral and multilateral advocacy behind the curtains (due to the need to keep low visibility). These activities contributed to – even if they were not the sole responsible for – the improvements observed in some of these areas from 2019 onwards (i.e. visibility and recognition of the crisis, wider humanitarian space in Venezuela and humanitarian/international presence across the region). DG ECHO's advocacy role was particularly crucial inside Venezuela, where it contributed significantly to opening humanitarian space and establishing – and subsequently improving – coordination mechanisms in the country.

The main shortcomings of DG ECHO's advocacy role related to its limited impact on coordination outside of Venezuela, despite efforts. On the one hand, DG ECHO's advocacy with respect to the need to simplify the (double) coordination structure established as a result of the Venezuelan regional crisis yielded limited results. Some stakeholders consulted also identified room for DG ECHO to advocate more strongly towards other donors and DG INTPA to ensure follow-up on the humanitarian response.

**Efficiency:** DG ECHO encouraged the adoption of cost-effective approaches by partners and took actions to ensure cost-effectiveness throughout the project cycle to the extent possible, in light of the constraints imposed by the context and the limited internal tools, data, and human resources to carry out a sounder cost-effectiveness analysis.

All HIPs covering the Venezuela crisis stressed the need to select the most cost-effective modality and that a “response analysis to support modality selection for all resource transfers” was mandatory. They also promoted an integrated / multi-sectoral approach. Furthermore, cost-effectiveness/efficiency was one of the six criteria used by DG ECHO to assess proposals. However, data on DG ECHO's assessment of this criterion was only available for 52% of the funded actions. Consulted DG ECHO staff noted challenges in assessing this criterion given the complexity, urgency and variability of the context and activities. The evaluation considers that the lack of specific DG ECHO guidelines and benchmarks to assess efficiency/cost-effectiveness may have made this assessment more challenging and not always accurate. The limited number of alternative proposals addressing similar needs rendered the criterion less useful.

DG ECHO monitored the implemented activities, their results and budget execution on an ongoing basis based on frequent dialogs with partners, missions, and on interim and final stage reporting. Evidence shows that during DG ECHO's field missions field officers and during interim stage, DG ECHO highlighted opportunities/risks related to efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Actions funded by DG ECHO to respond to the Venezuela crisis were designed and implemented balancing efficiency and cost-effectiveness with other elements. Throughout the project cycle, obstacles were generally addressed or mitigated and opportunities for efficiency, effectiveness gains were explored, and lessons learned incorporated. Overall, there were no significant cost

differences between initial and financial budget of the funded actions, and the expected results were mostly achieved (see Effectiveness criterion).

However, while consulted stakeholders indicate that, overall, the benefits of the portfolio of actions outweighed their costs, available data does not allow for a full assessment of their efficiency and cost effectiveness.

**Sustainability:** DG ECHO has shown a strong willingness to collaborate with development actors and actively engage in coordination mechanisms and conferences. However, progress in finding durable solutions to the protracted regional crisis has been limited. DG ECHO promoted sustainability, resilience building, and the operationalisation of the humanitarian-development nexus in its strategy through various means, including localisation of aid, capacity building, participatory approaches, resilience mainstreaming, and coordination efforts. However, the practical outcomes of incorporating sustainability and resilience elements into the response have been constrained by the limited funding available (from both, DG ECHO and development actors) and a predominant focus on short-term, lifesaving interventions in light of the high humanitarian needs persisting. Challenges such as political factors, weak infrastructure, limited resources, and lack of coordination have further hindered the sustainability of funded actions. Despite these limitations, DG ECHO has made efforts to foster collaboration and align with development actors, including the European Union. While DG ECHO made attempts to foster interlinkages and synergies, and complementarity could be observed through initiatives funded by the IcSP and collaboration between DG ECHO and DG INTPA, projects reviewed, and stakeholders consulted did not convey apparent synergies on the ground. Overall, the operationalisation of the nexus was limited and fragmented. However, this shortcoming cannot be attributed specifically to DG ECHO, as it was a challenge faced by the broader humanitarian community involved in the response to the Venezuelan regional crisis. The evaluation found that there is a need for stronger coordination, increased funding, comprehensive strategies, and improved collaboration to enhance the operationalisation of the nexus and address the challenges of the protracted regional crisis.

**EU added value:** The evaluation found that DG ECHO's response was overall perceived as having generated significant added value. One of the main aspects of DG ECHO's response that stakeholders believed had generated added value was the funding provided. DG ECHO was not only the second largest donor to the Venezuelan regional crisis, but it was also among the first donors to respond to it. During the evaluation period, DG ECHO's funding also generated value as compared to that of other (larger) donors because it allowed to cover areas, activities and needs that were being not, or insufficiently, covered (like Sexual and reproductive health for example not attended by the US). Lastly, DG ECHO demonstrated more budget flexibility than other donors in the region, allowing partners to adapt to an ever-evolving context and, in Colombia, tackle issues related to the *doble/triple afectación*. Testament of the importance of DG ECHO's funding to the crisis was the fact that a majority of DG ECHO partners who reflected on the likely consequences of the absence of DG ECHO's funding considered that without it, their actions would have not been implemented or their scope would have been reduced.

The evaluation also identified other comparative advantages of DG ECHO's involvement in the response to the crisis. These were primarily linked to DG ECHO's field presence and technical expertise (which also ensured a good level of understanding of the context and key needs) and its commitment to ensuring a principled humanitarian response.

## 4.2 Recommendations

As requested in the terms of reference, this section presents five key strategic recommendations for DG ECHO's future response to the Venezuelan regional crisis. The recommendations are informed by findings and observations stemming directly from the evaluation and as such, they focus on issues and developments from the period covered by this evaluation (2017-2021). For each strategic recommendation, a brief explanation of their rationale (i.e. evaluation findings to which they relate or issues they seek to address) and possible ways in which they could be operationalised is provided.

### 1. DG ECHO should maintain the regional approach at strategic level but prioritise country-specific approaches at operational level, except when a regional approach is more appropriate

The evaluation found that adopting a regional approach to respond to the crisis was a suitable decision given that the crisis affected multiple countries, and some issues and needs were common in all the region. The regional approach also allowed DG ECHO to address emerging, common, and migration-related issues and ensure greater visibility of the crisis, and it did not prevent the response from being tailored to each country. However, its operationalisation presented several challenges and limitations, including:

- At project level, there was limited cross-border collaboration and a lack of a regional vision. Even though most DG ECHO-funded actions during the evaluation period were multi-country, the evaluation noted a lack of mechanisms to facilitate cross-border collaboration and limited cross-border collaboration between implementing teams in the different countries.
- The regional approach posed challenges given the differences in the context and the response across countries covered. Although the needs of Venezuelan migrants and refugees across the region were similar in nature, the different national context, profiles of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, and the stage of their migration process also resulted in differences in the level of humanitarian needs and specific support they required. These differences were not properly reflected in the HIPs for Latin America and the Caribbean and were only partially reflected in the proposals – and their subsequent appraisal as well as the monitoring and reporting of funded actions – even if the amount of funding and the type of activities supported varied, to some extent, from country to country.
- The regional approach also led to missed opportunities to better exploit synergies and complementarity between different crises and humanitarian budget lines in some countries. An example of this is Colombia, where the distinction between the budget allocated to address the migration crisis (VENSIT) and other humanitarian crises in the country (COLSIT and DP) created difficulties to effectively address the *doble/triple afectación* phenomenon during the evaluation period (despite DG ECHO's flexibility).

In addition, one of the main limitations that affected the evaluation was linked to the high number of multi-country projects (covering a large number of countries) which, in many cases, did not necessarily address common issues or cross-border elements. This over-reliance on multi-country projects hampered a more detailed analysis of the performance per country/sector given that appraisal and monitoring information did not generally generate the level of broken-down data per country (and if relevant, sub-national region) and result covered by the action. This limited the ability of the evaluation to spot differences across countries.

Considering the above, DG ECHO should adapt its strategy to **prioritise country-specific approaches at operational level** (to better reflect singularities and specific country contexts across the region) **while maintaining a regional approach at strategic level**, to ensure that the response considers the regional nature of the crisis and regional commonalities across the region. More specifically, the (adapted) hybrid approach would consist of the following elements:

- At strategic planning level, the HIPs should remain regional, to maximise the impact of DG ECHO's advocacy efforts and maintain a high level of awareness, whilst also identifying national specificities. The HIPs should thus set out a regional strategy focusing on common issues, needs and cross-border challenges, and the desired regional / multi-country response to addressing these, while at the same time drawing attention to specific national needs and related response priorities. This will not only help identifying possible response gaps, but also areas where a progressive transition from humanitarian aid to development may be feasible, thus favouring the Nexus.
- At operational level, multi-country projects should be prioritised only when they are necessary (i.e. a harmonised approach is needed to tackle common needs and issues, to reinforce the border dimension) or when they are likely to yield greater impact, bring important economies of scale, etc. Where they cannot bring any value added, however, a country-specific approach should be favoured.

- DG ECHO should closely work with partners implementing multi-country approaches to make sure that these are both internally coherent (i.e. implementing harmonised activities across the borders) but also complementary to the actions (multi-country or not) implemented by other partners active in the region. DG ECHO could encourage coordination and cooperation within and between partners through, for example, carrying out monitoring missions focusing on border/multi-country aspects, or covering two or more countries during the same visit (these missions would gather DG ECHO Field staff from the Regional Office and/or the relevant national offices).

To complement the above, DG ECHO should also **strengthen internal tools and processes for the appraisal of multi-country projects to ensure concrete and efficient evaluation reporting systems**. In the context of multi-country projects, DG ECHO (Field and HQ) staff should ensure that the appraisal and monitoring information included in the FichOp adequately reflects any variations observed between the countries and (sub-national) regions covered, if relevant.

## **2. DG ECHO should establish objectives and priorities for their response to the internal and external dimensions of the crisis in the medium term and, where and when relevant, further exploit opportunities to promote and facilitate a progressively implemented transition to a long-term response by development and/or government actors**

In Venezuela and across the region, the level of (acute) humanitarian needs remains high, and life-saving interventions are still required. This was the case at the end of the evaluation period (2021) and is expected to hold true for the coming years. Despite this, the evaluation showed that there is a growing need to accompany humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable with interventions addressing longer-term needs of the broader affected population (e.g. increased resilience, livelihood support and socio-economic integration of Venezuelan migrants in the region). During the evaluation period, this was observed in several areas across the region where, due to existing conditions, migratory patterns or the specific profile of the (Venezuelan) population settled, longer-term solutions became ever more relevant. In the coming years, the co-existence of (acute) humanitarian needs among the most vulnerable Venezuelan population (in Venezuela and the region), and longer-term needs of the affected population is expected to continue, rendering the involvement of development actors and / or national governments in the LAC region increasingly necessary to avoid perpetuating the vulnerable state of the population impacted by the crisis through the support to interventions with a longer-term impact.

The evaluation also observed that DG ECHO's response to the crisis was highly reactive during the 2017-2021 period, partly due to the need to adapt to the drastic and constant changes in the context and to the availability of new data allowing to better depict and understand the main needs on the ground. More recently, the Venezuelan regional crisis entered a protracted stage. Despite the challenges that this generates, the protracted nature of the crisis, coupled with the better understanding of the situation that DG ECHO and other humanitarian actors involved have acquired since 2017, ensures a higher degree of predictability of how the situation and the needs may evolve in the future, facilitating the design of a medium-term strategy for their response to the Venezuelan regional crisis.

Against this background, it is recommended that along with short-term priorities, **DG ECHO establish objectives for the response to the Venezuelan regional crisis (in Venezuela and in the region) in the medium and, where possible, long term**. The establishment of differentiated medium-term objectives would not imply a change in DG ECHO's programming, which would remain short-term given its humanitarian mandate. It would rather entail the identification of areas and / or population groups expected to continue requiring humanitarian assistance in the coming years (and the type of assistance that will likely be needed) as opposed to those which would benefit from a progressively implemented transition to long-term responses led by development or government actors.

In this context, the adaptation of the HIPs to better reflect the specific needs and related response priorities across the region (see Recommendation #1) would be crucial, as it would enable DG ECHO to use them to set differentiated priorities in the short and medium term and to identify long-term needs requiring government- or development-led interventions, in line with the different level and nature of (humanitarian) needs in the various areas or for the different population groups. The HIPs would also ensure a sufficient level of flexibility, as the objectives and priorities would be established and subsequently adapted based on observed and expected migratory patterns and evolution of the situation and humanitarian needs every year.

Reflecting the medium-term strategy and identifying relevant long-term needs that render the operationalisation of the Nexus relevant should not be at the detriment of prioritising life-saving interventions / responses to (acute) humanitarian needs. To avoid this, the HIPs should clearly differentiate between priorities for the upcoming year (i.e. which will continue informing the selection of projects) and DG ECHO's objectives in the medium term for the different areas and / or population groups (i.e. this may envisage the continuation of support if the level of (acute) humanitarian needs remains high, an increased focus on the operationalisation of the Nexus where relevant and possible, etc.).

The establishment of medium-term objectives and identification of long-term needs in the HIPs should be accompanied by:

- **Higher degree of predictability of the funding to the Venezuelan regional crisis**, at least on a yearly basis (i.e. less reliance on top-ups) and, if possible, for the next years (i.e. predictability as to whether the funding will decrease, increase or remain the same). Increased funding predictability would reflect positively on the ability of DG ECHO to establish a medium-term strategy (in line with the expected level of funding) and in doing so, it would also allow DG ECHO partners to better anticipate DG ECHO the focus in coming years, potentially allowing them to better design their interventions in the short, medium and long-term. In this sense, DG ECHO could consider rolling out Programmatic Partnerships with framework partners involved in the response more widely, beyond those already identified as potential Programmatic Partners for the period 2021-2027.
- **Enhanced advocacy towards other humanitarian and/or development actors** to raise awareness about existing long-term needs and priorities (as identified by DG ECHO in the HIPs) and the areas where the operationalisation of the Nexus and exit strategies are increasingly necessary. While long-term needs such as socio-economic integration fall outside DG ECHO's mandate, DG ECHO has a deep knowledge of the crisis and the needs of individuals in Venezuela and Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the region and, therefore, it is well positioned to lead advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives targeting regional governments and humanitarian and/or development actors able to tackle these needs (e.g. Member States' cooperation agencies with a combined humanitarian and development mandate). Along with engaging in direct advocacy with these actors, other potential ways in which this could be done would be by increasing funding for advocacy activities implemented by its partners (at international and national level) or by investing more on communication and advocacy specifically targeting humanitarian-development donors able to address longer-term needs. This would, however, require additional financial and human resources dedicated to advocacy to ensure that these efforts are not undertaken at the expense of addressing existing (acute) humanitarian needs.
- **A progressive adaptation of the focus of the response at operational level, if and when the level of funding to the Venezuelan regional crisis and the local context allow it.** Although the overall level of (acute) humanitarian needs remains high in Venezuela and the region (and has in fact increased significantly in certain areas of the region, e.g. along the Central American route), the evaluation observed that some of the areas or population which required life-saving assistance during the evaluation period were now facing other less urgent – albeit increasingly relevant – needs which required an increased focus on more sustainable (humanitarian and / or development) interventions. For DG ECHO's response to increase its relevance in these areas / for these population groups in the future, a progressive adaptation of the focus of the response at operational level – in line with the changes in the level and nature of humanitarian needs – would be needed. For instance, in areas and/or contexts where purely life-saving interventions are less needed, DG ECHO should place increased focus on sustainability and resilience-building. Similarly, in areas where the level of acute humanitarian needs is progressively lower, and the national context allows it, DG ECHO should seek – and encourage partners to seek – complementarity between DG ECHO's funding and support provided by other humanitarian and/or development actors present in the region covering longer-term needs (e.g. livelihood support, socio-economic integration). This approach would not be possible, however, if the following pre-conditions are not met:
  - Additional financial resources are made available to respond to the crisis: in a context of limited funding, life-saving and emergency interventions should continue to be prioritised over those addressing less urgent humanitarian needs. Therefore, progressively adapting the focus of DG ECHO's response to pay increased attention to sustainability, resilience-building and livelihood support would require additional resources to avoid that this is done at the expense of covering the most urgent needs of the most vulnerable population.



- Along with the availability of funding, the specific focus in each region / for each population group would also depend on the specific local context and the extent to which other actors (development or government) can cover these needs.

### **3. DG ECHO should expand its capacity-building efforts to further enhance data systematisation and should promote and support initiatives seeking to improve information management and sharing among humanitarian actors in the region and to facilitate collaborative learning**

During the evaluation period, DG ECHO dedicated significant efforts to enhance partner capacity and streamline data processes, including by funding actions that incorporated a strong data/information management element, encouraging cooperation and sharing of data and information between partners, and providing (technical) support to partners for the strengthening of data and information management processes and systems. Although progress in this area was observed, the evaluation also identified room for additional improvement, namely:

- DG ECHO partners collected a wealth of field information which helped them and DG ECHO assess and adjust the response to changing needs. Despite this, room for better systematisation and use of collected data was identified, particularly in terms of consolidation, sharing and use of the analyses.
- Although partners' needs assessments were overall increasingly thorough and of higher quality, there were differences in the level of quality between the different partners, countries, sectors and years. DG ECHO also noted weaknesses in the partners' risk analyses and inconsistent use of international indicators, which made it difficult to compare the crisis to other humanitarian emergencies.
- DG ECHO promoted and, to some extent, supported cooperation among partners, notably through monitoring missions and sector-specific technical partners' meetings. These activities were, however, more frequent in some countries than others. Similarly, although coordination improved over the evaluation period, room for further synergies and less overlaps between partners was identified.
- DG ECHO partners and other humanitarian actors faced difficulties to effectively reach certain population groups deemed to be highly vulnerable (LGBTIQ+ communities, indigenous populations, men travelling alone, young migrants). The lack of coverage of some of these groups (e.g. men travelling group) was due to the prioritisation that DG ECHO partners did of other (more) vulnerable groups, but in other cases (e.g., LGBTIQ+ communities, indigenous populations), natural barriers and other obstacles made it difficult for DG ECHO partners to assess their specific needs and thereby, ensure a tailored approach.

The above observations highlight the need to continue efforts to strengthen capacity across the region and further foster coordination and collaboration among partners (and among other humanitarian organisations) operating in the region, especially as the LAC region is currently affected by several migratory crises which require humanitarian assistance. In light of this, it is recommended that DG ECHO expand its capacity-building efforts and further foster coordination and collaboration among partners by **reinforcing its support to further enhance data systematisation and sharing, evidence-based programming and capacity-building across the region**, building on previous support. To this end, sufficient financial and human resources should be made available to ensure that the expansion of capacity-building efforts does not lead to a decrease in the financial or human resources dedicated to the operational response to the crisis.

More specifically, this would entail the following measures:

- Continuation of the funding of projects seeking to strengthen information management and sharing, both at regional and national level, focusing on countries where there is less data available, or where information management presents more weaknesses. Given that strengthened capacity among partners in the region would also allow for a strengthened response to other migratory crises in the region, the Disaster Preparedness budget window could be potentially used to finance such interventions through projects tackling regional displacement and migration.
- Promotion and support of technical exchanges between humanitarian actors operating in the region (including DG ECHO partners), on relevant topics and common challenges and issues faced in specific countries, across the region and possibly across continents. These initiatives would be most useful if led by existing coordination platforms, working groups or clusters as they would allow for exchanges between all humanitarian organisations operating in the region (as opposed to restricted to DG ECHO

partners). However, in the absence of such initiatives, or to complement them, DG ECHO should consider the possibility of organising specific sessions (e.g. technical workshops or other types of exchanges) among their partners. These sessions would enable DG ECHO partners operating in countries where there is less DG ECHO presence to access further technical support and would also be an opportunity to promote collaborative learning among partners within and beyond the LAC region. Workshop topics could either be suggested by DG ECHO geo-desks, based on information provided by DG ECHO Field officers, or be chosen in consultation with partners.

- Advocacy towards UN agencies coordinating the humanitarian response in the region (e.g. UN OCHA, UNHCR and IOM) for the establishment of an online platform to enable information sharing and knowledge management, as a means to promote collaborative learning. The purpose of the platform would be to serve as a hub / repository for sharing information and analysis outputs that could be beneficial to other humanitarian actors in the region (e.g. national and international NGOs, cluster leads, etc.), regardless or not they are meant to be published. Considering the potential benefits that such a platform would generate for other (migratory) crises in the region, the construction and management of the platform should ideally be led by UN agencies coordinating the humanitarian response in the region (UN OCHA, IOM and UNHCR) and not be restricted to the Venezuelan regional crisis.

#### **4. DG ECHO should ensure that lessons learned are systematically collected, recorded, shared and acted upon by DG ECHO and its partners across the LAC region and promote similar initiatives more widely across the region**

The evaluation concluded that DG ECHO partners incorporated, to some extent, lessons learned during the design of their actions, and that lessons learned were also identified and considered by DG ECHO to inform the response during the evaluation period. However, this was not done systematically across the region, and opportunities to exchange lessons learned between DG ECHO and its partners, and between partners, were limited beyond monitoring missions.

In light of this, it is recommended that **DG ECHO set up mechanisms to systematically identify, record, share and act upon lessons learned at various levels and, where possible, promote similar initiatives more widely across the region.** Lessons learned processes are a powerful tool to improve the performance of DG ECHO's response in the region and promote continuous and collaborative learning and improvement. As such, they constitute an important complement to the enhanced capacity-building efforts suggested under Recommendation #3, especially as they allow to combine DG ECHO-led support with partner-led exchanges and knowledge transfer. This is particularly relevant considering DG ECHO's renewed commitment to the localisation principle and the recent Flagship Initiative, of which Colombia is part.

More specifically, this recommendation would entail:

- The organisation of lessons learned sessions within DG ECHO, at least once a year, to discuss and follow up on lessons learned identified by DG ECHO officers in HQ and across the LAC region. The sessions should involve the DG ECHO LAC Team and relevant DG ECHO Field officers/experts in the LAC region. Identified lessons should be discussed, recorded and documented, indicating action points stemming from each of them.
- The promotion and support of exchanges of good practices and lessons learned among DG ECHO partners and, if possible, humanitarian organisations operating in the region. Like the capacity-building and information exchange initiatives proposed under Recommendation #3, lessons learned processes would be most useful if led by coordination platforms, working groups or clusters as they would allow to involve other humanitarian organisations operating in the region (i.e. not restricted to DG ECHO partners). For this reason, DG ECHO should promote and support the establishment of lessons learned mechanisms in the region, which could potentially be embedded in the construction of the online platform referred to under Recommendation #3. In their absence, however, DG ECHO should establish such processes to identify, record, share and act upon lessons learned identified by DG ECHO partners. This could take the form, for instance, of lessons learned sessions organised by DG ECHO Field officers on a regular basis (e.g. once every year / two years). Partners would be invited to identify their main lessons learned in advance, for discussion with other partners and DG ECHO during the session.

To ensure that the financial and human resources dedicated to organising and / or promoting lessons learned processes do not reduce DG ECHO's operational capacity to cover humanitarian needs in the region, sufficient (additional) human and financial resources should be made available for these activities.

**5. DG ECHO should continue exploiting its role as leading and knowledgeable donor in the region to communicate and advocate more strongly to reinstate the visibility of the crisis and enhance donor coordination**

DG ECHO played a crucial role in raising visibility of the crisis and mobilising funding during the evaluation period especially, albeit not only, in the initial years. Examples of such efforts include DG ECHO's leading role in International Solidarity Conferences and dialogues and workshops with civil society organisations and the ICG's Humanitarian Aid Working Group (as reported in EQ7) but also presentations before relevant Council working parties and, more recently, its involvement in the European Humanitarian Forum or the EU-CELAC Summit. However, despite a significant increase in international humanitarian funding between 2019 and 2021, the available resources remained insufficient to address all humanitarian needs identified and/or regions affected, resulting in a high level of prioritisation in the allocation of humanitarian funding.

Since 2021, the crisis has become protracted and international funding has decreased in recent years while needs remain high, requiring an even higher degree of prioritisation which, if continued, may ultimately generate unintended effects in the future, such as additional population movements that could create additional risks and humanitarian needs. There is therefore a need to re-establish the crisis's prominence to prevent a further decrease of funding and preventing it from becoming a forgotten crisis. Despite providing comparatively limited funding compared to the US, DG ECHO can play a significant role in this process due to its deep understanding of the situation on the ground, technical expertise and commitment to a principled approach, which is highly appreciated by the humanitarian community.

In this context, it is recommended that **DG ECHO continue engaging, and where possible strengthen, advocacy and communication to reinstate the visibility of the crisis at EU and international levels and prevent further funding cuts and prevent it from becoming a forgotten crisis**, especially considering that attention has recently shifted towards other existing crises (e.g. Ukraine). This could entail:

- Advocacy and communication towards other EU institutions (Council, Parliament, EEAS) and other Commission services (e.g. DG INTPA, FPI). DG ECHO, more specifically the LAC team (HQ), should:
  - Engage with members of other EU institutions to continue advocating and raising awareness about the protracted crisis and the existing needs in Venezuela and in the region, building on previous efforts (e.g. presentations with relevant Council working parties, including on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) or on Latin America and the Caribbean (COLAC)). The publication of this evaluation could provide a good opportunity to do so, as part of dissemination efforts. Along with the relevant Council working parties mentioned above, European Parliament Committees (e.g. Foreign Affairs, Development) could be targeted to also encourage Member States to donate more, and may prove particularly opportune considering that the evaluation will be published during Spain's tenure of the Council's Presidency (traditionally a country that has a strong humanitarian presence in the LAC region). If funding allows it, regular meetings and presentations could be organised to provide updates on the situation, at least once a year.
  - Regularly and more systematically disseminate information on the humanitarian (and other) needs on the ground with the hierarchy and other EU bodies, e.g. through briefings, bulletins, etc. During the evaluation period, DG ECHO led initiatives and shared information with other EU bodies and Commission services (e.g. information sheets), but this was done rather ad hoc. This measure could also contribute to the efforts to strengthen the Nexus in the context of the crisis (see Recommendation #2).
- Advocacy and communication at international level. DG ECHO should continue collaborating with other EU institutions to ensure that the EU maintains its crucial role in international Solidarity and Pledging Conferences and dialogues with civil society organisations from LAC countries, as well as within the context of the ICG in Venezuela. This would enable DG ECHO to maintain its position and credibility as one of the leading donors for the crisis, provided that the level of EU funding to the crisis remains sufficiently high.

Wider advocacy can also be considered, but only if dedicated additional funding is made available. This could entail, for instance, funding DG ECHO partners to implement wider advocacy initiatives (e.g. communication campaigns, producing reports that can be published on humanitarian databases like ALNAP). DG ECHO could also launch a dedicated campaign on the crisis, highlighting the existing needs, what DG ECHO is doing and shedding light on the needs and challenges that remain unaddressed.

**DG ECHO should also make use of its leadership role to further exploit opportunities to coordinate with other donors.** While several initiatives were in place, DG ECHO's role as coordination lead varied significantly from country to country (e.g. in Venezuela and Colombia, where DG ECHO led the Humanitarian Donors Group, it played a comparatively more significant role than in other countries like Ecuador). Similarly, even if overlaps between donors were avoided, programming coordination between donors was limited, and donors consulted noted an added value in having more formalised (e.g. at regional level) or more meaningful exchanges in the context of coordination mechanisms that already exist.

There is therefore room for DG ECHO to ensure more meaningful coordination between donors across the region. This could entail:

- The systematisation of donor dialogues at regional level, possibly in collaboration with the US, organising such dialogues at least once a year (ideally at programming stage). During the evaluation period, donor dialogues were held at regional level but as explained under Section 3.2 (Coherence), these were not organised in a systematic or regular manner. The systematisation of such dialogues would therefore imply that these are held on a regular basis (at least once a year).
- The establishment of humanitarian donor coordination groups in countries receiving significant funding to respond to the external dimension of the crisis (e.g. Peru, Ecuador). Like in Colombia, these could be co-led by DG ECHO and the US. This would, however, require buy-in from the US and additional human resources in these countries.
- Incorporate in the dialogues and coordination groups the identification and discussion of lessons learned and promote collaborative learning between donors. In this context, DG ECHO could also consider organising online workshops for donors in the region to ensure that this is done more consistently across the region.

For this to be effective, it is crucial that sufficient human and financial resources are made available for communication and advocacy efforts, but also that DG ECHO's funding to the operational response to the crisis is, at least, maintained at a similar level as a significant reduction would risk DG ECHO lose its credibility as leading donor.

# ***PART B: EVALUATION OF DG ECHO'S PARTNERSHIP WITH UNHCR***

## 5 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

### 5.1 Evaluation questions

This component of the evaluation covered three evaluation criteria (coherence, effectiveness and efficiency). Table 33 presents the evaluation questions included under each criterion.

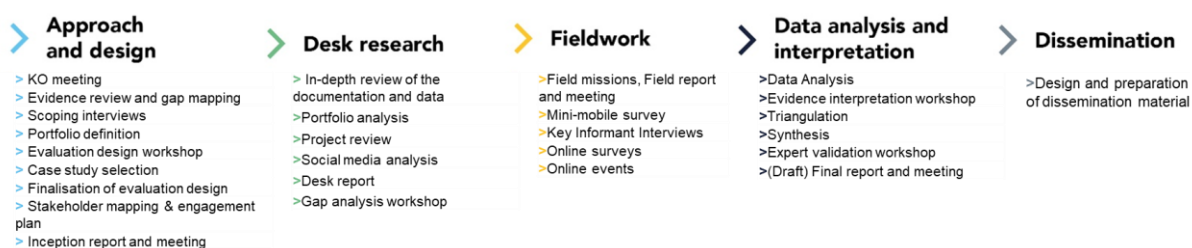
Table 33. Evaluation criteria and questions covered in this component

Coherence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EQ1.</b> How well aligned were DG ECHO and the UNHCR in terms of: i) strategies, objectives and mandate? (EQ1.1), ii) needs assessments and vulnerability analyses? (EQ1.2), and iii) advocacy priorities, communication campaigns and visibility efforts? (EQ1.3)</li> </ul>
Efficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EQ 2.</b> To what extent did the DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership succeed in: (i) maximising efficiencies and decreasing management and related costs, including administrative burden? (EQ2.1), and b) improving cost-effectiveness in their response? (EQ2.2)</li> </ul>
Effectiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EQ 3.</b> To what extent has the Strategic Partnership approach deepened, improved or hindered the overall cooperation between DG ECHO and UNHCR? To what extent did a structured, strategic, timely and functional dialogue take place between the two partners at HQ, regional and country/field level? By what means? (EQ3.1); To what extent were the outcomes of this dialogue reflected in the focus of funding trends between the two organisations? (EQ3.2); To what extent did this dialogue have any impact at policy and operational levels? (EQ3.3); How could the partnership be further strengthened? (EQ3.4)</li> <li>• <b>EQ 4.</b> To what extent did the DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership succeed in strengthening vulnerability, needs-based and quality responses?</li> <li>• <b>EQ 5.</b> To what extent did the DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership succeed in encouraging both sides to fulfil the ambitions of the partnership (definition of the partnership, clarity of obligations, information sharing, reporting, visibility, meetings and communication at different levels – HQ, Geneva, field etc)?</li> <li>• <b>EQ 6.</b> To what extent did the DG ECHO - UNHCR partnership contribute to: (i) Strengthening field coordination between relevant actors (notably during the COVID-19 response), including: a) DG ECHO and UNHCR national and regional offices, (b) Humanitarian actors – notably UN and NGOs, and (c) Donors? (EQ6.1); reinforcing and enhancing relevant sectorial coordination at global, regional, and country/field level, and supporting UNHCR's lead or co-lead role in the cluster coordination system? (EQ6.2); and facilitating cooperation towards a triple Nexus approach? (EQ6.3)</li> </ul>

### 5.2 Methodological approach and description of data collection sources

The methodological approach was structured around five main phases (approach and design phase, desk research phase, fieldwork phase, data analysis and interpretation phase and dissemination phase), each comprising various tasks, as depicted in Figure 52. This section summarises the main data collection and analysis work under each phase.

Figure 52. Overview of the methodological approach



During the **Approach and design phase**, the evaluation framework and methodological approach were refined based on a rapid review of documentation and data and preliminary consultations from relevant DG ECHO officials (in Headquarters).

As part of the **Desk research phase**, the team reviewed in detail the documentation available and carried out an analysis of the entire portfolio of 136 actions funded by DG ECHO during the evaluation period (the results of this analysis are presented in Annex 2). The team also reviewed the project documentation (Single Forms and FichOp) following a two-step approach. The first step consisted of the review of elements of the project documentation extracted from various HOPE databases (e.g. qualitative and quantitative information in the Pre-Selection Dashboard, gender-age and resilience markers, KOIs and KRIs information). The second level of analysis consisted of a more detailed review of 40 actions.

During the **Fieldwork phase**, the evaluation team collected feedback from relevant stakeholders through the following activities:<sup>497</sup>

- **Online survey for DG ECHO and UNHCR HQ and field officers.** the survey was launched in January and closed in March 2023. In total, it received 43 responses (the results can be found in Annex 5).
- A total of **25 key informant interviews (KIIs)** with DG ECHO and UNHCR officials in HQ and Field/Regional Offices, other EU institutions, and other donors. Annex 4 presents an overview of the stakeholders consulted through KIIs.
- **Three field missions**, i.e. one remote field mission in Bangladesh and two in-country field missions in Chad and Jordan. The field missions entailed face-to-face and/or remote consultations with key actors (DG ECHO and UNHCR Field Officers, EU Delegations in the field, UNHCR's implementing partners, other DG ECHO partners, coordination mechanisms including cluster/sector leads, national and local authorities, other humanitarian actors) in the form of 42 individual and group interviews (an overview of the stakeholders consulted during the field missions is included in Annex 4). During the in-country field missions, the evaluation team also carried out project visits of DG ECHO-funded actions implemented by UNHCR in Chad and Jordan.

The field evidence was summarised in two thematic case studies which covered: The partnership contribution to enhanced field and sectoral coordination (Case study 4) and the partnership contribution to enhanced needs-based protection responses (Case study 5) (see Annex 8).

During the fourth phase of the evaluation (**analysis and interpretation phase**), the evaluation team analysed the evidence emerging from the various tasks, as well as the limiting factors, good practices and lessons learned. The results of the different analytical exercises were triangulated and synthesised to provide the answers to the evaluation questions presented in Section 7 of this report. The evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations will be discussed with, and validated by, the members of our panel of experts during the expert validation workshop, which will be held following the submission of this report.

### 5.3 Limitations and robustness of the findings

The findings presented in this report were affected by several limitations in terms of breadth and quality of the evidence collected for the evaluation. Limitations concerning data collected in the field included:

- High staff turnover in both DG ECHO and UNHCR over the evaluation period. In some countries, field staff with knowledge of the DG ECHO-UNHCR cooperation on the ground was no longer in the countries visited and new staff had limited knowledge on the functioning of the partnership between 2017-2021. To mitigate this challenge, data from

---

<sup>497</sup> Initially, an online workshop with key stakeholders was also envisaged to discuss and analyse specific topics relating to advocacy and sustainability, but these were not required as the information gathered during the other desk and field activities was considered sufficient.

key informant interviews with DG ECHO and UNHCR staff at HQ and regional level – who have extensive knowledge of the partnership – were also used to complement data collected in the field.

- Most stakeholders consulted – other than DG ECHO and UNHCR – had very little knowledge of the functioning of the partnership and its impacts. While some stakeholders were aware that UNHCR had received funding from DG ECHO, in most cases, they did not know which type of activities were funded. Most stakeholders consulted outside DG ECHO and UNHCR could also not provide feedback on the partners' cooperation and communication on the ground.
- As all UNHCR funded actions were multi-donor, some UNHCR field staff did not know which specific program activities were funded by DG ECHO and therefore could not provide feedback on the impact of those activities. Data gathered through interviews with UNHCR staff at national/country level and with DG ECHO staff helped mitigating this challenge. Moreover, additional data on results of DG ECHO funded actions was collected from the project documentation to complement primary data gathered through other sources.

The stakeholder feedback collected also presented limitations, particularly:

- A low response rate to the online survey from UNHCR staff in the Headquarters. All the UNHCR answers to the survey were provided by field officers, which limited the comparability of opinions between HQ and field staff. To mitigate this challenge, survey data was triangulated with interview data in order to assess relevant aspects and opinions provided by UNHCR HQ officers.

Beyond the specific mitigation measures outlined above, the use of complementary research methods enhanced the reliability and validity of the data collected and allowed for sufficient cross-verification, corroboration and triangulation of the results of the evaluation, which are overall valid and robust. Any limitations or weaknesses of the findings are properly highlighted in the respective sections.



## 6 OVERVIEW OF THE CONTEXT

### 6.1 Overview of UNHCR

This section examines the partnership between DG ECHO and UNHCR. The two partners have presence in the same geographical areas and hold similar priorities regarding the humanitarian aid they provide to refugees and displaced individuals.

DG ECHO and UNHCR's partnership has been recently impacted by external factors such as the increase of humanitarian emergencies worldwide and, consequently, the increase of forcibly displaced populations with crises becoming more and more protracted. In addition, both organisations have undergone operational and structural changes, and this might have impacted the functioning of the partnership in terms of funding and operational constraints.

#### **UNHCR in a nutshell<sup>498</sup>**

**What?** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), created in 1950 by the UN General Assembly, is a global organisation aiming to save lives and protecting the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced communities, and stateless people. UNHCR primarily supports forcibly displaced and is mandated to assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement to a third country. They work to strengthen access to education and livelihoods, and provide life-saving support like shelter, water, food, and healthcare to both forcibly displaced and host communities.

**Where?** UNHCR staff is present in 132 countries and collaborates with governments, non-profits, and the private sector.

**How?** UNHCR relies almost entirely on funding from external donors, of which 85% of their budget is provided by governments and the European Union, and 11% comes from individuals and the private sector, including foundations, corporations, and the public.

**Impact.** The work of UNHCR is highly important for the protection of refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR. For example, by May 2022, 101.1 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced due to conflict, persecution, violence, human rights violations and natural disasters.<sup>499</sup> The UNHCR is currently supporting 20.7 million refugees under their mandate.<sup>500</sup>

In line with its mandate, UNHCR's activities primarily focus on providing protection through safeguarding fundamental rights and solutions for refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR, as well as providing short- and long-term solutions, responding with life saving support and contributing to providing better future for people of concern in line with its Strategic Directions<sup>501</sup> (see Figure 53).

Figure 53. UNHCR Strategic Directions 2017-2021



Between 2017 and 2021, UNHCR operated with a total budget of USD 37 billion. UNHCR's activities are spread across all continents, with a majority of the budget allocated to Africa and the Middle

<sup>498</sup> UNHCR website

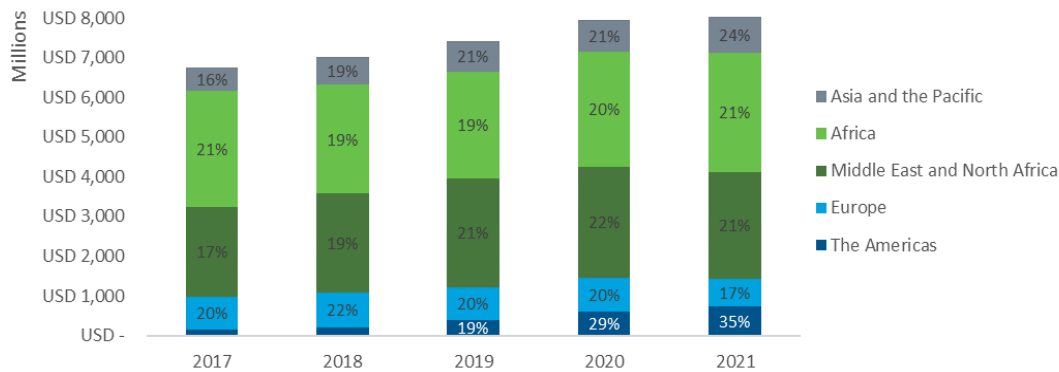
<sup>499</sup> UNHCR. 2022. Global Forced Displacement. Available online: <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends>

<sup>500</sup> UNHCR. 2022. Figures at a Glance. Available online: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html>

<sup>501</sup> UNHCR. 2017. UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021

East over the evaluation period.<sup>502</sup> Figure 54 provides an overview the UNHCR total budget allocated per region per year, specified for each subregion of Africa, being the main recipient.

Figure 54. UNHCR budget by region in USD (2017-2021)



Since 2005 and the UN humanitarian reform, UNHCR is the Global Lead/co-Lead for the Protection (GPC), Shelter (GSC) and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCCM) humanitarian clusters in complex situations of displacement, including internal displacement, across the globe. DG ECHO has acted as the lead for EU relations with UNHCR, leading the annual Strategic Dialogue EU-UNHCR and preparing and coordinating EU statements for UNHCR's governing body meetings. DG ECHO and UNHCR also actively collaborate in the production of communication campaigns and activities, such as an interactive film on Venezuelan displacement in Ecuador, launched in 2022.<sup>503</sup>

## 6.2 Overview of DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership and Theory of Change

Concerning the DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership, at strategic level **the relations are regulated by the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA)**,<sup>504</sup> which serves as the legal framework for all agreements between the EU and the UN. The FAFA was signed in 2003, and later revised in 2014 and 2018, and regulates the work of DG ECHO with 25 UN agencies. The framework agreement is implemented through action-related funding agreements. Furthermore, in 2005 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by both organisations established a Strategic Partnership between the EU and UNHCR.

DG ECHO funds UNHCR interventions all over the world through several sectors. During the 2017-2021 period, the majority of DG ECHO funded UNHCR projects were in Africa (57). DG ECHO funded 25 in the Middle East and 24 in Asia through UNHCR. 14 projects were funded in Europe and 13 in Latin America. Between 2017 and 2021, HOPE data showed that 136 actions were funded by DG ECHO and implemented by UNHCR all over the world. Financial contributions from DG ECHO amounted to a total of EUR 912 million<sup>505</sup>.

The EU and its Member States are among the UNHCR's largest donors. In 2020, the EU and its Member States provided USD 1.6 billion, accounting for 20% of the total budget, following the US with USD 1.9 billion, accounting for 25% of the total budget. Germany is the European Member State that provides the largest funding to the UNHCR (17%) followed by Sweden (2.6%) and Denmark 2.2%<sup>506</sup>.

<sup>502</sup> ICF Analysis of UNHCR Global budget between 2017-2021. Data per year available online:

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/budget-expenditure>

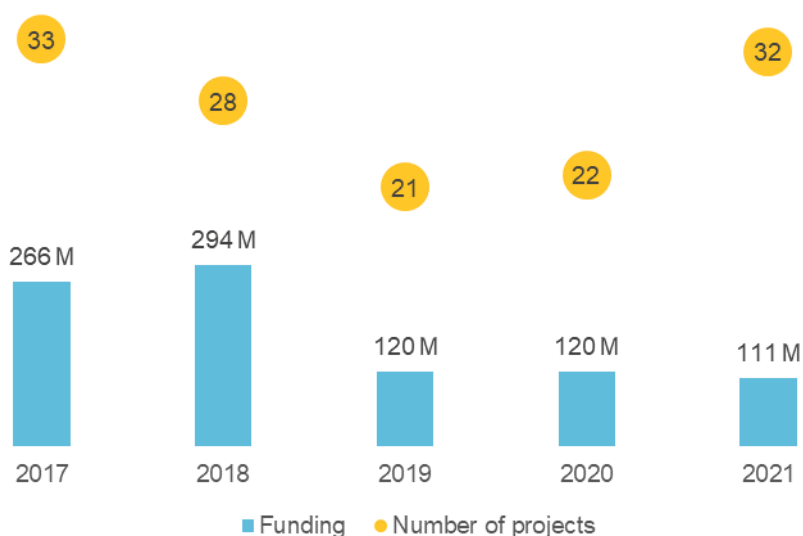
<sup>503</sup> UNHCR. 2022. UNHCR and the European Union launch 360-degree interactive film on Venezuelan displacement in Ecuador. Available online: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/announc/2022/3/623b41544/unhcr-european-union-launch-360-degree-interactive-film-venezuelan-displacement.html>

<sup>504</sup> European Union, United Nations. 2018., Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement between the United Nations and the European Union (FAFA).

<sup>505</sup> HOPE/EVA data extracted on 12/10/22 ICF analysis.

<sup>506</sup> HOPE/EVA data extracted on 12/10/22 ICF analysis.

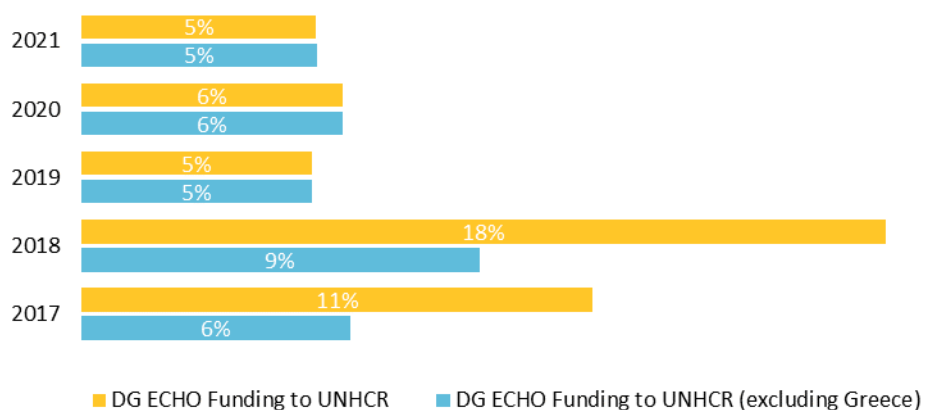
Figure 55. DG ECHO budget allocated to UNHCR projects per year (in Euro) and number of projects



Source: ICF (2023) based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases<sup>507</sup>.

Between 2017 and 2021, the proportion of DG ECHO funding directed to UNHCR has varied considerably. 2018 saw the biggest increase on this percentage (18%) mostly due to the funding allocated to Greece. Between 2019 and 2021 the funding remained relatively constant<sup>508</sup>.

Figure 56. Proportion of total DG ECHO funding directed to UNHCR, 2017-2021



Source: ICF (2023) based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases.

DG ECHO's funding to UNHCR was mostly directed to interventions in Europe. Since 2017, an average of 45% of the funding to UNHCR is addressed to projects taking place in Europe. 29% is directed to interventions happening in the Middle East and 16% for those in Africa.

Table 34. Breakdown of DG ECHO funding for UNHCR actions by region and financial year, 2017-2021

Share of funding to UNHCR per region						
Region/Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total

<sup>507</sup> Note: values are based on financial year. To estimate the number of actions per year in cases where there were actions containing multiple contracts in different years, the year of the first contract was used. If actions were conducted across multiple countries, the assumption made is that the funding was distributed across all countries equally.

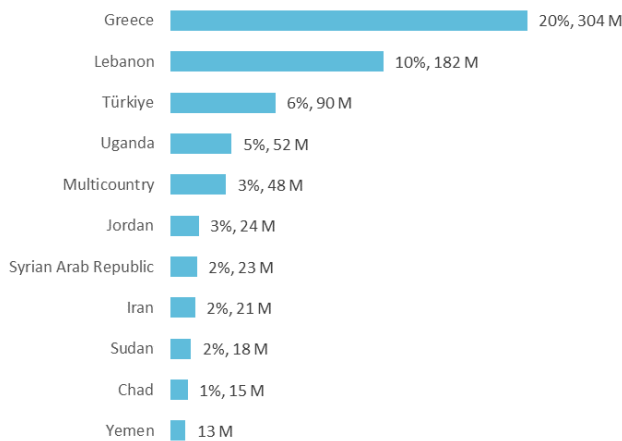
<sup>508</sup> HOPE/EVA data extracted on 12/10/22 ICF analysis.

Share of funding to UNHCR per region						
Africa	19%	10%	12%	28%	19%	16%
Asia	5%	1%	8%	8%	19%	6%
Europe	63%	60%	22%	15%	17%	45%
LAC	0%	4%	7%	6%	7%	4%
Middle East	13%	25%	51%	43%	39%	29%
Other	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.3%

Source: ICF (2023) based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases.

In Europe, DG ECHO funded UNHCR activities in Greece, with 35% of the funding directed to interventions in this country. In the Middle East, 21% of the funding was directed to activities conducted in Lebanon and 10% in Türkiye<sup>509</sup>.

Figure 57. Top ten countries receiving DG ECHO funding for UNHCR actions, 2017-2021



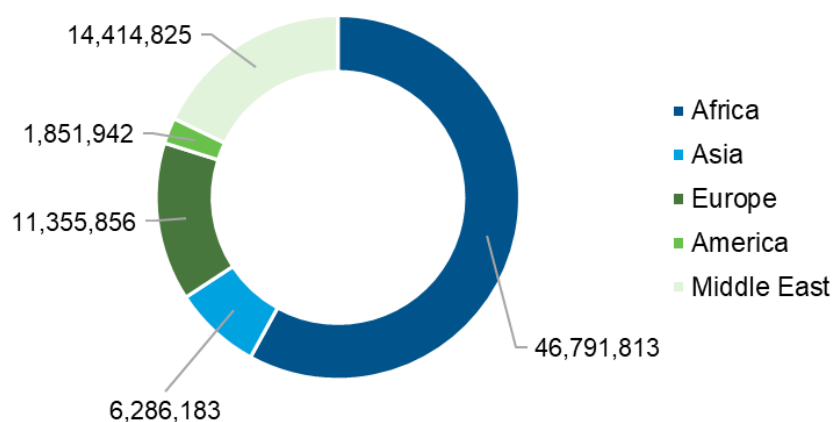
Source: ICF (2023) based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases.

Looking at beneficiaries, more than half of the beneficiaries covered by the UNHCR with DG ECHO's funding were African beneficiaries followed by Middle Eastern ones and beneficiaries in Europe. Beneficiaries in the American continent were the ones receiving the lowest funding from DG ECHO funded UNHCR interventions.<sup>510</sup>

<sup>509</sup> HOPE/EVA data extracted on 12/10/22 ICF analysis.

<sup>510</sup> HOPE/EVA data extracted on 12/10/22 ICF analysis.

Figure 58. Geographical coverage of beneficiaries of DG ECHO-funded UNHCR actions (in Euro), 2017-2021



Source: ICF (2023) based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases.

The three sectors that received the largest funding from DG ECHO to UNHCR in the period 2017-2021 were multi-purpose cash transfer, protection and shelter and settlements.<sup>511</sup>

Table 35. Breakdown of DG ECHO funding for UNHCR actions by sector and financial year, 2017-2021

Share of funding to UNHCR per sector						
Sector/Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Multi-purpose cash transfer	19.0%	48.4%	40.0%	31.0%	33.5%	34.6%
Protection	44.0%	12.3%	46.2%	40.2%	46.4%	33.9%
Shelter and settlements	25.6%	34.4%	2.9%	10.7%	5.3%	21.0%
Health	7.0%	2.4%	7.0%	11.9%	6.7%	6.1%
Coordination	0.9%	0.6%	2.7%	3.1%	1.0%	1.3%
Food security and livelihoods	1.8%	1.1%	0.3%	0.0%	1.0%	1.1%
WASH	1.1%	0.6%	0.3%	0.5%	1.6%	0.8%
Disaster Risk Reduction / Disaster Preparedness	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.8%	3.5%	0.6%
Education in emergencies	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	1.9%	1.0%	0.5%
Support to operations	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Nutrition	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: ICF (2023) based on data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases

There are some examples of DG ECHO and UNHCR having similar priorities regarding the intervention sectors for each country. In Türkiye, DG ECHO and UNHCR prioritised the information collection on refugees and documentation as well as their access to education. In Uganda, the main intervention areas for both actors were health (primary healthcare access for DG ECHO and mental

<sup>511</sup> HOPE/EVA data extracted on 12/10/22 ICF analysis.

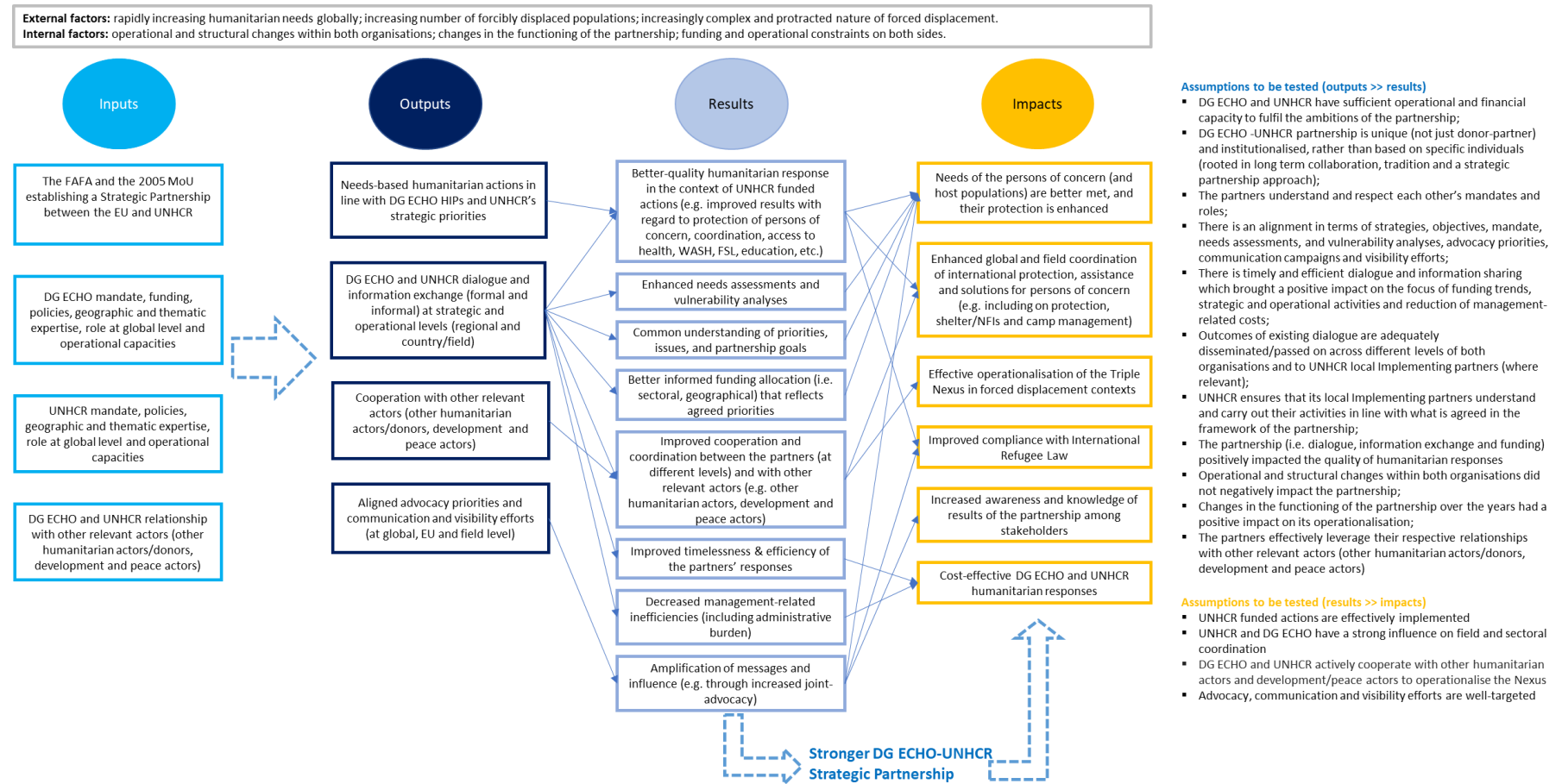
health and psychosocial support for UNHCR), multi-purpose cash assistance to cover refugees and displaced individuals' basic needs, shelter and settlement activities and WASH interventions. In Jordan, basic needs assistance was prioritised as well as access to healthcare services. UNHCR and DG ECHO shared the objective of helping refugees integrate their host communities' society and economy<sup>512</sup>.

Figure 59 (overleaf) illustrates the theory of change (ToC) underpinning the evaluation of DG ECHO's partnership with UNHCR, refined on the basis of feedback provided by the Steering Group and UNHCR representatives during Phase I of the evaluation (Inception). Due to the many limitations and caveats of the evidence gathered so far, we have included the version of the ToC from the Revised inception report, as approved by the client and the Steering Group. The ToC may be further refined in the next stages of the evaluation to reflect any findings, once more comprehensive and robust evidence is gathered.

---

<sup>512</sup> UNHCR Strategic priorities 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021; DG ECHO HIPs 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Figure 59. ToC: DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership



## 7 EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section presents the findings from the evaluation, structured around the three evaluation criteria and six evaluation questions (EQs) listed in Section 5 of the report. At the beginning of each question, a table summarising the key findings per judgement criterion and assessing the strength of the evidence has been included. The quality of the evidence is illustrated using the colour code system described in Table 36.

Table 36. Colour scheme to assess strength of evidence

Ranking of evidence	Reasoning
<b>Strong</b>	<p>High quality body of evidence, large or medium in size, highly or moderately consistent, and contextually relevant.</p> <p>Quality – includes evidence includes high quality studies and evaluations and/or good quality soft data</p> <p>Size – large or medium</p> <p>Consistency – similar messages emerge from different pieces of evidence. There might be some areas of dissonance / divergence</p>
<b>Medium</b>	<p>Moderate quality studies, medium size evidence body, moderate level of consistency. Studies may or may not be contextually relevant.</p> <p>Quality –good quality soft data</p> <p>Size –medium or low</p> <p>Consistency – similar messages emerge from different pieces of evidence. There might be some areas of dissonance / divergence</p>
<b>Weak</b>	<p>The evidence is limited to a single source of questionable quality (i.e. there is an obvious risk of bias) or, is mainly anecdotal in nature, or there are many sources of evidence but the information they provide is highly contradictory and it is not possible to distinguish their quality.</p>

### 7.1 Coherence

EQ1. How well aligned were DG ECHO and the UNHCR in terms of: i) strategies, objectives and mandate? (EQ1.1), ii) needs assessments and vulnerability analyses? (EQ1.2), and iii) advocacy priorities, communication campaigns and visibility efforts? (EQ1.3)

Table 37. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC1.1 DG ECHO and UNHCR's mandates, priorities, and objectives (at strategic and operational level) were well-aligned	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG ECHO and UNHCR were highly complementary in their mandates.</li> <li>• Even though the provision of protection is at the core of both DG ECHO and UNHCR's mandates, the partners had a somewhat different understanding of what protection entails at operational level.</li> <li>• Over the evaluation period, DG ECHO and UNHCR were highly aligned in their strategic priorities and objectives (e.g. ensuring protection of persons in situations of displacement; IDP agenda; localisation; ensuring flexible, timely and rapid responses; promoting innovation and digital technologies in humanitarian action; increased emphasis on the use of cash-based forms of assistance; preserving the environment and minimising the environmental</li> </ul>



Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
		<p>footprint of the provision of humanitarian aid as well as to enhancing climate resilience).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At operational level, DG ECHO and UNHCR were also generally well-aligned in terms of their in-country priorities. The degree of alignment however varied from country to country. In most cases, differences in priorities did not have a significant impact on the functioning of the partnership.</li> <li>• Some of the main areas of misalignment in terms of prioritisation under the partnership at operational level included: differences in terms of prioritisation of sectors / transfer modalities; and differences in DG ECHO and UNHCR views on durable solutions and long-term interventions and their links with humanitarian aid.</li> </ul>
<p>JC1.2 DG ECHO and UNHCR are well aligned in their approaches to needs assessments and vulnerability analyses</p>	<p><b>Strong</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG ECHO and UNHCR were generally well-aligned in their approaches to needs assessments and risk analysis. At operational level, the quality of those and their alignment with DG ECHO's requirements varied from action to action and depending on the country.</li> <li>• DG ECHO and UNHCR were also generally well-aligned in their approaches to risk and vulnerability analysis.</li> <li>• Evidence collected shows that the degree of alignment between DG ECHO and UNHCR targeting strategies varied across countries and contexts. Some misalignments in DG ECHO and UNHCR targeting strategies were identified in contexts where UNHCR targeted beneficiaries on the basis of status (i.e. refugees and asylum seekers), nationality, or a pre-determined list of vulnerabilities instead of on the basis of risk analysis as required by DG ECHO.</li> <li>• In some countries these differences in targeting approaches considerably hampered operational cooperation under the partnership, while in others, these misalignments were discussed and addressed thus not posing major issues to the partnership.</li> </ul>
<p>JC1.3 UNHCR and DG ECHO were aligned in their advocacy priorities at global and country level</p>	<p><b>Strong</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG ECHO and UNHCR were well aligned in their advocacy priorities at global level (e.g. promoting IHL, IHRL and International Refugee Law; advocating for access to the territory and registration for refugees; ensuring delivery of humanitarian aid to PoC in a safe and dignified manner, etc.)</li> <li>• DG ECHO and UNHCR were also generally aligned in their advocacy priorities at country level. In some cases, however, the partners had different priorities or disagreed on their preferred approach to advocacy (e.g. DG ECHO expected UNHCR to be more vocal on key advocacy issues with government actors).</li> </ul>

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted had different views as to whether they managed to effectively pursue joint advocacy actions where possible. While only a minority DG ECHO staff consulted considered that joint advocacy actions with UNHCR were pursued where feasible (both at global and at field level), most UNHCR staff reported that, where possible, joint advocacy actions were pursued at different levels.</li> <li>Evidence collected provided a few examples of joint advocacy activities at strategic level. At country level, cooperation on advocacy happened mostly through other means (e.g. funding to advocacy efforts, exchanges of information and advocacy messages, and in the context of coordination structures).</li> </ul>
JC1.4 DG ECHO and UNHCR were aligned in their visibility and communication efforts	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence collected shows an increased alignment in DG ECHO and UNHCR communication and visibility efforts as well as increased commitment in this area over the evaluation period, for example through the establishment of the EU Pool Fund and UNHCR EU Visibility Team.</li> <li>Some challenges in disseminating communication materials to a wider EU audience were identified (e.g. not enough use of social media channels other than Twitter to disseminate information on the partnership)</li> <li>The quality of UNHCR field visibility and its alignment with DG ECHO communication and visibility requirements varied across time and from country to country (and in some cases across different locations within a country).</li> </ul>

**DG ECHO and UNHCR were highly complementary in their mandates. Even though the provision of protection is at the core of both partners' mandates (and of the partnership), DG ECHO and UNHCR had a somewhat different understanding of what protection entailed at operational level. The partners were also highly aligned in their priorities and objectives at strategic level while at operational level, the degree of alignment varied across countries (JC 1.1.)**

**DG ECHO's humanitarian mandate** consists of the provision of needs-based humanitarian assistance and protection to people hit by disasters with particular attention to the most vulnerable populations.<sup>513</sup> One of DG ECHO's specific objectives for the evaluation period was meeting the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable people in refugee crises (including host communities).<sup>514</sup> To do so, DG ECHO increased its target for beneficiaries in situation of forced displacement from 54 million in 2015 to 60 million in 2020. In 2021, most DG ECHO humanitarian funding (about 80%) was allocated to projects that addressed the needs of forcibly displaced and host communities.<sup>515</sup>

<sup>513</sup> DG ECHO. Humanitarian Aid. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid_en).

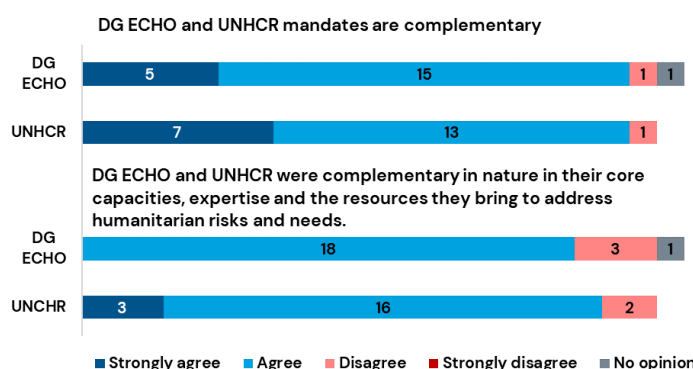
<sup>514</sup> DG ECHO. Strategic Plan 2016-2020. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/strategic-plan-2016-2020-dg-echo\\_march2016\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/strategic-plan-2016-2020-dg-echo_march2016_en.pdf).

<sup>515</sup> DG ECHO. Forced Displacement. Available at: [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/forced-displacement-refugees-asylum-seekers-and-internally-displaced-persons-idps\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/forced-displacement-refugees-asylum-seekers-and-internally-displaced-persons-idps_en).

DG ECHO humanitarian aid activities also comprise short-term rehabilitation work (including promoting resilience); supporting disaster risk reduction and enhanced preparedness for disasters<sup>516</sup> as well as high-level policy and advocacy work.<sup>517</sup> DG ECHO delivers humanitarian aid through the funding provided to its partners (including UNHCR). **UNHCR**, for its part, is mandated to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance, and to seek durable solutions for persons of concern (PoCs).<sup>518</sup> In this context UNHCR undertakes a diverse range of activities with the financial support of its donors (DG ECHO among others), including aid distribution, emergency preparedness, registration, determination of status and issuance of documentation as well as broader development work.<sup>519</sup>

**Evidence collected shows that DG ECHO and UNHCR were highly complementary in their mandates.**<sup>520</sup> Most DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted through the survey considered that the partners were also complementary in their core capacities, expertise and the resources they brought to address humanitarian risks and needs (see Figure 60).

Figure 60. Number of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff who considered that the partner mandate are complementary and number of staff who found that DG ECHO and UNHCR were complementary in nature in their core capacities, expertise and resources they bring to address humanitarian risks and needs



Source: ICF. 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (DG ECHO, N=22; UNHCR, N=21)

**This complementarity was particularly strong regarding the protection of refugees and other PoCs.** The provision of protection is at the core of both DG ECHO and UNHCR mandates. Over the evaluation period, UNHCR was the largest DG ECHO's protection partner (in terms of funding).<sup>521</sup> DG ECHO's Thematic Policy document on Humanitarian Protection<sup>522</sup> acknowledges the importance of UNHCR's role in the provision of protection to people in displacement situations and expressly refers to several UNHCR's instruments and documents when providing guidance to partners on the design and implementation of protection interventions (e.g. UNHCR protection Manual, UNHCR and partners Guide for Protection in cash-based interventions,<sup>523</sup> UNHCR, OHCHR, IASC background paper

<sup>516</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex:31996R1257>.

<sup>517</sup> EU guidelines on the promotion of compliance with international humanitarian law. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=legisum:ah0004>.

<sup>518</sup> Refugees (and asylum seekers), returnees, stateless persons and – in certain circumstances – also IDPs.

<sup>519</sup> UNHCR. Mandate of UNHCR, Executive Summary. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/5a1b53607.pdf>.

<sup>520</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (20 DG ECHO staff out of 22 responses agree or strongly agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR mandates are complementary; 20 UNHCR staff out of 21 responses agree or strongly agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR mandates are complementary); ICF. 2023. Desk research.

<sup>521</sup> UNHCR received 25% of the total DG ECHO protection budget.

<sup>522</sup> DG ECHO. Thematic Policy Document n° 8 – Humanitarian Protection, Improving protection outcomes to reduce risks for people in humanitarian crises. 2016. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/policy\\_guidelines\\_humanitarian\\_protection\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/policy_guidelines_humanitarian_protection_en.pdf).

<sup>523</sup> UNHCR together with Oxfam, WFP, WRC, DRC, GPC and Save the Children under the "Improving Cash-based Interventions – Multi-purpose Cash Grants and Protection"-project: <http://www.cashlearning.org/downloads/erc-guide-for-protection-in-cashbased-interventions-web.pdf>.

on the Protection of Human Rights in Humanitarian Crisis).<sup>524</sup> UNHCR also plays a central role in the Global Protection Cluster which was also supported by DG ECHO.<sup>525</sup>

Despite the above, evidence collected shows that **the partners had a somewhat different understanding of what protection encompasses at operational level.**<sup>526</sup> UNHCR and other Framework partners consulted<sup>527</sup> reported that DG ECHO's understanding of protection was limited to "core protection activities" including for example, physical protection, registration, access to documentation, legal assistance, protection monitoring, child protection, and prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).<sup>528</sup> UNHCR staff argued that they used a broader concept of protection, which often includes an "assistance" component (e.g. provision of food and non-food items, building infrastructure, EiE, healthcare etc.), as these activities are seen as essential to avoid negative coping mechanisms and ensuring individual protection and respect of rights. For example, under its Individual Protection Assistance programs (IPA), UNHCR takes an integrated and multi-disciplinary protection approach to address the protection needs of PoCs.<sup>529</sup> This includes for instance, the provision of MPCT, EiE and healthcare to persons with specific protection needs to prevent their further exposure to risks. For DG ECHO, those activities could only be considered as "protection" if they specifically aim to achieve protection outcomes (as part of integrated protection programming).<sup>530</sup> Some DG ECHO staff however, expressed concerns about UNHCR including some activities of other sectors (e.g. education, health, MTPC, WASH) under protection results without those being necessarily linked to protection outcomes.<sup>531</sup> These differences in the understanding of protection were discussed by DG ECHO and UNHCR at strategic (i.e. in the context of EU-UNHCR Strategic Dialogues and DG ECHO-UNHCR High-level Dialogues)<sup>532</sup> and operational level.<sup>533</sup>

**Over the evaluation period, DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their strategic priorities and objectives.**<sup>534</sup> Between 2017-2021, UNHCR's activities were guided by the organisation's Strategic Directions 2017-2021<sup>535</sup> which were then translated into biennium Global Strategic Priorities (GSPs). DG ECHO's humanitarian interventions over the evaluation period were guided by DG ECHO Strategic Plans for 2016-2020<sup>536</sup> and 2020-2024<sup>537</sup> which were then

---

<sup>524</sup> OHCHR, UNHCR and IASC. A Joint Background Paper on the Protection of Human Rights in Humanitarian Crisis. 2013. Available at:

[https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/old/\\_assets/files/tools\\_and\\_guidance/human\\_rights\\_protection/OHCHR-UNHCR%20Joint%20Paper\\_EN.pdf](https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/old/_assets/files/tools_and_guidance/human_rights_protection/OHCHR-UNHCR%20Joint%20Paper_EN.pdf).

<sup>525</sup> IASC. Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action. 2016. Available at:

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-11/IASC%20Policy%20on%20Protection%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action%202016.pdf>.

<sup>526</sup> ICF. 2023. Desk review; ICF. 2023. Scoping Interviews; ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions).

<sup>527</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions).

<sup>528</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions).

<sup>529</sup> See for example: UNHCR Ukraine. Individual Protection Assistance. Available at: [https://www.unhcr.org/ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/38/2018/11/2018-11-UNHCR-Ukraine-IPA-Update-FINAL\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/38/2018/11/2018-11-UNHCR-Ukraine-IPA-Update-FINAL_EN.pdf).

<sup>530</sup> For DG ECHO, targeted protection actions consist of two distinct sub-approaches, namely integrated protection programming and stand-alone protection programming. For protection programming to be integrated, there has to be an objective of achieving a protection outcome, and the sectors have to combine efforts to achieve this. See: [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-06/policy\\_guidelines\\_humanitarian\\_protection\\_en.pdf](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-06/policy_guidelines_humanitarian_protection_en.pdf).

<sup>531</sup> ICF. 2023. Scoping interviews; ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions); ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO documentation.

<sup>532</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO documentation.

<sup>533</sup> Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions).

<sup>534</sup> ICF. 2023. Desk research; ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Online survey of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff.

<sup>535</sup> UNHCR. Strategic Directions 2017-2021. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcrs-strategic-directions-2017-2021>.

<sup>536</sup> DG ECHO. Strategic Plan 2016-2020. Available at: [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/strategic-plan-2016-2020-european-civil-protection-and-humanitarian-aid-operations\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/strategic-plan-2016-2020-european-civil-protection-and-humanitarian-aid-operations_en).

<sup>537</sup> DG ECHO. Strategic Plan 2020-2024. Available at: [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/echo\\_sp\\_2020\\_2024\\_en.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/echo_sp_2020_2024_en.pdf).

translated into country/regional priorities through the annual Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs).<sup>538</sup>

Most DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted considered that both organisations were well-aligned in their strategic priorities and objectives.<sup>539</sup> Table 38 provides some examples of synergies between DG ECHO and UNHCR strategic priorities over the evaluation period as identified through the desk review and the stakeholder consultation.

Table 38. Examples of common DG ECHO/UNHCR strategic priorities and objectives between 2017-2021

<b>Humanitarian protection</b>	The protection of persons in situation of forced displacement is a key objective for both UNHCR and DG ECHO. Ensuring that protection is central to all humanitarian aid interventions was a priority for both partners. Humanitarian Protection was also one of the main issues of discussion between the partners at strategic level (during EU-UNHCR Strategic Dialogues and DG ECHO-UNHCR High-level Dialogues).
<b>Reducing mortality and morbidity</b>	The overall objective of EU humanitarian aid is to improve the chances of survival of people affected by crises. <sup>540</sup> Reducing mortality, morbidity and malnutrition through multi-sectoral interventions was also among UNHCR global strategic priorities over the evaluation period. <sup>541</sup>
<b>Climate and disaster-related displacement</b>	Over the evaluation period, DG ECHO and UNHCR were also committed to the protection of displaced populations in the context of disasters and climate change. DG ECHO was the chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement <sup>542</sup> in which UNHCR also participated. In the context of the platform, both partners were highly aligned in their priorities to ensure a better response to the needs of people displaced due to disasters and climate change. <sup>543</sup>
<b>IDP Agenda</b>	DG ECHO and UNHCR were aligned on their policy priorities with regard to IDPs. Over the evaluation period, both partners highlighted the importance of keeping a focus on ensuring better protection and assistance for IDPs (and host communities). <sup>544</sup>
<b>Reducing the environmental impact of humanitarian aid operations</b>	One of DG ECHO's priorities over the evaluation period was the reduction of the environmental impact of its humanitarian aid operations. <sup>545</sup> UNHCR is also committed to minimising the environmental impact across its field operations (particularly, to reduce the environmental impact of the presence of refugee camps and settlements). <sup>546</sup> In 2019, UNHCR launched a four-year Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy that aims to minimise the environmental impact of its operations by promoting a transition to clean, renewable energy at refugee camps and hosting sites. <sup>547</sup> The need to reduce the environmental footprint of humanitarian aid was also discussed in the context of the EU-UNHCR Strategic Dialogues.

<sup>538</sup> DG ECHO. Financing Decisions (HIPs). Available at: [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/funding-evaluations/funding-humanitarian-aid/financing-decisions-hips\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/funding-evaluations/funding-humanitarian-aid/financing-decisions-hips_en).

<sup>539</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 2, DG ECHO Field: 1, UNHCR HQ: 4, UNHCR Field: 1); ICF. 2023. Online Survey of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff (16 DG ECHO staff out of 22 agree or strongly agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well aligned in their strategic priorities and objectives; 19 UNHCR staff out of 21 agree or strongly agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well aligned in their strategic priorities and objectives).

<sup>540</sup> DG ECHO. Strategic Plan 2020-2024. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/echo\\_sp\\_2020\\_2024\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/echo_sp_2020_2024_en.pdf).

<sup>541</sup> UNHCR Global Strategic Priorities 2017-2021.

<sup>542</sup> Platform on Disaster Displacement, <https://disasterdisplacement.org/>.

<sup>543</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 1); ICF. 2023. Desk research.

<sup>544</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 1).

<sup>545</sup> DG ECHO. Strategic Plan 2020-2024. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/echo\\_sp\\_2020\\_2024\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/echo_sp_2020_2024_en.pdf).

<sup>546</sup> UNHCR. Help us protect the environment to protect refugees. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/6/5eda46614/unhcr-help-protect-environment-protect-refugees.html>.

<sup>547</sup> UNHCR. UNHCR launches sustainable energy strategy, strengthens climate action. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/10/5db156d64/unhcr-launches-sustainable-energy-strategy-strengthens-climate-action.html>.

**Promoting innovation and digital technologies in humanitarian action**

Exploring and promoting innovation and the use of digitalisation and technological solutions in humanitarian action was a key priority for both DG ECHO and UNHCR. This was a recurrent topic of discussion during the EU-UNHCR Strategic Dialogues and the DG ECHO-UNHCR High-level Dialogues over the evaluation period.

In its 2017-2021 Strategic Directions,<sup>548</sup> UNHCR emphasised the need to embrace innovation and the use of new technologies to achieve its strategic directions (e.g. digital identity, institutionalising of cash, predictive analytics, online education etc). In 2020, UNHCR launched an NGO Innovation award that recognises NGOs' efforts and achievements in developing innovative approaches for protection and delivery of services to PoCs. DG ECHO has also recently started to explore the use of new technologies and digital solutions to maximise the impact of humanitarian aid (e.g. through increased use of digital cash-based assistance, digital identities, supporting online education etc.).<sup>549</sup>

Source: ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF.2023. Desk review.

Over the evaluation period, DG ECHO and UNHCR also shared **common priorities in the context of the Grand Bargain commitments**, including:

- **Contributing to the localisation agenda.** Both DG ECHO and UNHCR were committed to empowering local responders to lead and deliver humanitarian aid.<sup>550</sup> In the context of DG ECHO funded actions, UNHCR often worked with local NGOs and community-based organisations for the delivery of assistance and protection responses thus contributing to empowering local actors in the context of the humanitarian response. In 2021, under UNHCR leadership, the IASC established a localisation repository which included guidance, policies, good practices, and information on localisation initiatives and projects.<sup>551</sup>
- **Increasing the flexibility of humanitarian responses.** Ensuring a flexible and rapid response to address the needs of affected populations was a priority for both DG ECHO and UNHCR. In its Strategic Plan 2020-2024, UNHCR highlighted the importance of reacting fast and flexibly to new crises (including through the provision of flexible funding). Similarly, in its Strategic Directions for the evaluation period, UNHCR committed to maintaining and reinforcing its capacity to respond to emergencies in a rapid and effective way (including through the deployment of staff and its work with partners as well as maintaining and increasing flexible funding). The ambition to explore flexibility was discussed by the partners at several EU-UNHCR Strategic Dialogues over the evaluation period. Moreover, in some of its statements before the UNHCR Standing Committee, the EU also committed to exploring multi-year planning and funding in exchange for transparency, accountability and visibility by UNHCR.;
- **Increased emphasis on the use of cash.** DG ECHO has a long-standing commitment to using cash in humanitarian settings. Under the Grand Bargain, DG ECHO has committed to delivering 35% of humanitarian assistance in cash transfers.<sup>552</sup> Following its commitments under the World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain, DG ECHO has also been promoting the use of cash as a preferred transfer modality whenever feasible.<sup>553</sup> An increase emphasis on cash-based forms of assistance was

<sup>548</sup> UNHCR. Strategic Directions 2017-2021. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/5894558d4.pdf>.

<sup>549</sup> DG ECHO. Digitalisation. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what-we-do/humanitarian-aid/digitalisation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what-we-do/humanitarian-aid/digitalisation_en).

<sup>550</sup> DG ECHO. Localisation. Available at: [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/localisation\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/localisation_en); UNHCR,

<sup>551</sup> IASC. Task Force 5 – Localization Online Repository. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/topic/iasc-task-force-5-localization-online-repository>.

<sup>552</sup> DG ECHO. Cash transfer. Available at: [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/cash-transfers\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/cash-transfers_en)

<sup>553</sup> DG ECHO. Strategic Plan 2020-2024. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/echo\\_sp\\_2020\\_2024\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/echo_sp_2020_2024_en.pdf).

also one of UNHCR's strategic directions for the period 2017–2021. For that period, UNHCR committed to increase the funding allocated to cash-based interventions.<sup>554</sup>

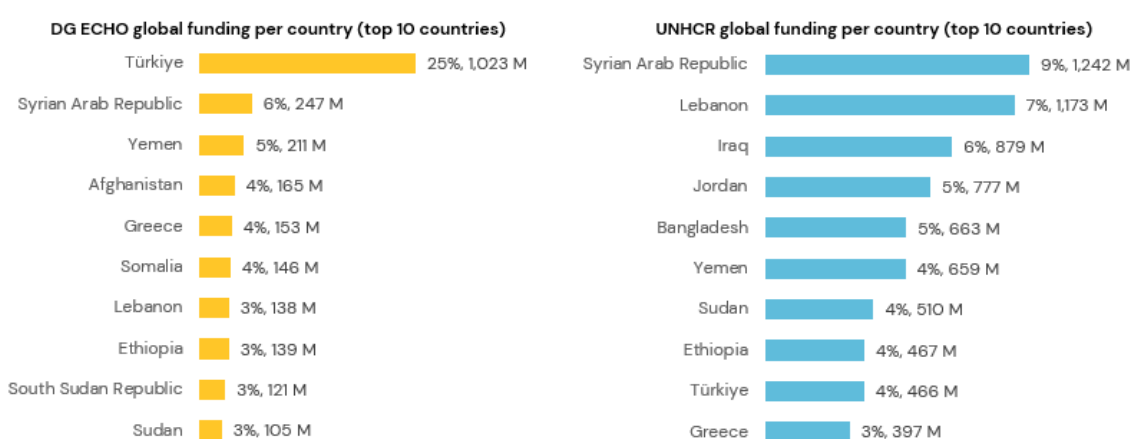
In addition to the above, DG ECHO and UNHCR were also well aligned with regard to other **cross-cutting issues**, including:<sup>555</sup>

- Promoting respect for IHL, IHRL and International Refugee law (see also JC 1.3);
- Paying attention to gender, age and disabilities in the delivery of humanitarian action;
- Ensuring a coordinated humanitarian response;
- Contributing to the effective operationalisation the Triple Nexus and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; and
- Enhancing disaster preparedness (in displacement contexts).

Evidence collected also provides some examples of **differences in strategic priorities** which were however mostly rooted in the specificities of each partner's mandate and did not have an impact on the well-functioning of the partnership. For example, UNHCR's strategic directions for the evaluation period included supporting peace-building initiatives and actively engaging with national and regional peace processes (whenever relevant) to ensure that the causes of displacement and opportunities for sustainable solutions were factored into political agreements. DG ECHO does not directly engage in peace building processes/initiatives (due to its purely humanitarian mandate) but is committed to the promotion of the Triple Nexus which aims among other things to ensure a coherent approach between humanitarian, development and peace interventions (see also JC 6.3). The UNHCR strategy for the evaluation period also placed a great emphasis on the inclusion of PoC in national services and economies. This was less of a priority for DG ECHO which primarily focuses on the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance while other EU services (e.g. DG INTPA and DG NEAR) address longer-term needs.<sup>556</sup>

**At operational level**, the portfolio analysis shows some similarities (but also differences) in the crises / countries prioritised for funding by the partners over the evaluation period (e.g. Syrian crises, Yemen, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Greece) (see Figure 61). Existing differences in the prioritisation of countries can primarily be explained by the differences in the partners' mandates (i.e. UNHCR focusing on addressing the needs of PoC and DG ECHO covering a broader range of beneficiaries based on existing humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities).

Figure 61. DG ECHO and UNHCR top ten countries in terms of funding (in EUR million) between 2017-2021



Source: HOPE/EVA data extracted on 29/05/23; and OCHA, humanitarian aid contributions, <https://fts.unocha.org/> extracted on 28/11/22. ICF analysis; OCHA data converted from USD into EUR with exchange rate 31/12/2021.

<sup>554</sup> UNHCR. Strategic Directions 2017-2021. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/5894558d4.pdf>.

<sup>555</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Desk research.

<sup>556</sup> ICF. 2023. Desk research.

Note: In OCHA database, 6% of the countries for UNHCR global funding were not specified and 6% corresponded to funding provided in multiple locations.

**The degree of alignment in terms of operational priorities was generally good but varied across countries.**<sup>557</sup> With a few exceptions, differences in prioritisation at operational level did not have a negative impact on the partners' cooperation.

Most DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted reported that the partners were generally well-aligned in their operational priorities and objectives.<sup>558</sup> This was particularly the case when it came to core protection priorities like protection monitoring, registration, access to documentation, legal assistance, child protection and prevention and protection against SGBV. However, the stakeholder consultation and desk review also provided some examples of misalignment in terms of operational priorities mostly due to:<sup>559</sup>

- **Differences in the prioritisation of sectors and/or transfer modalities.** In some countries there were some differences in the sectors prioritised for funding by DG ECHO and UNHCR over the evaluation period. For example, in the HoA and the Sahel, DG ECHO primarily focused on addressing food security and malnutrition while UNHCR prioritised the protection of refugees and IDPs.<sup>560</sup> In Jordan and Uganda, UNHCR prioritised the construction and upgrade of camps and shelters respectively, while this was not a priority for DG ECHO. Promoting livelihoods and self-reliance was also among the main UNHCR priorities in Türkiye and Uganda while these aspects were not specifically targeted by DG ECHO response in the countries.<sup>561</sup> In Colombia, while DG ECHO prioritised the provision of direct protection assistance to beneficiaries, UNHCR primarily focused its response on capacity building of national and local authorities to strengthen the migration and asylum systems.<sup>562</sup>
- In Jordan, DG ECHO and UNHCR were also not entirely aligned in their views on the use of cash to prevent or address urgent protection needs. DG ECHO considered that in a context where core protection needs (e.g., registration) were still unaddressed, UNHCR – as the only actor that could work on those issues – should have concentrated mostly on those needs.<sup>563</sup>
- **Differences in DG ECHO and UNHCR views on durable solutions and long-term interventions and their links with humanitarian aid.** UNHCR works across the whole displacement cycle (from the moment person is displaced until they find durable solutions). DG ECHO on the other hand, is a humanitarian actor that focuses on the provision of emergency assistance. This difference in mandates also led to some differences in prioritisation in some countries as some of UNHCR's "longer-term priorities" were not among DG ECHO's priorities (or were considered to be outside DG ECHO's mandate). In South Sudan for example, DG ECHO staff consulted reported that UNHCR was too focused on finding durable solutions for returnees while this was not a priority for DG ECHO as urgent humanitarian needs were still unaddressed.<sup>564</sup> Similarly, in Lebanon, DG ECHO staff reported a misalignment with UNHCR priorities focused on

---

<sup>557</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Desk research.

<sup>558</sup> ICF. 2023. Online Survey of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff (15 DG ECHO staff out of 22 agree or strongly agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well aligned in their operational priorities and objectives; 19 UNHCR staff out of 21 agree or strongly agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well aligned in their operational priorities and objectives); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO Field: 6, UNHCR Field: 6, UNHCR HQ: 1).

<sup>559</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO Field: 2, UNHCR HQ: 3, UNHCR Field: 1); ICF. 2023. Online Survey of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff; ICF. 2023. Desk research; ICF.20230. Analysis of DG ECHO documentation.

<sup>560</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR HQ 1); ICF. 2023. Desk research.

<sup>561</sup> ICF. 2023. Desk review.

<sup>562</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions)

<sup>563</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions).

<sup>564</sup> ICF. KIIs (DG ECHO Field: 1).



poverty alleviation.<sup>565</sup> In Uganda, the repairment and upgrade of infrastructure (e.g. WASH and shelter) was not a priority for DG ECHO while it was for UNHCR.<sup>566</sup>

**Overall, DG ECHO and UNHCR were well aligned in their approaches to needs assessments, vulnerability and risk analysis. At operational level, however, the quality of UNHCR's needs and risk analysis and their alignment with DG ECHO's requirements varied from action to action, and was also depending on the country. Some differences in targeting strategies were also identified (JC 1.2.).**

**DG ECHO provides needs-based funding following concrete needs assessments** that rely on data from international indices (i.e. the INFORM Risk Index and the INFORM Severity Index)<sup>567</sup> complemented with the assessment undertaken by DG ECHO's field-based humanitarian experts. Over the evaluation period, DG ECHO relied on UNHCR data when describing country contexts and humanitarian needs in the HIPs (e.g. number of refugees, number of registered asylum seekers, number of returnees, existing conditions for safe, voluntary, informed and sustainable refugee returns, etc.).<sup>568</sup> DG ECHO also directly supported UNHCR data analysis work<sup>569</sup> (in the context of the funded actions) and used the results of some UNHCR's vulnerability assessments as a basis for their funding considerations when it came to refugees and other PoCs.<sup>570</sup>

**UNHCR undertakes different types of needs assessments** depending on the crisis/context and their role in the humanitarian response (e.g. leading the response or contributing). UNHCR needs assessments often consist of secondary data sources, ongoing monitoring data, and assessment data, both quantitative and qualitative (i.e. the Participatory Assessment Tool<sup>571</sup>).<sup>572</sup> UNHCR carries out a formal needs assessment on an annual basis for the preparation of the annual planning exercise. In addition, regular needs assessments are also conducted throughout the year to collect up-to-date information on existing needs, protection risks and capacities of PoC in the different countries where UNHCR is operational.<sup>573</sup> UNHCR also often relies on information gathered through joint needs assessments undertaken in cooperation with other humanitarian actors (see also JC 6.1).

Most DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted considered that they were well aligned in their approaches to needs assessments and risk analysis.<sup>574</sup> The case study on the Partnership contribution to risk-based protection interventions also showed a general alignment in the ways DG ECHO and UNHCR approached needs assessments in the protection sector (this being the main sector of cooperation between the partners). At operational level, evidence collected suggests that

---

<sup>565</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO Field: 1).

<sup>566</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR Field: 1).

<sup>567</sup> European Commission. DRMKC – INFORM. INFORM severity. Available at: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORMSeverity>.

<sup>568</sup> ICF. 2023. Review of DG ECHO HIPs 2017-2021.

<sup>569</sup> E.g. through the support provided to strengthening screening, registration and referrals in order to identify protection needs of the most vulnerable.

<sup>570</sup> ICF. 2023. Review of DG ECHO HIPs 2017-2021.

<sup>571</sup> UNHCR. Participatory Assessment in Operations. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/450e920e2/unhcr-tool-participatory-assessment-operations-part-introduction.html>

<sup>572</sup> UNHCR. Needs Assessment Handbook. Available at: <https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/50204/UNHCR+Needs+Assessment+Handbook/3e21b7d7-57c5-4cd4-82df-2a01900ab14f>; ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>573</sup> UNHCR. Needs Assessment Handbook. Available at: <https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/50204/UNHCR+Needs+Assessment+Handbook/3e21b7d7-57c5-4cd4-82df-2a01900ab14f>; ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>574</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO Field: 3, UNHCR Field: 5, UNHCR HQ: 2); ICF. 2023. Online Survey of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff (16 DG ECHO staff out of 22 agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their approaches to risk analysis and needs assessments; 19 UNHCR staff out of 21 agree or strongly agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their approaches to risk analysis and needs assessments); ICF. 2023. ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

the quality and alignment of UNHCR's need assessments with DG ECHO's requirements greatly varied across countries and funded actions.<sup>575</sup>

For all 40 funded actions reviewed as part for the project mapping, UNHCR had undertaken a needs assessment and risk analysis prior to the implementation of the action (using primary and secondary data). **The quality of the needs assessments and risk analysis included in UNHCR's proposals – as assessed by DG ECHO – considerably varied across actions and countries.** While in some cases DG ECHO praised the quality of UNHCR's needs assessments, in some others, they considered that they were not comprehensive enough or did not provide an adequate level of disaggregation.<sup>576</sup> Table 39 provides some examples of differences in the quality of UNHCR's needs assessments as reported by DG ECHO.

Table 39. Examples of DG ECHO's assessment of UNHCR's needs assessments

Country	DG ECHO assessment
<b>Bangladesh</b>	DG ECHO considered of very good quality the needs assessments undertaken by UNHCR in the context of funded actions in Bangladesh and in particular, UNHCR's protection risk analysis. Nonetheless, in the face of a raise in the number of security incidents in the camps, DG ECHO requested UNHCR to enhance its assessment of the security situation and provide more qualitative data on existing security risks. DG ECHO also encouraged UNHCR to enhance their efforts to identify and assess the needs of people with disabilities in the camps.
<b>Greece</b>	DG ECHO generally praised the quality of UNHCR's needs assessments in Greece (especially for cash interventions) which were generally considered to be very complete and realistic and relying on lessons learned from previous actions. However, some flaws in UNHCR's needs assessment for people in accommodation schemes in Greece were also identified.
<b>Türkiye</b>	DG ECHO considered UNHCR's needs assessments in the context of funded actions in Türkiye as good but lacking a solid provincial and regional analysis in some cases.
<b>Chad</b>	DG ECHO staff had different views on the quality of UNHCR's needs assessments in Chad. The quality of these assessments also varied considerably across the funded actions. For example, for the 2018 UNHCR funded action, DG ECHO considered that the need assessments undertaken by UNHCR were rather generic and not always up to date. Conversely, for the 2020 and 2021 funded actions, UNHCR's needs assessments (particularly in the protection sector) were found to be sufficiently comprehensive and detailed. According to DG ECHO staff consulted reported that UNHCR staff on the ground had a very good understanding of existing needs but this was not always well reflected in the proposals.
<b>Jordan</b>	DG ECHO found that the number and quality of needs assessments undertaken by UNHCR were adequate and sufficient. The vulnerability Framework developed by UNHCR, together with the World Bank, was considered by DG ECHO to be a very useful tool to assess vulnerabilities and their evolution over time (although a higher level of disaggregation was expected).
<b>Venezuelan crisis</b>	DG ECHO positively assessed the quality of UNHCR's needs assessments undertaken for actions funded in the context of the Venezuelan crisis overall, but also made some recommendations on how to strengthen these (e.g. better assessing the needs of IDPs in Colombia, making sure the needs assessments were updated during the course of implementation of the actions, etc.)

ICF. 2023. Project Mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination), Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions).

Even though DG ECHO does not require partners to provide identifiable personal data as part of the needs assessments, UNHCR staff consulted reported that they often have access to very sensitive protection information on PoCs that cannot be put in writing. As explained by UNHCR, that is why in

<sup>575</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination), Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions); ICF. 2023. KIIs.

<sup>576</sup> Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination); ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

some cases, UNHCR needs assessments included in the proposals did not contain very detailed information on some protection indicators as requested by DG ECHO.<sup>577</sup>

**DG ECHO and UNHCR were also generally well aligned in their approaches to risk and vulnerability analysis.**<sup>578</sup> Both DG ECHO and UNHCR use the same approach to risk analysis (i.e. assessing existing threats, vulnerabilities and capacities). In this context, the partners use a slightly different definition of vulnerability (see Figure 62) but both emphasise the importance of considering the unique circumstances of the individual.

Figure 62. UNHCR and DG ECHO definitions of vulnerability

Definition of vulnerability	
UNHCR	The limited capacity to avoid, resist, cope with, or recover from harm. This limited capacity is the result of the unique interaction of individual, household, community, and structural characteristics and conditions.
DG ECHO	Life circumstances (e.g. poverty, education) and/or discrimination based on physical or social characteristics (sex, disability, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) reducing the ability of primary stakeholders (for example, individuals/households/community) to withstand adverse impact from external stressors. Vulnerability is not a fixed criterion attached to specific categories of people, and no one is born vulnerable per se.

Source: UNHCR, *Glossary of Terms*, <https://www.unhcr.org/glossary/#p>; DG ECHO, *Thematic Policy Document, Humanitarian Protection, Improving protection outcomes to reduce risks for people in humanitarian crises*, [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/policy\\_guidelines\\_humanitarian\\_protection\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/policy_guidelines_humanitarian_protection_en.pdf).

In several contexts, DG ECHO staff consulted praised the quality of UNHCR vulnerability analyses. For example, DG ECHO staff highlighted the high quality of UNHCR's Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR).<sup>579</sup> The VASyR was undertaken jointly by UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP to assess the vulnerabilities of Syrian refugee households (i.e. protection, economic vulnerability, shelter, livelihoods, food security, education, health, coping mechanisms, etc.). Similarly, the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) developed by UNHCR, together with the World Bank in Jordan was also highly valued by DG ECHO staff.<sup>580</sup> Over the evaluation period, DG ECHO also financially supported UNHCR in developing (joint) vulnerability assessment tools (e.g. in the context of the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub). On the other hand, some DG ECHO staff found that in some cases, UNHCR's pre-determined list of vulnerabilities was not sufficiently adapted to the context and did not allow to undertake a fully-fledged risk analysis and vulnerability assessment.<sup>581</sup>

DG ECHO requires its partners to target beneficiaries based on the results of needs assessments, risk analysis and context-specific vulnerabilities. **Evidence collected shows that the degree of alignment between DG ECHO and UNHCR targeting strategies varied across countries and contexts.**<sup>582</sup> Refugees and other PoCs were among the most vulnerable in the countries where DG ECHO and UNHCR cooperated and thus, the partners were generally aligned in the targeting of those groups, particularly in the context of sudden crises and new displacements.<sup>583</sup> In these contexts, DG ECHO sometimes allowed for a blanket targeting of newly displaced populations and

<sup>577</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR HQ: 2, UNHCR Field: 1).

<sup>578</sup> ICF. 2023. Online Survey of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff (16 DG ECHO staff out of 22 agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their approaches to risk and vulnerability analysis; 18 UNHCR staff out of 21 agree or strongly agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their approaches to risk and vulnerability analysis); ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination), Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions); ICF. 2023. KIIs.

<sup>579</sup> See: UNHCR. The VASyR Hub. Available at: <https://ialebanon.unhcr.org/vasyr/#/>.

<sup>580</sup> Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination).

<sup>581</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Online Survey of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff.

<sup>582</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO Documentation.

<sup>583</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

did not require a targeting approach based on vulnerability for those groups. However, for other groups, as well as in more protected displacement contexts and camp settings, DG ECHO required its partners to use vulnerability-based targeting strategies (instead of targeting based on status) to prioritise the most vulnerable groups. It was primarily in those contexts where there were some ***misalignment in DG ECHO and UNHCR targeting strategies***.<sup>584</sup> ***That was because UNHCR often targeted beneficiaries on the basis of status*** (i.e. refugees and asylum seekers), ***nationality, or a pre-determined list of vulnerabilities instead of on the basis of risk analysis***.<sup>585</sup> In Lebanon, for instance, UNHCR used a blanket approach to target all refugees (as the result of the VASyR showed high vulnerabilities for most refugees) while DG ECHO's strategy in the country emphasised the need to target based on vulnerability criteria adapted to the context.<sup>586</sup> In Chad, DG ECHO and UNHCR were aligned in the blanket targeting of newly displaced populations. However, when it came to other groups, UNHCR targeted all refugees and not only the most vulnerable ones which was not in line with DG ECHO's targeting strategy in the country.<sup>587</sup> In Jordan, UNHCR targeted all refugees with specific needs without further consideration to existing vulnerabilities which was not fully in line with DG ECHO's approach.<sup>588</sup> In the context of the Venezuela crisis, UNHCR also initially used nationality-based targeting criteria (i.e. being Venezuelan) instead of vulnerability.<sup>589</sup>

In some countries, differences in targeting approaches during the evaluation period considerably hampered operational cooperation under the partnership, while in others, the identified misalignments were discussed and addressed, thus not posing major issues to the well-functioning of the partnership. In Afghanistan for instance, one of the main reasons why DG ECHO did not fund UNHCR activities between 2017-2020 was the fact that UNHCR targeting was not aligned with DG ECHO strategy.<sup>590</sup> This also happened in DRC, where some of the latest UNHCR proposals were not selected for funding due to, among other things, lack of prioritisation of the most vulnerable beneficiaries through the targeting approach used.<sup>591</sup> In Lebanon on the other hand, where the partners initially used different targeting strategies, the misalignments were discussed and UNHCR agreed to adapt its targeting approach to bring it more in line with DG ECHO's requirements.<sup>592</sup> In the context of the Venezuelan crisis, following conversations with DG ECHO, UNHCR also transitioned from a targeting approach based on nationality to a targeting strategy based on vulnerability regardless of the nationality (as of 2021).<sup>593</sup>

DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted reported that even though some differences in targeting approaches persisted in several countries over the evaluation period, alignment in the partners' targeting strategies improved over time.<sup>594</sup>

***DG ECHO and UNHCR were also generally well aligned in their advocacy priorities both at global and country level.*** In some cases, however, the partners disagreed on their preferred approaches to advocacy (***JC 1.3***).

---

<sup>584</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Online Survey of DG ECHO and UNHCR Staff; ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO documentation; ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination), Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions).

<sup>585</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO Field: 1, DG ECHO HQ: 1, UNHCR Field: 2); ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>586</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO Field: 1)

<sup>587</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions).

<sup>588</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions).

<sup>589</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>590</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO documentation.

<sup>591</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO documentation.

<sup>592</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs.

<sup>593</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions).

<sup>594</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 1, UNHCR HQ: 1).

Most DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted considered that the partners were well-aligned in their advocacy priorities **at global level**.<sup>595</sup> Some examples of common advocacy priorities in this context included:<sup>596</sup>

- Ensuring the delivery of humanitarian assistance to PoC in a safe and dignified manner and on the basis of humanitarian needs;
- Bringing policies, practice and laws in line with International Refugee Law, IHL and Human Rights Law;
- Promoting access to the territory and registration for refugees; and
- Promoting greater acceptance of persons of concern by host communities and working towards durable solutions.

**At country level, DG ECHO and UNHCR's advocacy priorities were also generally aligned.**<sup>597</sup>

Examples of common advocacy priorities at this level included enhancing registration of refugees, advocating for the provision of documentation, promoting durable solutions, enhancing the respect for the principle of non-refoulement and advocating for increase humanitarian (and development) funding.<sup>598</sup>

Over the evaluation period, **DG ECHO also funded a number of UNHCR advocacy activities** in several countries (e.g. to ensure registration and documentation, access to basic services and rights, against returns, enhanced asylum legislation, to reduce xenophobia and discrimination, etc.).<sup>599</sup> Section A7.2 (Annex 7) provides some examples of UNHCR's advocacy actions financially supported by DG ECHO (among other donors).

**Despite a general alignment in advocacy priorities at country level, some misalignments were also identified.** This was for instance the case in South Sudan (and for some time also in Burundi) where UNHCR was advocating for supporting refugees who decided to return, while DG ECHO did not want to proactively advocate for returns, as this was considered to be a very politicised issue in the country, posing a risk of instrumentalisation of humanitarian aid.<sup>600</sup>

**Also, the partners were not always aligned in their preferred approaches to advocacy.** For example, in some countries, DG ECHO expected UNHCR to be more vocal and open in their advocacy efforts towards the government (e.g. in favour of refugee protection). This happened for instance in Colombia where DG ECHO had expected UNHCR to advocate more openly for the promotion of the implementation the Cartagena Declaration as well as in pushing the government to improve the protection system.<sup>601</sup> Similarly in Türkiye, DG ECHO considered that UNHCR was not always vocal enough *vis-à-vis* the government on different issues affecting refugees (e.g. preserving NGO space to carry out key protection activities, access to protection data, registration of Syrians under Temporary Protection, and deportations).<sup>602</sup> In Iran and Pakistan, DG ECHO also expected UNHCR to play a stronger advocacy role for refugee protection despite the challenging political environment.<sup>603</sup>

---

<sup>595</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (16 DG ECHO staff out of 22 responses agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their advocacy priorities at strategic level; 14 UNHCR staff out of 21 responses agree or strongly agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their advocacy priorities at strategic level); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 1, DG ECHO Field: 1, UNHCR HQ: 1, UNHCR Field: 1).

<sup>596</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; UNHCR. Advocacy in Emergencies. Available at: <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/49254/advocacy-in-emergencies>; European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:42008X0130\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:42008X0130(01)&from=EN).

<sup>597</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 1, DG ECHO Field: 4, UNHCR HQ:1, UNHCR Field: 6); ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (16 DG ECHO staff out of 22 responses agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their advocacy priorities at country level; 17 UNHCR staff out of 21 responses agree or strongly agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their advocacy priorities at country level); ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>598</sup> DG ECHO HIPs; UNHCR. Global Focus, Country Operations. Available at: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operations>.

<sup>599</sup> Out of the 40 UNHCR funded actions review, 35 included advocacy activities.

<sup>600</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO Field: 1, UNHCR Field: 1); ICF. 2023. Online survey of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff (1 UNHCR respondent).

<sup>601</sup> Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions).

<sup>602</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO Documentation.

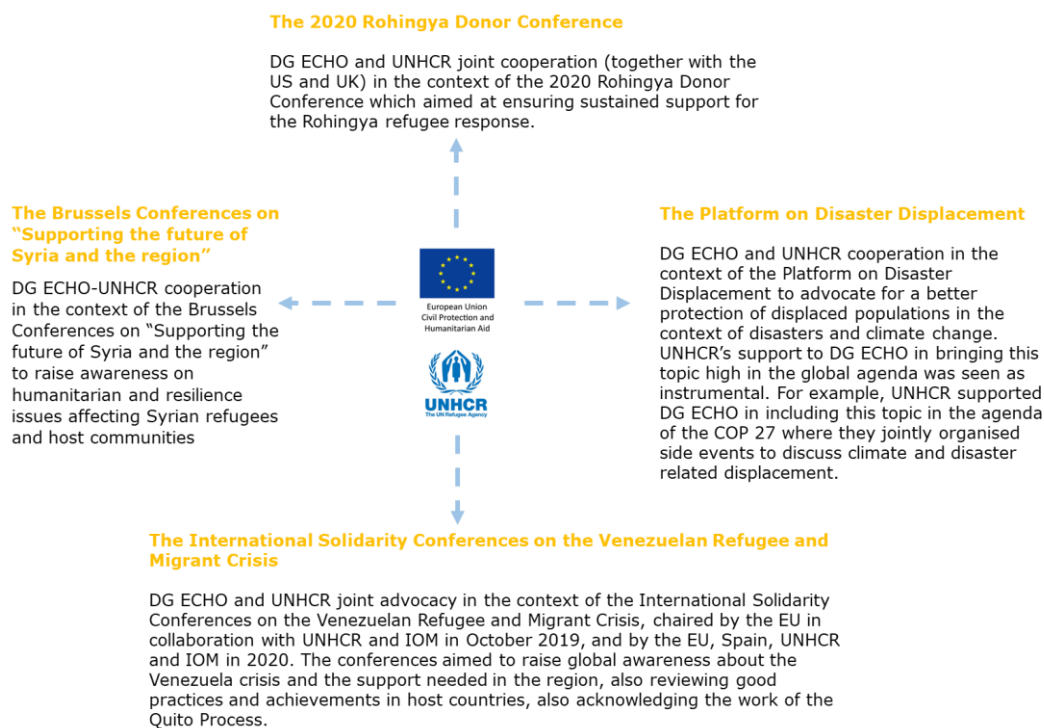
<sup>603</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO Documentation.

UNHCR staff consulted reported that, in some cases, UNHCR prefers to adopt an advocacy strategy that does not imply public confrontation with the government (e.g. private and confidential meetings with the relevant governments, through special envoys, etc.) so they do not risk their capacity to operate in a country and can preserve their access to people in need.<sup>604</sup>

**DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted had different views as to whether they managed to effectively pursue joint advocacy actions where possible.** While only a minority DG ECHO staff<sup>605</sup> consulted through the survey considered that joint advocacy actions with UNHCR were pursued where feasible (both at global and at field level), most UNHCR staff consulted stated that joint advocacy actions were pursued at different levels whenever possible.<sup>606</sup>

Evidence collected provided a few examples of joint advocacy efforts at **global level** (see Figure 63). **At field level**, however, while there was some degree of cooperation on advocacy issues in different countries (as described above), this mostly happened through the funding provided to UNHCR's advocacy and awareness raising activities, exchanges of information and advocacy messages or in the context of existing coordination forum (e.g. Donor Support Groups) rather than through joint advocacy campaigns. UNHCR staff consulted reported that in some contexts, it was not possible for UNHCR to undertake joint advocacy with DG ECHO as they would risk being perceived as linked with the EU interests in a given country which could undermine their perception of neutrality and independence.<sup>607</sup>

Figure 63. Examples of DG ECHO-UNHCR joint advocacy efforts at global level



Source: ICF.2023. KIIs; ICF.2023. Analysis of DG ECHO Documentation; ICF.2023. Desk research.

**The evaluation period also saw increased alignment in DG ECHO's and UNHCR's communication and visibility efforts and enhanced commitment from both partners in**

<sup>604</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR HQ: 3, UNHCR Field: 1)

<sup>605</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (9 DG ECHO staff out of 22 responses agree that joint advocacy actions were pursued where possible at global and field level, 6 disagree or strongly disagree and 7 had no pinion).

<sup>606</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (16 UNHCR staff out of 21 responses agree or strongly agree that joint advocacy actions were pursued where possible at global and field level, 1 disagree ad 4 had no pinion).

<sup>607</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR HQ: 3)

**this area.** Nevertheless, challenges in the dissemination of communication materials to an EU-wide audiences as well as quality issues regarding UNHCR's field visibility were also identified (**JC1.4**).

While only a minority of DG ECHO staff consulted through the survey agreed that DG ECHO and UNHCR were aligned in their communication and visibility efforts, most UNHCR staff consulted considered that there was a good degree of alignment.<sup>608</sup> The level of alignment and (joint) commitment to communication and visibility efforts increased over the evaluation period.

Visibility and communication issues (both at field and EU level) were **recurrent topics of discussion** during the DG ECHO-UNHCR High-level Dialogues. DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted considered that the inclusion of communication and visibility issues in the agenda of high-level meetings was useful to ensure that enough importance was given to this aspect of their cooperation.<sup>609</sup>

Over the evaluation period, UNHCR made efforts to enhance the visibility and communication of DG ECHO's funding.<sup>610</sup> One example of this commitment was the establishment in 2018 of a **dedicated EU Communication and Visibility Team** based at the UNHCR Representation for EU Affairs (REUA) in Brussels. The UNHCR EU Visibility Team was responsible for liaising directly with DG ECHO on joint communication and visibility issues and to provide support to UNHCR field staff on visibility aspects related to EU funding. Some examples of this support included:<sup>611</sup>

- **Online training sessions** for UNHCR's Regional Bureaux and their respective operations on how to provide correct and high-quality EU Visibility and to exchange good practices;
- The creation of an online board ("**Trello board**") to support UNHCR on DG ECHO visibility.<sup>612</sup>
- **Supporting UNHCR field and regional staff** in the preparation of visibility and communication activities to publicise the DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership.<sup>613</sup>

DG ECHO staff consulted considered the establishment of the UNHCR EU Visibility Team as a positive step to enhance the visibility of the partnership and particularly, to streamline UNHCR's field visibility and its alignment with DG ECHO's requirements. On the other hand, UNHCR's internal structure was reported to have hampered – to some extent – the organisation's ability to reach out to wider audiences in the EU. This is because the EU Visibility Team was only responsible for interactions and communication *vis-à-vis* EU Institutions and not Member States and therefore did not have access to UNHCR social media accounts in those countries.<sup>614</sup>

In 2019, DG ECHO and UNHCR also established the **DG ECHO Visibility Pooled Fund**, financed by deducting 0.1% (in 2019 was 0.06%) from all DG ECHO contracts with UNHCR of EUR 1 million and above (see Figure 64). The fund was used for joint communication and visibility activities aimed at EU audiences, and to co-fund one full-time position within the UNHCR EU Visibility Team.

---

<sup>608</sup> ICF. 2023. Online survey of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff (6 DG ECHO staff out of 22 agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their visibility and communication efforts; 14 UNHCR staff out of 21 agree or strongly agree that DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their visibility and communication efforts.

<sup>609</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 2, UNHCR HQ: 1).

<sup>610</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO documentation.

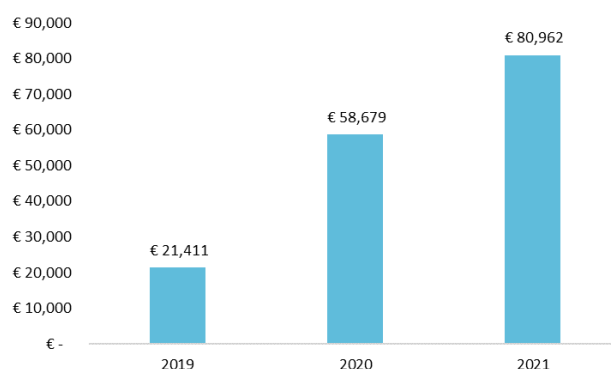
<sup>611</sup> UNHCR-DG ECHO Communication and visibility reports 2019-2021.

<sup>612</sup> The board included information on: REUA support, guidance on logos, social media including a cheat sheet with relevant handles, a mission checklist, events, digital content including videos, animations, photo exhibitions, planning templates, etc.

<sup>613</sup> The type of support provided went from advice regarding logos for signboards and pull-ups, social media advice, content-gathering ideas, planning, implementation, and reporting.

<sup>614</sup> ICF. 2023. KII (DG ECHO HQ: 2).

Figure 64. Financial amounts of visibility pool fund between 2019-2021



Source: UNHCR, DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership communication and visibility reports.

Note: these amounts represent the portion for the visibility fund recorded in a given year. Some contracts may overlap two years, in which case the visibility fund will be applied against the portion recorded for each year.

DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted reported that the establishment of the Pooled Fund was very useful to enhance cooperation and alignment on communication and visibility aspects and to support UNHCR field staff in better understanding and implementing DG ECHO's visibility requirements.<sup>615</sup> However, the high turnover in UNHCR staff at the UNHCR EU Visibility Team was reported to have posed some difficulties in ensuring smooth communication and planning between the partners.<sup>616</sup>

Since 2019, UNHCR has been producing **annual communication and visibility reports** summarising the activities undertaken profiling the DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership. Some examples of UNHCR's visibility and communication activities, included:<sup>617</sup> several metro campaigns in Brussels to show cast the impact of the partnership; the publication of Human Interest Stories; press releases; publications and printed materials; acknowledgment of DG ECHO funding in UNHCR's website; and a number of audio-visual products (i.e. photos and videos). Key international days, events and meetings were also used by UNHCR to further boost the visibility of the partnership (see Annex 7 for some examples).

Over the evaluation period, the UNHCR EU Visibility Team liaised on a regular basis with DG ECHO's Social Media and Web Team to share common content and amplify the reach of the partnership (e.g. through retweets and tweeting of content shared). UNHCR used **social media platforms** (primarily Twitter) to promote DG ECHO's support and the impact of the partnership.<sup>618</sup> However, as the REUA only had a Twitter account, the coverage of the partnership in other social media channels (e.g. Instagram, TikTok) was limited.<sup>619</sup> This limitation also challenged the possibility to reach a younger audience (even though this was a priority for both partners under the Visibility Pooled Fund).<sup>620</sup>

When it comes to **field visibility**, evidence collected shows that the level of alignment of UNHCR field visibility with DG ECHO's requirements varied considerably from one action to another and across countries (or even across different action sites).<sup>621</sup> The figure below provides an overview of the type of field visibility implemented by UNHCR on the ground based on DG ECHO standard field visibility requirements.

<sup>615</sup> ICF. 2023. KII (DG ECHO HQ: 1, UNHCR HQ: 1).

<sup>616</sup> ICF. 2023. KII (DG ECHO HQ: 1).

<sup>617</sup> UNHCR-DG ECHO Communication and visibility reports 2019-2021; ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. KIIs.

<sup>618</sup> UNHCR-DG ECHO Communication and visibility reports 2019-2021; ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

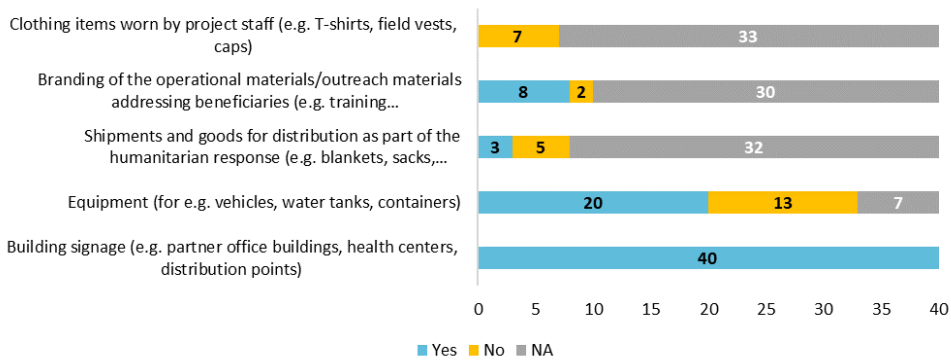
<sup>619</sup> ICF. 2023. KII (DG ECHO HQ: 1).

<sup>620</sup> ICF. 2023. KII (DG ECHO HQ: 1).

<sup>621</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).



Figure 65. Overview of UNHCR standard visibility in funded actions



Source: ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

Note: NA means this field was not required in the SF (as this was only introduced in the 2021 SF) or the project did not include relevant activities that would require visibility.

The reason why, as shown in Figure 65, the DG ECHO logo was not placed on clothing and other items worn by UNCHR staff, is because UNHCR policies prohibit the use of logos other than the one of UNHCR on workwear for safeguarding and accountability purposes as PoCs need to be able to quickly and clearly identify UNHCR on-duty staff.<sup>622</sup> Figure 66 provides some examples of differences in the quality of UNHCR's field visibility as assessed by DG ECHO staff during monitoring visits and/or after the submission of interim/final reports.

<sup>622</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

Figure 66. Examples of DG ECHO's assessment of UNHCR's field visibility in the funded actions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: blue;">○</span> Derogation from field visibility applied</li> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> Adequate field visibility</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Some deficiencies identified</li> <li><span style="color: orange;">●</span> Poor field visibility</li> </ul>	
<b>Venezuela</b>	<span style="color: blue;">○</span>	UNHCR requested a partial derogation in terms of standard communication and visibility requirements in view of the challenging political environment in Venezuela, where the national authorities did not recognise the existence of and humanitarian emergency. This exception was granted by DG ECHO.
<b>Chile</b>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	No issues with visibility were identified.
<b>Peru</b>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	In the 2018 action DG ECHO highlighted a critical absence of DG ECHO field visibility. In the 2021 action on the other hand, UNHCR showed a good level of visibility of DG ECHO funding.
<b>Ecuador</b>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	Under the 2021 regional programme to respond to the Venezuelan crisis DG ECHO noticed that there was no mention to DG ECHO funding in UNHCR activities when presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the other hand, DG ECHO praised UNHCR visibility actions in the context of the 2019 UNHCR action funded in Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador.
<b>Colombia</b>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	The quality of field visibility in Colombia varied from one action to the other and depending on the site.
<b>Trinidad and Tobago</b>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	The visibility of DG ECHO funding was seen as very positive.
<b>Chad</b>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span> <span style="color: blue;">○</span>	The quality of field visibility varied across locations and funded actions. While some of the funded actions displayed low visibility of DG ECHO funding, in others, UNHCR's visibility efforts were considered very strong (e.g. in the 2020 action). In some cases, a derogation from field visibility was requested and accepted due to insecurity.
<b>Lebanon</b>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	Standard visibility was correctly applied in line with DG ECHO requirements.
<b>Greece</b>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	Visibility was generally in line with DG ECHO requirements, but the quality varied depending on the site. In some areas visibility was kept to the minimum and there was no visibility in camps.
<b>Türkiye</b>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	The reviewed funding actions in Türkiye showed good visibility overall but DG ECHO highlighted some issues with some UNHCR implementing partners not complying with visibility requirements. There was also an agreement that some operations would not be publicised due to existing sensitivities around the implemented activities.
<b>Jordan</b>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	Basic field visibility was ensured
<b>Bangladesh</b>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	UNHCR showed adequate field visibility
<b>Uganda</b>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	Field visibility was considered to be good and improved over time (especially since 2018)

Source: ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

Some UNHCR staff consulted considered that DG ECHO communication and visibility requirements were very demanding, especially when compared to those of other donors. The need to adequately balance field visibility of DG ECHO and other donors was also highlighted by UNHCR staff consulted as something that the organisation needs to consider when displaying DG ECHO visibility.<sup>623</sup>

<sup>623</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR HQ: 3, UNHCR Field: 2).

### Good practice

Both DG ECHO and UNHCR staff highlighted as a good practice the 2021 UNHCR above-standard visibility Campaign in Ecuador.<sup>624</sup> Under its 2021 funded action to respond to the needs of Venezuelan refugees in Ecuador (ECHO/-AM/BUD/2021/91062), UNHCR submitted a proposal to hire a company to produce 'On the Other Side', an immersive 360-degree interactive experience, based on true stories, developed with inputs from Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador. This short film aimed to raise awareness about the Venezuelan displacement, the risks people face on their journey to safety and why they are forced to leave their countries as well as demonstrate UNHCR's role in providing assistance and finding solutions with DG ECHO's support. The film was supported by a website and educational guides in Spanish, English, Italian and French. To mark the launch of the film, a virtual 'Film Launch and High-level Panel on the Venezuelan Displacement' was organised. The dissemination plan for the film included a joint UNHCR-DG ECHO press release, paid social media, and a metro campaign in Brussels. The film was also submitted to several film festivals across Europe. Moreover, to mark the launch of the film, a virtual 'Film Launch and High-level Panel on the Venezuelan Displacement' was also organised.



## 7.2 Efficiency

EQ 2. To what extent did the DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership succeed in: (i) maximising efficiencies and decreasing management and related costs, including administrative burden? (EQ2.1), and b) improving cost-effectiveness in their response? (EQ2.2)

Table 40. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC 2.1 Opportunities for efficiency gains were adequately identified and maximised at global and country level	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At global level, there were some occasions in which opportunities for improving efficiency were discussed between the partners. However, there were no visible effects of these discussions on efficiency during the timeline of the evaluation.</li> <li>At programmatic and operational level, there is evidence that the partnership contributed, in some countries/projects, to identifying opportunities for efficiency gains.</li> <li>Nevertheless, a significant number of consulted DG ECHO staff and UNHCR staff considered that the impact of the partnership on increasing efficiency was not significant.</li> </ul>
JC 2.2 The partnership succeeded in decreasing management-related costs (including administrative burden)	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The partnership did not have a significant effect on decreasing management related costs.</li> <li>The partners have distinct views on the impact of the partnership on administrative burden. While DG ECHO has simplified requirements for UNHCR, UNHCR considers that further simplification would be required.</li> </ul>
JC 2.3 The partnership contributed to improving the cost-	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall, UNHCR staff has a more positive assessment of the impact of the partnership on</li> </ul>

<sup>624</sup> UNHCR-DG ECHO Communication and visibility report 2021; and ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
effectiveness of the partners' humanitarian responses		<p>cost-effectiveness and timeliness of the response than DG ECHO staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The majority of DG ECHO staff consulted, indicated that the partnership did not influence the cost-effectiveness of the UNHCR humanitarian response.</li> <li>On the other hand, the vast majority of UNHCR staff thinks that DG ECHO's requirements contributed to improve cost-effectiveness and only a minority disagreed that the partnership contributed to enhancing cost effectiveness and timeliness of the UNHCR humanitarian response.</li> </ul>

**Opportunities for efficiency gains were identified at various levels to different degrees, even though exchanges and discussions between the partners mostly focused on other issues (JC2.1). The impact of the exchanges and discussions on efficiency gains were limited.**

At global level, there were some occasions in which opportunities for improving efficiency were discussed between the partners. During strategic and high-level meetings, the partners explored opportunities mainly in the following areas (see also EQ3):<sup>625</sup>

- Digitalisation and other approaches to streamline processes and increase interoperability;
- Localisation;
- Scaling-up cash-based assistance;
- Innovative finance;
- Flexibility and predictability of financing, including multi-year programming.
- Operational issues related to budget allocation and management in specific regions/countries were occasionally also discussed.

In addition, the participation of DG ECHO (as lead for EU relations with UNHCR) in the UNHCR Standing Committees also provided a stage for the parties to discuss opportunities to increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness, the most recurrent ones being scaling up cash-based assistance,<sup>626</sup> solutions to reduce management/indirect costs, increase coordination, cooperation and exploitation of synergies and interoperability, integrated approaches to needs, and multi-partner and multi-year strategies.<sup>627</sup>

However, the consulted stakeholders were not able to pinpoint any visible effects of these discussions on efficiency during the timeline of the evaluation.<sup>628</sup> The documentation review also did not find, for most of the elements identified above, evidence that they resulted in concrete efficiency or cost-effectiveness gains.<sup>629</sup> The exception was the use of cash in UNHCR actions funded by DG ECHO, with the portfolio analysis showing that the share of cash transfers done by

<sup>625</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of minutes of High-level and Strategic Dialogue meetings; analysis of High-level and Strategic Dialogue monitoring tables

<sup>626</sup> In 2017 the EU indicated the aim to scale up the cash component of the overall humanitarian assistance to 35%.

<sup>627</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of minutes of UNHCR Standing Committee statements.

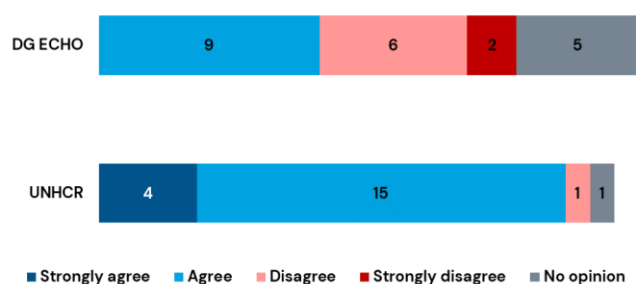
<sup>628</sup> UNHCR: ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 8, UNHCR: 13)

<sup>629</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of documentation shared by DG ECHO and UNHCR in the context of the evaluations. See full list in Annex 1.

UNHCR funded actions increased from 4.6% of the total cash transfers carried out by DG ECHO global portfolio in 2016 to 7.1% in 2021.<sup>630</sup>

At programmatic and operational level, there is evidence that the partnership contributed, in some countries and projects, to identifying opportunities for efficiency gains.<sup>631</sup> The project mapping suggests that the two partners engaged in dialogue throughout the project cycle, which included ways to increase efficiency or address inefficiencies, where relevant.<sup>632</sup> This was also highlighted by some DG ECHO and UNHCR staff,<sup>633</sup> but the perceived impact of the dialogue and information exchanges between DG ECHO and UNHCR on the identification of opportunities for efficiency gains differed between the partners. As shown in Figure 67, UNHCR respondents to the survey were almost unanimously positive while DG ECHO's responses showed a more mixed picture, with only a minority agreeing and around 20% stating they had no opinion. A few DG ECHO and UNHCR staff highlighted that, in their view, the quality of the dialogue on efficiency and cost-effectiveness aspects between the two partners at country and regional level was in some cases weak, partially due to limited information sharing by UNHCR.

Figure 67. Number of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff who considered that the “Dialogue and information exchange between DG ECHO and UNHCR facilitated the identification of potential inefficiencies/opportunities for efficiency gains”



Source: ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (DG ECHO, N=22; UNHCR, N=21)

The project mapping found that when opportunities to increase the efficiency of a funded action were identified, follow-up actions were sometimes suggested by DG ECHO and carried out by UNHCR (in particular in case of cash-based assistance).<sup>634</sup> Nevertheless, a significant number of consulted DG ECHO staff and UNHCR staff considered that the impact of the partnership on increasing efficiency was not significant.<sup>635</sup> Some DG ECHO staff indicated that this was due to:<sup>636</sup>

- A lack of detailed and timely information on UNHCR projects/activities to allow for a timely analysis of their efficiency and subsequent adjustments, where relevant;
- The limited flexibility of UNHCR to take DG ECHO's recommendations on board, given the size of UNHCR's structure and their multi-donor approach (which limited the operational influence of DG ECHO).

Some UNHCR staff highlighted that this reduced impact was in their view due to:

<sup>630</sup> ICF. 2023. Portfolio analysis (data extracted from HOPE/EVA databases)

<sup>631</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2, UNHCR: 3); ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>632</sup> Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>633</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2, UNHCR: 3).

<sup>634</sup> Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>635</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 5, UNHCR: 8).

<sup>636</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 5).

- DG ECHO providing insufficient information about which partners and activities/projects were being funded by them,<sup>637</sup> which prevented the exploitation of synergies and the avoidance of duplications,<sup>638</sup> and
- A misalignment of both partners' timelines as UNHCR has a program-based approach that is defined to start already in January each year, while DG ECHO's fund decisions are project-based and take place later, around March, limiting their capacity to still influence UNHCR programmes of that year.<sup>639</sup>

**The impact of the partnership in decreasing management-related costs, including administrative burden, was not significant (JC 2.2).**

The FAFA<sup>640</sup> highlights that the partnership between UNHCR and the EU aimed to ensure the “most effective and efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance in the context of the increasing humanitarian needs worldwide” including the further harmonisation or simplification<sup>641</sup> of the procedures used to co-operate with each other. Evidence shows that while DG ECHO's requirements for UNHCR were simpler than those applicable to INGOs, the two partners had distinct views on the reporting requirements. While DG ECHO considered that the reporting by UNHCR could have been further improved and it was not as comprehensive as the reporting provided by other partners (which do not benefit from the simplified reporting rules as UN agencies do),<sup>642</sup> UNHCR considered DG ECHO reporting requirements to have been too heavy and cumbersome, especially when compared to those of other donors and their amount of funding.<sup>643</sup> This aspect might have had, however, a very limited impact on UNHCR management costs, as those were mostly related to its structure and internal procedures which were not elements that the partnership could have influenced.<sup>644</sup>

Figure 68. Number of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff who considered that “The FAFA and the 2005 MoU contributed to decrease management-related costs, including administrative burden”

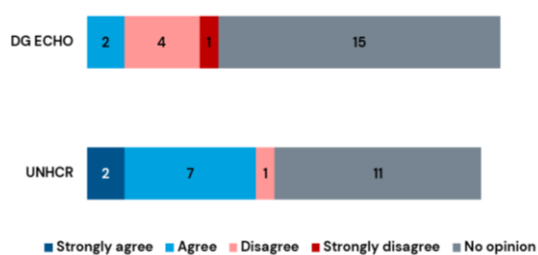
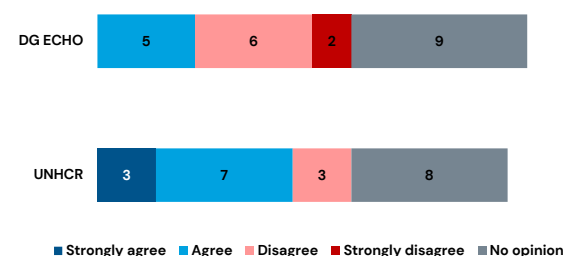


Figure 69. Number of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff who considered that “The partnership contributed to decreasing management-related costs”



Source: ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (DG ECHO, N=22; UNHCR, N=21)

<sup>637</sup> DG ECHO's awards funding in a transparent, but competitive process which may limit the sharing of information about proposals under consideration.

<sup>638</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR: 2).

<sup>639</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR: 4).

<sup>640</sup> Available at: <https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/io/framework-partnership-agreement/the-fafa>

<sup>641</sup> For example, in the FAFA it is mentioned that “The Commission may not always request a specific format for budgets in contribution-specific agreements and reports, provided that a sufficient level of detail is provided in the United Nations’ proposals and standard reports.”

<sup>642</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3).

<sup>643</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR: 5).

<sup>644</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1).

Overall, the majority of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted did not agree that the FAFA and the MoU or the partnership contributed to decreasing management-related costs, as shown in Figure 68 and Figure 69. These findings are also supported by the analysis of the weight of indirect costs for a sample of projects, that concluded that UNHCR-funded actions had similar shares to the non-UNHCR actions.<sup>645</sup>

***The partnership contribution to improving the cost-effectiveness of the partners' humanitarian responses varied across countries and projects (JC 2.3).***

Both partners recognised that their global presence and technical capacities were contributing factors for the cost-effectiveness of the UNHCR actions but had different views on the overall impact of the partnership on cost-effectiveness.<sup>646</sup>

The majority of DG ECHO staff consulted, indicated that the partnership did not influence the cost-effectiveness of UNHCR's humanitarian response nor its timeliness, mostly due to proposals and reports sometimes delayed<sup>647</sup> and lacking detailed information, targeting not always aligned with DG ECHO priorities, limited availability of UNHCR to adjust activities and discuss/follow DG ECHO's recommendations on issues related to efficiency and cost-effectiveness and the characteristics of the structure of UNHCR, which is centralised and heavy.<sup>648</sup> Nevertheless, some good practices and positive examples of the impact of the partnership on cost-effectiveness were shared by DG ECHO, including the expertise, geographical coverage and size of UNHCR that allowed DG ECHO to address certain crises (which might not have been possible or less cost-effective if UNHCR would not have been involved) and the joint work on some cash-programmes.<sup>649</sup>

The review of documentation further supports these views, as throughout the evaluation period, DG ECHO officers highlighted the following challenges related to the proposals and reports of UNHCR:<sup>650</sup>

- Some UNHCR proposals tended to be of lower quality, with poor use of indicators (protection in particular), weak risk analysis and needs assessment, vague description of activities, and no details on cost-effectiveness;
- Targeting not always aligned with DG ECHO priorities;
- Some UNHCR report tends to be of lower quality and submitted with delays.

Often, when a proposal was not of the desired level of quality, the two partners initiated a negotiation procedure to ensure the quality, and subsequent approval, of the proposal. The project mapping also shows that two partners engaged in dialogue throughout the project cycle, which in some cases led to mitigation of problems and to increases in the cost-effectiveness of actions.<sup>651</sup>

---

<sup>645</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>646</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2, UNHCR: 2).

<sup>647</sup> While the proposals are received on time, the lack of detail or some misalignments (e.g., on targeting approach) in the proposals can lead to longer negotiation processes.

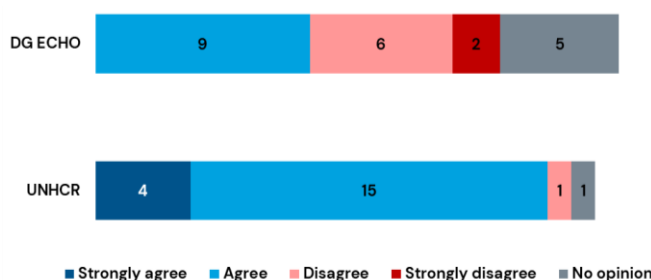
<sup>648</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 5). ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff – see results in Figure 71 and Figure 72.

<sup>649</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2).

<sup>650</sup> ICF 2022. Review of documentation (dashboard analysis, 2022 DG ECHO's Strategic Partnership with UNHCR-presentation, DG ECHO survey to field officers 2022).

<sup>651</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

Figure 70. Number of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff who considered that “DG ECHO’s requirements positively influenced the cost-effectiveness of the design and implementation of UNHCR funded actions”



Source: ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (DG ECHO, N=22; UNHCR, N=21)

- While only a minority of DG ECHO’s staff indicated in the survey that DG ECHO’s requirements positively influenced the cost-effectiveness of the design and implementation of UNHCR funded actions, the vast majority of consulted UNHCR agreed with the statement (see Figure 70).
- Furthermore, UNHCR staff had also a more positive assessment of the impact of the partnership on cost-effectiveness and timeliness of the response than DG ECHO staff, with only a minority disagreeing that the impact was positive (see Figures 71 and 72). Nevertheless, some areas for improvement were highlighted by many of the UNHCR officers consulted (at HQ and field level), including lack of clarity regarding what DG ECHO took into account and how it assessed cost-effectiveness, insufficient flexibility of the funding (as the tight earmarking limits UNHCR capacity to quickly adapt and adjust in order to improve cost-effectiveness), heavy and cumbersome reporting requirements.<sup>652</sup>

The identified challenges between the two partners at operational level, were rarely scaled-up or discussed at strategic strategic/global level, limiting the influence of strategic and high-level dialogues on cost-effectiveness at operational level.<sup>653</sup>

Figure 71. Number of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff who considered that “The partnership contributed to enhancing the cost-effectiveness of my organisation’s humanitarian response”

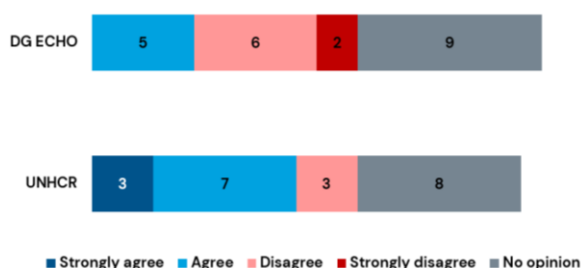
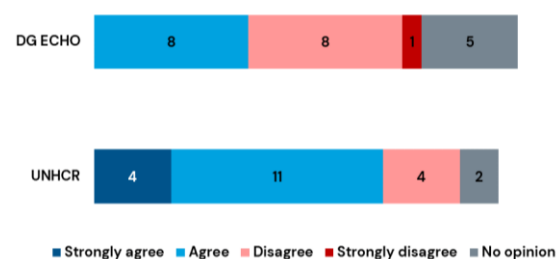


Figure 72. Number of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff who considered that “The partnership contributed to enhancing the timeliness and flexibility of my organisation’s humanitarian response”



Source: ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (DG ECHO, N=22; UNHCR, N=21)

<sup>652</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR: 8).

<sup>653</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of minutes of High-level and Strategic Dialogue meetings; analysis of High-level and Strategic Dialogue monitoring tables.



### 7.3 Effectiveness

EQ 3. To what extent has the Strategic Partnership approach deepened, improved or hindered the overall cooperation between DG ECHO and UNHCR? To what extent did a structured, strategic, timely and functional dialogue take place between the two partners at HQ, regional and country/field level? By what means? (EQ3.1); To what extent were the outcomes of this dialogue reflected in the focus of funding trends between the two organisations? (EQ3.2); To what extent did this dialogue have any impact at policy and operational levels? (EQ3.3); How could the partnership be further strengthened? (EQ3.4)

Table 41. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC 3.1 The Strategic Partnership provided for opportunities to deal with issues hindering cooperation at different levels (e.g. disagreements on operational and strategic priorities, mandate-related constraints, potential conflicts of interest etc.)	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG ECHO and UNHCR created opportunities to follow up on and address issues hindering the cooperation, both at strategic and operational level.</li> <li>• At strategic level, to follow up on discussions held during the annual High-level Dialogue DG ECHO-UNHCR and Strategic Dialogue EU-UNHCR, DG ECHO and UNHCR set up a monitoring mechanism to keep track of the implementation of the agreed action points, including potential issues raised.</li> <li>• At operational level, issues and disagreements were generally addressed through formal and/or informal exchanges between country offices and, to a limited extent, regional offices.</li> <li>• Both partners should put more effort cascading the results of high-level discussions to the field, to avoid creating an information gap between the strategic and operational levels.</li> </ul>
JC 3.2 There was regular and timely dialogue and information exchange (formal and informal) between DG ECHO and UNHCR at different levels: HQ, regional and country/field level	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was regular and timely dialogue and information exchange (formal and informal) between DG ECHO and UNHCR at different levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– At strategic level, DG ECHO and UNHCR carried out annual Strategic Dialogue meetings (involving other EU services), annual High-level Dialogue meetings (bilateral) as well as UNHCR's governing body meetings (where DG ECHO coordinated/represented the EU);</li> <li>– At operational level, monitoring missions and visits jointly organised to exchange information were carried out consistently across the regions/countries where DG ECHO and UNHCR collaborated. However, the extent to which regular bilateral dialogue took place at country level varied considerably (in terms of number and quality of interactions).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• As a formal dialogue platform between DG ECHO and UNHCR did not exist in several countries, information was rather exchanged on an informal basis. Nevertheless, the quality of the dialogue, both formal and informal, was reported as positive and transparent.</li> </ul>

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC 3.3 Trends in the focus of budget allocations to UNHCR (i.e. geographical and sectoral) reflected the outcomes of dialogue and information exchange between the partners	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At strategic level, DG ECHO and UNHCR consistently used the High-level Dialogue as a platform to discuss policy-related matters (in some cases also related to specific geographical areas or sectors). However, there is limited evidence of the influence of such discussions on the focus of budget allocations to UNHCR.</li> <li>In some of the countries analysed, the formal and informal exchanges between the partners (e.g. on needs, gaps, etc.) informed the development of DG ECHO's HIPs and allowed DG ECHO and UNHCR to mutually discuss expectations for future programming (e.g. sectors for which UNHCR would request funding, expectations of DG ECHO from UNHCR's proposals).</li> </ul>
JC 3.4 Regular and timely dialogue between DG ECHO and UNHCR (at different levels) helped shaping their policy priorities and facilitated their operationalisation	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although the two partners operated with clearly separated and distinct policies, the Strategic and High-level Dialogue meetings between DG ECHO and UNHCR were used as a platform to discuss policy priorities both at geographical (e.g. LAC) and thematic (e.g. cash-based assistance) level.</li> <li>There is scope to further develop a more integrated approach towards the partnership between the EU and UNHCR, with all European Commission services (e.g. DG ECHO, DG INTPA, DG NEAR) and EEAS/EUDEL developing and sharing more coherent and joint messages, thus facilitating discussions and work towards the Nexus.</li> </ul>
JC 3.5 There is room to further reinforce mutual cooperation in the framework of the Strategic Partnership	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG ECHO and UNHCR have been discussing how to further reinforce mutual cooperation since 2018. To this end, exchanges have been organized on policy/thematic issues, e.g. protection and UNHCR has been consulted with other partners for the preparation of DG ECHO guidance documents (e.g. on logistics, localization, cash etc.)</li> <li>Apart from policy dialogue, throughout the evaluation period, some attempts to establish longer term funding mechanisms were made (e.g. through applications for PPPs), however without success, given the competitive process by which the PPP allocations were granted.</li> <li>While the High-level meetings mainly focused on strategic issues, an effort towards the reinforcement of mutual cooperation could be made by addressing also some cross-cutting (i.e. applicable to all countries/sectors) operational issues</li> </ul>

**Overall, the strategic partnership approach contributed to improving the cooperation between DG ECHO and UNHCR, particularly through discussions held during High-level and Strategic dialogue meetings. Additional efforts could be invested by both partners in creating a stronger bridge between the strategic (HQ) and operational (field) levels, particularly in regard to the flow of information to and from strategic discussions. There**

**is also scope to further reinforce mutual cooperation by creating opportunities to discuss more cross-cutting operational issues.**

Throughout the evaluation period there was **regular and timely dialogue and information exchange** (formal and informal) between DG ECHO and UNHCR at different levels (**JC3.2**). The new DG ECHO Unit D1 – Strategic Partnerships with Humanitarian Organisations is responsible for the EU's relations with UNHCR and for the organisation of three types of formal dialogues which were implemented from 2019 onwards. At strategic level (headquarters), DG ECHO and UNHCR regularly carried out formal dialogue and information exchange events, in particular:

- An annual **Strategic Dialogue** meeting between the European Union (all relevant Commission services and EEAS) and UNHCR (Deputy High Commissioner level). The meetings are **chaired** by DG ECHO Director General and the UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner. After these discussions, a **common agenda / monitoring table** of “follow-up” action points is drafted and, once a month, the partners hold a meeting to discuss the state of **implementation of the action points**;
- An annual **High-level Dialogue** (bilateral) meeting between DG ECHO (Deputy General level) and UNHCR (Deputy High Commissioner level) to discuss common interests, strategic priorities, review challenges, and an examination of the ways to strengthen the partnership, followed by a regular monitoring of the agreed actions points (similar to the Strategic Dialogue);
- The **UNHCR's governing body meetings**, for which DG ECHO Unit D1 prepares draft statements on behalf of the EU and its Member States or the EU as a donor (the EU has enhanced observer status at the Executive Committee and Standing Committee meetings).

The meetings at strategic level were reported to be structured, well prepared and informed by the regular formal and informal exchanges between DG ECHO Unit D1 and the UNHCR Brussels office,<sup>654</sup> which regularly reported bilateral specific needs (e.g. requests to discuss particular issues or topics, requests for information, request to participate in panels events, etc.) into the action plans of the different dialogues.<sup>655</sup> The partners **ensured a regular monitoring of the action points discussed** in the Strategic and High-level dialogues through shared monitoring tables which were consistently updated on both sides. Throughout the evaluation period, the tables have been modified and evolved from a simple list of action points (e.g. 2018 Joint Action Points document) to a more complex monitoring tool allowing the partners to jointly monitor the follow up actions on each of the points discussed/ raised during the meetings, the state of play of each action point, next steps, actors involved and the target timeframe for the completion of the action. After the end of each dialogue, the partners finalised the table and bilaterally filled in the necessary information on a monthly basis.

Between 2017 and 2019 (i.e. before the decentralisation of UNHCR), operational dialogue and exchanges were also organised between DG ECHO HQ and UNHCR HQ/Brussels Office in addition to High-level and Strategic Dialogue meetings, depending on the need/demand for specific operational, policy or sectoral meetings at director level, geographic unit or field level. For example, the partners engaged in a formal “Operational Dialogue” organised at the level of geographic directors (in regional directorates).<sup>656</sup> A monitoring table (similar to the one used for the Strategic and High-level dialogues) was developed and used to keep track of the progress on the action points discussed, and was structured around geographical areas (Americas, Asia, Africa).<sup>657</sup>

---

<sup>654</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3; UNHCR: 1)

<sup>655</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 2)

<sup>656</sup> ICF. 2022. Scoping interviews (1).

<sup>657</sup> DG ECHO. 2020. UNHCR Operational Dialogue 2019 of 5 July 2019, Monitoring Table – updated on 20 February 2020

At the strategic level, some survey respondents and one interviewee reported that DG ECHO and UNHCR **did not set up a mechanism to identify and act upon lessons learned**.<sup>658</sup> The Strategic and High-level dialogues allowed to regularly discuss topics and issues of common interest, however it was reported that, despite their usual (formal and informal) meetings and exchange of information, the partners did not regularly reflect on what could have been done better at different levels (e.g. strategic and operational, and the interface between these levels). Although it should be noted that the collection of lessons learned is not explicitly mentioned in the 2005 EU-UNHCR MoU, the partners could consider exploring ways to identify lessons and embed them in their way of working, particularly as an exercise to explore positive and negative experiences of the partnership as a whole. Such exercise could be a complementary tool to further improve collaboration and ensure that both partners make the best of the dialogue.

**At field level**, DG ECHO and UNHCR stakeholders reported that **there was timely dialogue and exchange of information between the partners**. However, the extent to which regular bilateral dialogue took place varied considerably from country to country (in terms of number and quality of interactions).<sup>659</sup> In most cases, the dialogue was only partially institutionalised and instead originated from informal exchanges, thus being dependent on personal relationships between DG ECHO and UNHCR officers. The partners also regularly organised **missions and visits** to exchange information on a specific country/region<sup>660</sup>. UNHCR notably invited DG ECHO to participate in its donor mission to Colombia, Ecuador and Peru (Venezuela refugee and migrants' crisis) in November 2018. Monitoring visits were organised in all the 20 projects analysed, with most of them (14) receiving one visit from DG ECHO experts and others being monitored multiple times (with a peak of 7 times for one project implemented in the LAC Region). Nevertheless, DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted in the field (i.e. Chad, Bangladesh and Colombia), highlighted the need to have more regular discussions at field level on existing protection needs (outside the proposal cycle) to be able to better identify common priorities and discuss existing gaps and challenges.<sup>661</sup>

Overall, the partnership also provided for **opportunities to deal with issues hindering cooperation at different levels (e.g. disagreements on operational and strategic priorities, mandate-related constraints, potential conflicts of interest etc.) (JC3.1)**. Survey results show that the large majority of stakeholders considered that the partnership provided a space for open and honest dialogue which allowed to express concerns with the other partner,<sup>662</sup> and that there were effective ways to deal with disagreements or sensitive cases.<sup>663</sup> At strategic level, the High-level and Strategic Dialogue meetings were used as platforms to raise issues and agree on potential solutions, which were regularly followed up on through the regular bilateral monitoring exercises.<sup>664</sup> Table 42 presents some examples of issues raised in High-level and Strategic dialogue meetings, as well as of how issues were monitored/ addressed by the partners.

Table 42. Examples of issues raised in High-level and Strategic dialogue meetings

Year	Type of event	Examples of issues raised	Example of how issues were monitored/ addressed
2019	Strategic Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrity, accountability and oversight of UNHCR's operations (in three selected countries)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several bilateral meetings as well as follow-up in close association with UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner, DG ECHO Director General and Inspector General Office on the three operations</li> </ul>

<sup>658</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR: 1), ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (3 out of 22 DG ECHO responses)

<sup>659</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 7; UNHCR: 7)

<sup>660</sup> ICF Inception Report: Combined evaluation of the EU's response to the Venezuelan regional crisis, and DG ECHO's partnership with the UNHCR (2017-2021).

<sup>661</sup> ICF. 2023. Field Report

<sup>662</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (15 out of 22 DG ECHO responses and 18 out of 21 UNHCR responses)

<sup>663</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (14 out of 22 DG ECHO responses and 16 out of 21 UNHCR responses)

<sup>664</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of minutes of High-level and Strategic Dialogue meetings; analysis of High-level and Strategic Dialogue monitoring tables

Year	Type of event	Examples of issues raised	Example of how issues were monitored/ addressed
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNHCR to provide regular updates, progress on investigations, and further reassurances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concerned and more broadly on the general principles required to address integrity issues</li> <li>UNHCR provided regular updates and further reassurances upon request as well as a commitment to ensure that EU/ DG ECHO was proactively and consistently informed on progress of investigations</li> </ul>
2021	High-level Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNHCR concerns regarding the decline of DG ECHO funding availability;</li> <li>Possibility to expand cooperation beyond the legal protection dimension;</li> <li>Potential concerns regarding:</li> <li>Alignment of priorities;</li> <li>Divergence in modalities and strategies to tackle advocacy issues;</li> <li>Inefficiency of proposals (see also EQ2);</li> <li>Limited visibility of UNHCR's actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several high-level discussions on funding trends and were reported</li> <li>Bilateral action to strengthen interaction between the two organisations at country level across various steps in the programmatic cycle to ensure alignment on operational priorities</li> <li>Continued communication between DG ECHO focal point and UNHCR focal point on communication and visibility</li> <li>Development and update of UNHCR-DG ECHO joint visibility strategy</li> </ul>

Source: Desk Review, analysis of minutes from meetings and monitoring tables

At operational level, **issues and disagreements were generally addressed through formal and/or informal exchanges between country offices** and, to a limited extent, regional offices. Almost all DG ECHO and UNHCR field officers consulted reported that there were effective ways to deal with issues such as disagreements or sensitive cases, and the monitoring visits were used as platform to identify and discuss issues (e.g. related to quality), ultimately contributing to improve UNHCR's programme design.<sup>665</sup>

DG ECHO's internal information flow, in particular between HQ and field offices (and vice versa) could be improved. As expressed by some DG ECHO officers, there is the perception that throughout the evaluation period, while DG ECHO geographical units (including field offices) were regularly consulted on issues and topics (to be) discussed during the dialogues (e.g. directly or via the relevant forced displacement working group), the results of high-level discussions did not sufficiently cascade to the field (and/or, vice versa, field's reactions to HQ), potentially leaving an information gap between the strategic and operational levels (for example, due to the commitment of single DG ECHO Officers in cascading the information).<sup>666</sup>

DG ECHO and UNHCR consistently used the High-level Dialogue meetings as a platform to discuss policy-related matters (in some cases also related to specific geographical areas or sectors). However, evidence does not allow to affirm that **trends in the focus of budget allocation to UNHCR (i.e. geographical and sectoral) reflected the outcomes of dialogue and information exchange between the partners (JC 3.3)**. The stakeholder consultation shows contrasting opinions on this matter between the partners, also at different levels (e.g. HQ vs. field). There was consensus amongst UNHCR HQ officers and DG ECHO officers, with only a minority reporting that strategic and operational dialogue and information exchange between DG ECHO and

<sup>665</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (9 out of 11 DG ECHO responses and 16 out of 21 UNHCR responses)

<sup>666</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR: 3, DG ECHO Field: 2), Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (7 qualitative responses)

UNHCR led to changes in the focus of funding trends.<sup>667</sup> Conversely, most of UNHCR field officers agreed that there was a consequential effect of dialogue on funding trends.<sup>668</sup> The analysis of documentation provided examples of the potential effects of discussions (geographic and thematic) held during High-level and Strategic Dialogue meetings on funding trends, for example:

**Thematic: cash-based assistance**

- On cash-based assistance, in 2017 the EU committed to scale up the cash component of the overall humanitarian assistance, and the DG ECHO funding to UNHCR on multi-purpose cash transfer has notably peaked to 59% of the total funding per year (by sector) in 2018 (from 18% in 2017).

**Geographic: Middle East and Africa**

- In 2018, the partners also discussed geographic priorities, with DG ECHO identifying the **Middle East and Africa** as the main focus for funding.<sup>669</sup> Also, in 2017 the EU called for UNHCR to take more action to improve the situation of refugees in Africa.<sup>670</sup> While DG ECHO funding to UNHCR has progressively increased for interventions in Africa after 2018 (from 8.5% of the total funding per year in 2018 to 17.5 in 2019, 42% in 2020 and 18.8% in 2021), the funding for intervention in the Middle East has sensibly decreased from 40.8% of the total funding per year in 2018 to around 20% in 2019 and 2020, peaking again in 2021 (to 42.6%), despite the region accounted for around 30% of the total funding between 2017 and 2021.

**Thematic: Education in Emergencies**

- On EiE, in 2017 the EU committed to further support access to quality education for displaced children to improve their wellbeing and integration in their host communities and increase funding dedicated to emergency education.<sup>671</sup> Furthermore, in 2018 the EiE interventions were highlighted as a policy priority for DG ECHO.<sup>672</sup> The share of DG ECHO funding to UNHCR in the education in emergencies sector increased to 3% only in 2020 (from 0% in the previous years), suggesting that dialogue between the partners might have somewhat influenced funding trends in this sector.
- DG ECHO and UNHCR also discussed how to address the gap between needs and available funding. In the 2021 Strategic Dialogue the EU (DG ECHO, DG INTPA) encouraged UNHCR and the EU to work together on innovative finance, including from a humanitarian perspective, and shared its challenging experience on innovative financing for forcibly displaced. In the same meeting, UNHCR presented innovative financing solutions, such as a toolkit to help enable more sustainable, efficient, and effective support for refugees, host communities and other PoC. However, there is no evidence of follow up actions by the partners to discuss how such financing solutions would address the gap between needs and available funding, besides providing additional financial resources.<sup>673</sup>

Another positive effect of the dialogue on funding trends, reported by field officers, was that in some of the countries analysed, the formal and informal exchanges (e.g. on needs, gaps, etc.) between the partners **informed the development of DG ECHO's HIPs** (for example through discussions on number of refugees, number of registered asylum seekers, number of returnees, existing conditions for safe, voluntary, informed and sustainable refugee returns, number of IDPs

---

<sup>667</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (8 out of 22 DG ECHO responses); none of the DG ECHO or UNHCR officers consulted through KIIs reported that there was a consequential effect of dialogue on funding trends

<sup>668</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (11 out of 22 DG ECHO responses); KIIs (UNHCR: 6)

<sup>669</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of documentation: 2018 Strategic Dialogue

<sup>670</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of documentation: Statements – UNHCR Standing Committee

<sup>671</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of documentation: Statements – UNHCR Standing Committee

<sup>672</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of documentation: 2018 Strategic Dialogue

<sup>673</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of documentation: 2021 Strategic Dialogue; Feedback from DG ECHO

etc.). They also allowed **DG ECHO and UNHCR to mutually discuss expectations for future programming** (e.g. sectors for which UNHCR would request funding, expectations of DG ECHO from UNHCR's proposals).<sup>674</sup>

The analysis of the impact of dialogue (e.g. technical through the monitoring visits) on the funded actions suggests that the exchange between DG ECHO and UNHCR (at different levels) helped **facilitating the operationalisation of priorities (JC 3.4)**. While the survey results show contrasting views, with a large majority of UNHCR officers and only less than 50% of DG ECHO officers reporting that strategic and operational dialogue and information exchange led to a better operationalisation of policy/strategic priorities, the qualitative analysis of project documentation shows several examples of results of dialogue. For instance, in the **LAC Region** a discussion on the annual HIP allowed to highlight the issue of nationality-based targeting, particularly in light of the Do No Harm approach, and to consider it in future actions. Also, data suggests that the partners proactively escalated potential issues (e.g. related to budget, timeframes, submission of reports, etc.) to their respective HQ through the organisation of meetings between HQs and country/field representatives, in order to find a shared solution (e.g. in **Chad and Greece**).<sup>675</sup> The positive effects of in-field dialogue and information exchanges are also reflected in the analysis of the recommendations made by DG ECHO during the monitoring visits, with 28 (out of 46) UNHCR actions fully or partially addressing DG ECHO recommendations over the course of the implementation of the action.<sup>676</sup> Furthermore, over half (26) of the UNHCR actions analysed incorporated lessons learnt and recommendations provided by DG ECHO in previous projects, suggesting that dialogue and information exchange has positively influenced the design of actions.<sup>677</sup> At strategic level, as a result of the 2021 High-level dialogue, the partners invited Heads of Field Offices in selected countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Sudan) to reach out to their respective counterpart to engage in discussions aimed to strengthen the partnership between the two organisations at country level, particularly to foster interaction between the two organisations across various steps in the programmatic cycle to ensure maximum alignment on operational priorities.<sup>678</sup>

Nevertheless, data shows that there is scope to **further develop a more integrated approach towards the partnership between the EU and UNHCR**, with all European Commission services (e.g. DG ECHO, DG INTPA, DG NEAR, DG HOME) and EEAS/EUDEL developing jointly and sharing more coherent messages, thus facilitating discussions and work towards the operationalisation of the Nexus (see also EQ6).<sup>679</sup> Stakeholders reported that, while there were regular internal exchanges (e.g. on the agenda) prior to the annual EU-UNHCR Strategic dialogue, more effort should have been put into jointly discuss and develop common EU strategies and priorities (e.g. on certain geographical areas, on nexus activities in selected sectors, etc.) which will be presented to UNHCR during the dialogue meetings.

As outlined in previous sections, the partnership has progressively evolved throughout the evaluation period and **additional opportunities to discuss and reinforce mutual cooperation (JC3.5)** were introduced also as a consequence of organisational restructuring of the two partners. For example, DG ECHO and UNHCR organised exchanges on policy/thematic issues – e.g. protection – ,– and UNHCR has been consulted, with other partners, during the preparation of DG ECHO guidance documents (e.g. on logistics, localisation, cash etc.).<sup>680</sup> Also, the analysis of documentation highlighted that initial discussions were held on possible solutions to reinforce mutual cooperation already in 2018, with UNHCR expressing interest in starting discussions on a **pilot project to move towards a programmatic approach**. DG ECHO agreed to consider this possibility on a basis of a

---

<sup>674</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1; UNHCR: 6); ICF. 2023. Field Report

<sup>675</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions)

<sup>676</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions)

<sup>677</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions)

<sup>678</sup> ICF. 2023. Review of documentation: 2021 High-level Dialogue; Feedback from DG ECHO

<sup>679</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 3; UNHCR: 6; Other EU services: 1)

<sup>680</sup> Feedback from DG ECHO

first concept note drafted by UNHCR.<sup>681</sup> The issue was further discussed in the 2019 Strategic Dialogue and 2020 High-level Dialogue meetings since DG ECHO launched in 2020 the first pilot Programmatic Partnerships, focusing on NGO partners. In 2020, a second pilot phase was launched, and opened to all UN and International Organisation partners. However, as part of the related competitive proposal selection process, UNHCR's proposal(s) were not retained for a pilot Programmatic Partnership with DG ECHO.

Lastly, UNHCR stakeholders reported that, while the High-level meetings mainly focused on strategic issues, an effort towards the reinforcement of mutual cooperation could be made by **addressing also some cross-cutting (i.e. applicable to all countries/sectors) operational issues**, for example how UNHCR could improve proposals, needs assessments, etc. across countries.<sup>682</sup> However, as highlighted by DG ECHO, the High-level dialogue might not be the right platform to discuss such operational matters, particularly due to the high-level of participants and to its "strategic nature".<sup>683</sup> Therefore, the partners should reflect on the possibility to create a common space to discuss cross-cutting operational issues outside of the current dialogue opportunities (e.g. the previously held Operational dialogue).

*EQ 4. To what extent did the DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership succeed in strengthening vulnerability, needs-based and quality responses?*

Table 43. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC4.1 DG ECHO and UNHCR cooperation and information exchange under the partnership contributed to enhancing their respective needs assessments and vulnerability analyses	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG ECHO and UNHCR's Strategic and High-level dialogue contributed to enhancing the partner's needs assessments</li> <li>UNHCR undertook different types of needs assessments depending on the crisis/context and its role in the humanitarian response (e.g. leading the response or contributing) and made use of joint inter-agency needs assessment exercises in some contexts. Nevertheless, the quality of the needs assessment varied from country to country.</li> <li>The partner's information exchange at field level, particularly through discussions and recommendations to proposal and/ or interim reports allowed for a consistent alignment of approaches to needs assessments in all funded sectors.</li> </ul>
JC4.2 UNHCR actions funded under the partnership were based on robust needs assessments and targeted the most vulnerable groups	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While there was a substantial difference in targeting strategies between the partners (i.e. DG ECHO performing and requesting targeting based on risks and needs and UNHCR performing targeting based on status and nationality), the results of targeting activities matched in most of the countries analysed, with few exceptions related to particular vulnerable groups.</li> </ul>
JC 4.3 The partnership contributed to enhancing the quality of UNHCR and DG ECHO responses	<b>Strong</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Almost all UNCHR's actions funded by DG ECHO during the evaluation period achieved (or, in some cases, partially achieved) the objectives set out in proposals, suggesting that DG ECHO funding</li> </ul>

<sup>681</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of documentation: 2018 Strategic Dialogue

<sup>682</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR: 3);

<sup>683</sup> Feedback from DG ECHO



Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
		<p>contributed to enhancing the humanitarian response provided by UNHCR.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The exchange of information at field level (e.g. during monitoring of actions) might have also contributed to enhance the quality of the actions and, ultimately, enabled UNHCR (and DG ECHO) to better achieve the set objectives.</li> <li>• DG ECHO funding to UNHCR's core protection activities (e.g. refugee status determination and registration) contributed, at least to some extent, to enhancing the quality of the overall humanitarian protection response</li> </ul>

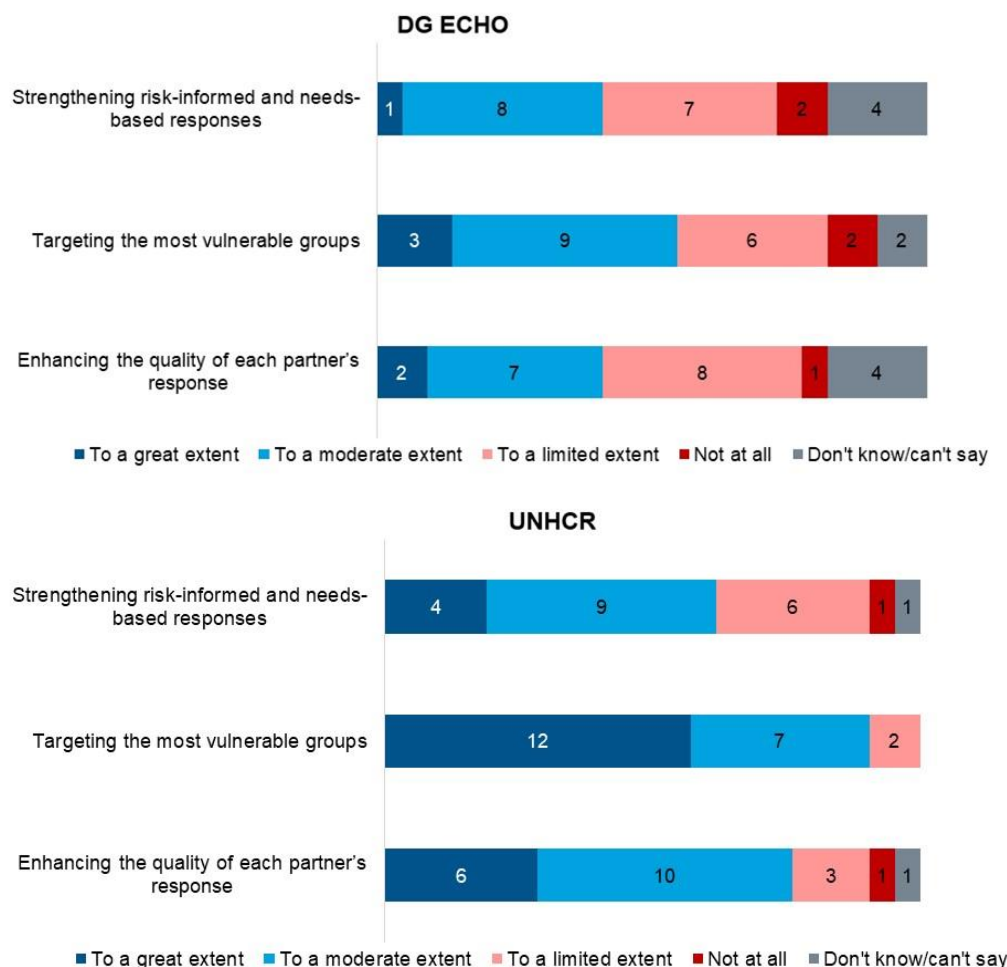
**The DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership overall succeeded in strengthening needs-based and quality responses, particularly through DG ECHO funding to UNHCR's core protection activities and the exchange of information both at strategic and field level. The partners, however, show substantial differences in targeting strategies, which raised discussions in several of the countries analysed.**

Overall, evidence suggests that DG ECHO and UNHCR **cooperation and information exchange under the partnership contributed to enhancing their respective needs assessments and vulnerability analyses (JC 4.1)**, however the quality of UNHCR's needs and risk analysis and their alignment with DG ECHO's requirements varied depending on the country (see EQ1). Around 50% of stakeholders consulted reported that the partnership contributed to strengthening risk-informed and needs-based responses<sup>684</sup> (see Figure 73 below), and the UNHCR Standing Committee meetings as well as preparatory briefings appear to have been a productive platform for discussions on needs at strategic level. In 2017, for example, during one of these meetings UNHCR stressed the need for **small-scale resettlement** of particularly vulnerable people, and the EU confirmed its commitment to continuing resettlement of Syrians and other nationals displaced by the conflict in Syria, as well as its awareness of other resettlement needs in Africa and the Central Mediterranean route; in 2019, the EU called for an increased **dialogue on cash assistance and related needs assessments**, as well as on a revised strategy and associated design and targeting models. In 2020, the EU encouraged UNHCR to strengthen a **people-centred needs assessment**.<sup>685</sup>

<sup>684</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (9 out of 22 DG ECHO responses and 13 out of 21 UNHCR responses), KII's (DG ECHO: 1, UNHCR: 4);

<sup>685</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of documentation: Statements - UNHCR Standing Committee

Figure 73. To what extent did the partnership contribute to the following:



Source: ICF (2023) based on results of survey to DG ECHO and UNHCR representatives

The analysis of project documentation suggests that exchanges of information at operational level (i.e. in the context of DG ECHO-funded UNHCR actions) also influenced needs assessments and/ or risk analyses either directly in currently implemented action (e.g. when the exchange happened at proposal stage) or in future actions (e.g. when the products of the exchange were recommendations provided either at interim or final stage). In 16 (out of 40) actions analysed, DG ECHO recommendations at proposal and/ or interim stage were related to needs assessments, targeting and/ or vulnerability analyses, which were taken on board and addressed by UNHCR either fully or partially in almost all the cases (12 actions).<sup>686</sup> For example, in a 2021 LAC action DG ECHO recommended to **reinforce the vulnerability approach and avoid nationality-based targeting** in the regional response outside Venezuela. UNHCR re-centred the focus of the action on protection and applied a differentiation by country/sub-region of intervention (Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, the Caribbean) with dedicated targets and activities. In a 2018 action, DG ECHO recommended UNHCR to **request technical advice from more specialised agencies** in order to better address beneficiaries' needs in the health and WASH sectors. UNHCR fully addressed the recommendation by involving specialised actors in the action (e.g. the Pan American Health Organization - PAHO in Venezuela) and discontinuing some sectors in future proposals.<sup>687</sup>

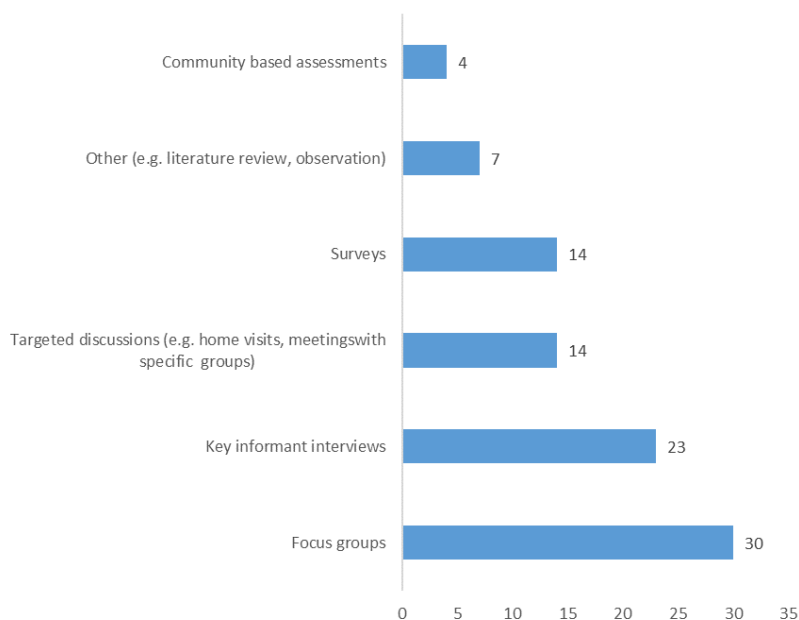
Evidence also shows that all UNHCR actions analysed (20) were **based on robust needs assessments**, but only 60% (12) **targeted the most vulnerable groups (JC4.2)**. In a large majority of actions (17) DG ECHO positively commented on the quality of the needs assessment

<sup>686</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>687</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

carried out by the partner, which were carried out in all cases directly by UNHCR (sometimes in combination with inter-agency needs assessment exercises) through primary and secondary data collection methodologies. Also, almost all actions (19) involved the beneficiaries and/or communities in their needs assessment through participatory processes. As outlined in Figure 74, focus groups were the most used participatory assessment methodology used by UNHCR in the actions analysed (used in 17 actions), followed by surveys (7 actions) key informant interviews and targeted discussions (6 actions) and community-based assessments (4 actions).

Figure 74. Types of participatory assessment methodologies used by UNHCR



Source: Project mapping (40 actions)

In line with the results of the project analysis, as outlined in Figure 73 DG ECHO and UNHCR stakeholders reported mixed views regarding the **partnership's contribution to targeting the most vulnerable groups**, with only 55% of DG ECHO respondents to the survey (vs. 90% of UNHCR respondents) considering that it contributed to a great or moderate extent.<sup>688</sup> Survey results were also confirmed by stakeholders interviewed, who reported **differences in targeting strategies depending on the country**, for example:

- In **Bangladesh**, DG ECHO staff considered that UNHCR should have invested more efforts to identify and target people with disabilities.<sup>689</sup>
- In **Chad**, UNHCR pushed to target all refugees and not only the most vulnerable ones. This was not in line with DG ECHO's targeting strategy in the country which required focusing on the most vulnerable groups. While DG ECHO allowed for a blanket targeting approach when it came to new arrivals, it required UNHCR to target other groups based on vulnerability.<sup>690</sup>
- In **Ecuador**, DG ECHO focused primarily on new arrivals and people in transit, while UNHCR also prioritised the provision of assistance towards integration to people who wanted to permanently stay in Ecuador.<sup>691</sup>

<sup>688</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff: 55% of DG ECHO respondents vs. 90% of UNHCR respondents considered that it contributed to a great or moderate extent (12 out of 22 DG ECHO responses and 19 out of 21 UNHCR responses)

<sup>689</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews.

<sup>690</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews and project mapping.

<sup>691</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews.

- In **Jordan**, UNHCR targeted any refugees with specific needs without further consideration to existing vulnerabilities. DG ECHO staff consulted reported that they had often encouraged UNHCR to better contextualise vulnerabilities and adjust their programming accordingly, as a more granular approach to targeting would allow a better prioritisation of resources. DG ECHO staff also indicated that they have discussed this with UNHCR and that there were noticeable improvements over the evaluation period.<sup>692</sup>
- In **Lebanon**, while DG ECHO reported that UNHCR used an excellent vulnerability assessment tool (VASyR) since the beginning of the crisis, it also stressed that the approach to targeting had not changed, and still identified poverty-related vulnerability in the majority of refugees. DG ECHO highlighted to UNHCR the importance of returning to vulnerability-based programming and the partners worked together (through monitoring missions, DG ECHO regional office, etc) to improve targeting, however no changes were noted so far.<sup>693</sup>

Furthermore, while in general terms DG ECHO required its partners to use vulnerability and needs-based targeting criteria, in some cases, UNHCR targeted beneficiaries on the basis of status (i.e. refugees and asylum seekers) or nationality instead of vulnerability.<sup>694</sup> This was for instance the case in the Western Balkans where UNHCR targeted only refugees and asylum seekers<sup>695</sup> and for funded actions in the context of the Venezuelan crisis where UNHCR used nationality-based targeting criteria (i.e. being Venezuelan) instead of vulnerability.<sup>696</sup> In Afghanistan, one of the main reasons why DG ECHO did not fund UNHCR activities between 2017 and 2020 was the fact that UNHCR targeting was not aligned with DG ECHO's strategy.<sup>697</sup> The same happened in DRC, where some of the latest UNHCR proposals were not selected for funding due to, among other things, a lack of prioritisation of the most vulnerable beneficiaries through the targeting approach used.<sup>698</sup>

Evidence also suggests that DG ECHO funding and the exchange of information between the partners (particularly in the field) **contributed to enhancing the quality of UNHCR and DG ECHO responses (JC 4.3)**. While the survey results show mixed views between the partners,<sup>699</sup> with only 40% of DG ECHO respondents considering that it contributed to a great or moderate extent, the analysis of project documentation highlighted that 90% (36 out of 40) of **UNHCR's actions funded by DG ECHO achieved or partially achieved the objectives set out in proposals**, suggesting that DG ECHO funding contributed to enhance the humanitarian response provided by UNHCR.<sup>700</sup> The project mapping exercise found that **exchanges of information at field level** (e.g. during monitoring of actions) **might have also contributed to enhance the quality of the actions** and, ultimately, enabled UNHCR (and DG ECHO) to better achieve the set objectives. For example, in four actions (LAC, Chad, Greece, Türkiye), DG ECHO and UNHCR negotiated a modification of indicators, logframes and/or targets to better respond to the needs on the ground and measure the results of implemented activities. These modifications led to a positive assessment of the results of the actions at final stage, and potentially enhanced the quality of response of both partners – i.e. more in-line with DG ECHO requirements as well as with the needs of beneficiaries.<sup>701</sup> Furthermore, UNHCR and DG ECHO staff consulted in the field also overall agreed that their partnership contributed, at least to some extent, to enhancing the quality of the

---

<sup>692</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews.

<sup>693</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO: 1)

<sup>694</sup> ICF. 2022. Scoping interviews (1); ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>695</sup> ICF. 2022. Scoping interviews (1).

<sup>696</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>697</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of documentation.

<sup>698</sup> ICF. 2022. Review of documentation.

<sup>699</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff: 40% of DG ECHO respondents vs. 76% of UNHCR respondents considered that it contributed to a great or moderate extent (9 out of 22 DG ECHO responses and 16 out of 21 UNHCR responses)

<sup>700</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>701</sup> ICF. 2022. Project mapping (40 actions).

overall humanitarian protection response, primarily through the funding provided by DG ECHO to some of UNHCR's core protection activities,<sup>702</sup> as outlined in Table 44 below.

Table 44. Examples of partnership's contribution to the quality of the overall humanitarian protection response

<b>Core protection activity</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Example of partnership's contribution to the quality of the overall humanitarian protection response</b>
<b>Protection information management and monitoring</b>	<b>Bangladesh</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNHCR's border monitoring activities supported by DG ECHO (among other donors) were seen as an essential protection tool to monitor movements from Myanmar and Cox's Bazar.</li> </ul>
	<b>Ecuador</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG ECHO's support to UNHCR information management and border monitoring ("<i>monitoreo de frontera</i>", an inter-agency initiative)<sup>703</sup> activities was highly valued by different stakeholders consulted (i.e. DG ECHO, UNHCR, local implementing partners and national authorities). The information provided in the context of border monitoring activities was also used by national authorities to plan their own response.</li> </ul>
	<b>Chad</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG ECHO supported the implementation of UNHCR's P21 project which established a harmonised protection monitoring system at regional level in the region. Moreover, in Chad, DG ECHO recommended UNHCR to develop a service mapping that would offer information on available protection services per type of protection need. Following DG ECHO's recommendation a service mapping exercise was concluded in 2021 in cooperation with the protection cluster and all relevant protection actors. The service mapping was considered to be very useful to enhance the quality of the protection response and to facilitate access to protection services.</li> </ul>
<b>Registration activities</b>	<b>Ecuador and Colombia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNHCR's registration activities supported by DG ECHO facilitated access to other protection services e.g. legal assistance, psychosocial support, protection against SGBV etc.</li> </ul>
	<b>Jordan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG ECHO's support to UNHCR's registration activities was positively valued by stakeholders consulted as this activity was seen as key to allow refugees to access other types of support like health and education.</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity building activities</b>	<b>Ecuador</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The support provided by UNHCR to public institutions (i.e. Directorate for International Protection (DPIN), Ombudsman and Public Defender's Office) was seen by stakeholders as key for strengthening the national asylum system and ensuring access to protection services. Thanks in part to DG ECHO's funding (among other donors), UNHCR managed to increase the capacity of the DPIN to identify and process international protection cases as well as of the Public Defenders' Office who provided free legal assistance to migrants and refugees.</li> </ul>
	<b>Colombia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG ECHO's financial support to UNHCR activities aiming to enhance the capacity of the Public Defenders was seen as key specially to address the double affection issue as, in some areas of the country, public defenders were the only ones present on the ground.</li> </ul>

<sup>702</sup> ICF. 2023. Field Report.

<sup>703</sup> See: <https://www.r4v.info/en/ecuador>.

Core protection activity	Country	Example of partnership's contribution to the quality of the overall humanitarian protection response
	<b>Jordan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the support provided to UNHCR's capacity development activities contributed to achieving changes among government actors e.g. with regard to the use of administrative detention for refugees.</li> </ul>

Source: Field interviews, project mapping

EQ 5. To what extent did the DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership succeed in encouraging both sides to fulfil the ambitions of the partnership (definition of the partnership, clarity of obligations, information sharing, reporting, visibility, meetings and communication at different levels – HQ, Geneva, field etc)?

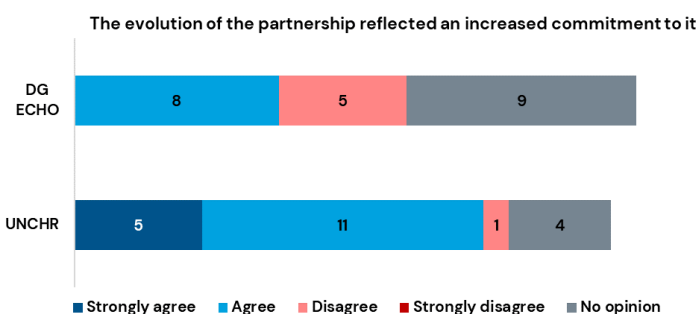
Table 45. Key findings

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
JC 5.1 The relationship developed under the partnership enhanced both partners' commitment to it (at all levels of both organisations) (e.g. partnership objectives, definition of priorities, compliance with requirements and obligations, information sharing and communication at different levels etc.)	<b>Weak</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtually all DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted agreed that over the evaluation period, both partners were committed to the partnership at all levels, within both organisations. However, views were diverging as to whether the relationship developed under the partnership further increased this commitment, with UNHCR staff perceiving the effects of the relationship overall as more positive to this extent.</li> <li>At strategic level, the partnership underwent some changes that reflected – at least to some extent – a strengthening of their mutual commitment (e.g. creation of specific unit within DG ECHO, establishment by UNHCR of the EU Communication and Visibility Team based at REUA).</li> <li>At operational level, the type of relationship developed under the partnership greatly varied across countries (depending on individuals) and so did the impact of the partnership on the partners' commitment to it on the ground.</li> </ul>
JC 5.2 The partnership contributed to enhancing the partners' understanding of and respect for each other mandates	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall, DG ECHO and UNHCR had a good understanding of their respective mandates and roles and that the partnership positively contributed to further enhancing this understanding.</li> <li>Evidence collected also provided however, some evidence of different understandings/nuances around UNHCR's mandate with regard to IDPs and in sectors other than protection.</li> </ul>

**The relationship developed under the partnership over the evaluation period contributed, at least to some extent, to enhancing the partners' commitment to it (especially at strategic level) (JC 5.1).**

Almost all DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted through the survey stated that, over the evaluation period, there was a commitment to the partnership at all levels within both organisations.<sup>704</sup> However, views were diverging as to whether the relationship developed under the partnership further increased DG ECHO and UNHCR's commitment to it, with UNHCR staff perceiving the effects of the relationship overall as more positive (see Figure 75).

Figure 75. Number of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff who considered that the evolution of the partnership reflected an increased commitment to it



Source: ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (DG ECHO, N=22; UNHCR, N=21)

**At strategic level**, between 2017-2021, the partnership underwent some changes that reflected – at least to some extent – a strengthening of the partners' mutual commitment. For example, in 2019, DG ECHO created a specific unit (Unit D1 - Strategic Partnerships with Humanitarian Organisations) with the aim of strengthening partnerships with strategic humanitarian partners, including UNHCR. The new unit was responsible for the EU's relations with UNHCR and for the organisation of the DG ECHO-UNHCR High-level Dialogues and the EU-UNHCR Strategic Dialogues, as well as for preparing and coordinating statements (often on behalf of the EU and its Member States) for the UNHCR's governing body meetings. It also became the point of contact for DG ECHO field staff and geographical desks to raise issues / aspects relevant to the partnership with UNHCR. Another example of increased commitment to the partnership was the establishment by UNHCR of the EU Communication and Visibility Team based at REUA to improve, among other things, the communication and visibility of the impacts and results of the partnership (see also JC 1.4). At **operational level**, the type of relationship developed under the partnership varied across countries (and depending on individuals) and so did the impact of the partnership on the partners' commitment to it on the ground (see EQ3).

**Overall, DG ECHO and UNHCR had a good understanding of their respective mandates and roles and the partnership positively contributed to further enhancing this understanding (JC 5.2).**

Most DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted considered that the other partner had a good understanding of their mandate, objectives and priorities.<sup>705</sup> However, data collected also provided some evidence of **diverging views around UNHCR's mandate with regard to IDPs and in the context of the work of the High-level Panel on IDPs and its follow up**. Although UNHCR does not have a general (or exclusive) mandate for IDPs, they are involved in certain IDP contexts to enhance protection and provide humanitarian assistance.<sup>706</sup> UNHCR is also the Global Lead for the Shelter (GSC) and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCCM) clusters in complex, conflict

<sup>704</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (20 DG ECHO staff out of 22 agree or strongly agree that there is commitment to the partnership at all levels within their organisation; 19 UNHCR staff out of 21 agree or strongly agree that there is commitment to the partnership at all levels within their organisation).

<sup>705</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (17 DG ECHO staff out of 22 agree or strongly agree that UNHCR has a good understanding of their mandate, objectives and priorities; 19 UNHCR staff out of 21 agree or strongly agree that UNHCR has a good understanding of their mandate, objectives and priorities).

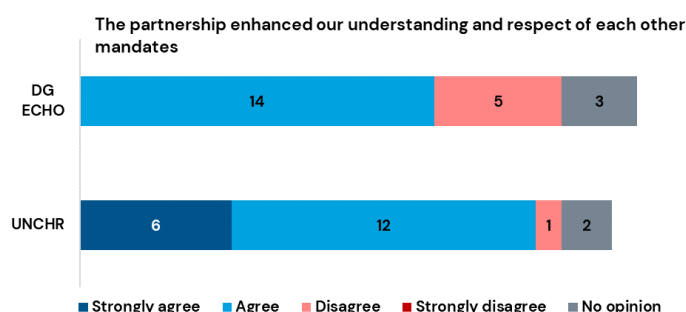
<sup>706</sup> UNHCR. UNHCR's mandate for refugees, stateless persons and IDPs. Available at: <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/55600/unhcrs-mandate-for-refugees-stateless-persons-and-idps#:~:text=The%20coordination%20of%20international%20protection,or%20she%20finds%20a%20solution.>

related IDP emergencies<sup>707</sup> and leads the Global Protection Cluster. Some DG ECHO staff however lacked clarity on the circumstances under which UNHCR would take the lead in situations of internal displacement and/or with regard to IDPs in the context of mixed migration flows.<sup>708</sup> This lack of clarity was in part because IOM and UNHCR can both take the leadership with regard to IDPs in mixed migration contexts, and do so in practice. DG ECHO also expects UNHCR to intervene in IDP contexts based on its added value and building on the synergies with other lead UN agencies.

Some issues around **DG ECHO's understanding of UNHCR's mandate with PoC outside the protection sector** were also reported. UNHCR is mandated to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance, and to seek durable solutions for PoC.<sup>709</sup> However, some UNHCR staff consulted reported that DG ECHO generally saw UNHCR as a protection actor and did not always acknowledge their mandate and role in other sectors (e.g. basic needs, CCCM, shelter, WASH, etc.).<sup>710</sup> This was particularly the case in IDP and mixed migration crises. DG ECHO staff consulted reported that in those contexts, UNHCR is not always the lead agency and does not necessarily have core expertise (or the greatest added value as compared to other partners) in sectors other than protection.<sup>711</sup>

**Most DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted considered that the partnership enhanced their understanding and respect for each other mandates (see Figure 76).**<sup>712</sup> Issues around UNHCR and DG ECHO's mandates were regularly discussed at strategic and operational level. For example, general issues related to IDPs (and UNHCR's role) were discussed in the context of the EU-UNHCR Strategic Dialogues over the evaluation period.<sup>713</sup> UNHCR also shared information on their mandate with IDPs in informal meetings with DG ECHO which allowed the latter to get more clarity on UNHCR's role and the division of responsibilities among UN Agencies in this context.<sup>714</sup> Differences in views around the partners' understanding of UNHCR's mandate and role in sectors other than protection were also discussed during the Strategic Dialogues and at country level e.g. in the context of monitoring visits.<sup>715</sup>

Figure 76. Number of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff who considered that the partnership enhanced understanding and respect for each other mandates



Source: ICF. 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (DG ECHO, N=22; UNHCR, N=21)

<sup>707</sup> IOM is the global lead of the CCCM for IDP emergencies following natural disasters and IFRC for the shelter cluster in the context of natural disasters.

<sup>708</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 1, DG ECHO Field: 1, UNHCR HQ: 2, UNHCR Field: 1).

<sup>709</sup> UNHCR. UNHCR's mandate for refugees, stateless persons and IDPs. Available at: <https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/legal-framework/unhcrs-mandate-refugees-stateless-persons-and-idps>.

<sup>710</sup> ICF. 2023. KII (UNHCR HQ: 3, UNHCR Field: 2).

<sup>711</sup> ICF. 2023. KII (DG ECHO Filed:1).

<sup>712</sup> ICF. 2023. Online Survey of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff (14 DG ECHO staff out of 22 agree that the partnership enhanced their understanding of each other mandates; 18 UNHCR staff out of 21 agree or strongly agree that the partnership enhanced their understanding of each other mandates); ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO Field: 2, UNHCR Field: 2 and UNHCR HQ: 1).

<sup>713</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO documentation; ICF. 2023. KIIs.

<sup>714</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (DG ECHO HQ: 1).

<sup>715</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs.



EQ 6. To what extent did the DG ECHO - UNHCR partnership contribute to: (i) Strengthening field coordination between relevant actors (notably during the COVID-19 response), including: a) DG ECHO and UNHCR national and regional offices, (b) Humanitarian actors – notably UN and NGOs, and (c) Donors? (EQ6.1); reinforcing and enhancing relevant sectorial coordination at global, regional, and country/field level, and supporting UNHCR's lead or co-lead role in the cluster coordination system? (EQ6.2); and facilitating cooperation towards a triple Nexus approach? (EQ6.3)

Table 46. Key findings

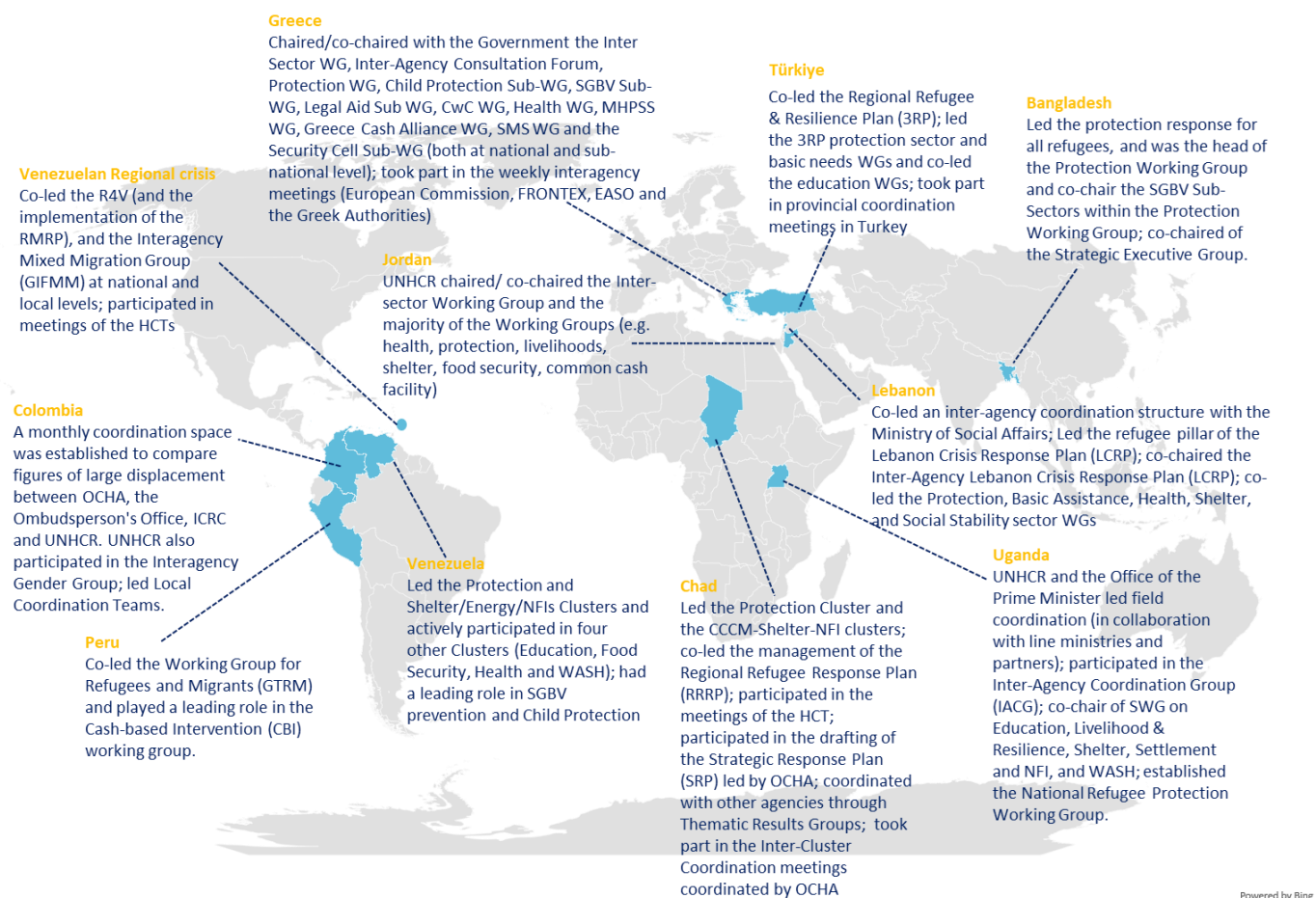
Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
<p>JC 6.1 The partnership improved field coordination between DG ECHO and UNHCR regional and national offices as well as with other humanitarian actors (i.e. UN, NGOs and IOs) and donors (particularly in the context of the COVID-19 response)</p> <p>JC 6.2 The partnership contributed to enhanced sectorial coordination to respond to situations of forced displacement (at global, regional, and country/field level) (including through DG ECHO's support to UNHCR's lead/co-lead role in the cluster coordination system)</p> <p><i>*Note: cooperation and coordination between DG ECHO and UNHCR at field level is covered under EQ3.</i></p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, the DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership had a limited impact on enhanced field and sectorial coordination, which in addition considerably varied across countries.</li> <li>• While most UNHCR staff considered that the partnership had at least a moderate impact on field and sectorial coordination, DG ECHO staff consulted was less positive on the impact of the partnership on coordination at country level.</li> <li>• Some of the main factors that influenced the partnership's ability to contribute to improved field and sectorial coordination included:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The level of DG ECHO funding to UNHCR's coordination activities and the extent to which DG ECHO shared information on funding to other humanitarian actors with UNHCR (and other Framework partners);</li> <li>- UNHCR's coordination role (e.g. lead/ co-lead of the response/cluster) and the quality of UNHCR's coordination activities; and</li> <li>- The quality of the DG ECHO-UNHCR relationship on the ground.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There are some examples of ways in which the partnership contributed – at least to some extent – to enhanced field and sectorial coordination in some countries. This was primarily done through:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DG ECHO's advocacy efforts for the establishment/reinforcement of the cluster system</li> <li>- DG ECHO and UNHCR promotion of the use of multi-sector/multi-agency joint needs assessments.</li> <li>- The funding provided for the development/reinforcement of information management systems to support humanitarian coordination (e.g. joint/inter-agency needs assessments, border monitoring, protection monitoring etc.).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• With the exception of single funding provided to support UNHCR's coordination role in the cluster system in some countries, the DG ECHO's support to UNHCR's leading or co-leading role in the cluster coordination system was generally limited.</li> </ul>

Judgement criteria	Strength of evidence	Key findings
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data collected provided little evidence of the partnership contribution to enhancing field coordination in the context the Covid-19 response.</li> <li>There was no evidence of the impact of the partnership on sectoral coordination at regional and/or global level.</li> </ul>
JC 6.3 The partnership facilitated DG ECHO and UNHCR cooperation towards a Nexus approach (at strategic and operational level)	<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At strategic level, the partnership had limited impact on DG ECHO and UNHCR cooperation towards the Nexus. While the EU-UNHCR High-Level and Strategic Dialogues provided for opportunities to discuss common priorities and objectives and issues related to the Nexus, the type of exchanges and the level of dialogue between the different actors did not directly contribute to fostering a Nexus approach in practice.</li> <li>At operational level, the extent to which the partnership contributed to the Nexus greatly varied across countries and depending on the humanitarian situation and political context. Where cooperation on the Nexus existed, this was mostly in the context of the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (often thus not involving any peace actors / peace actions).</li> <li>Overall, insufficient communication and dialogue between DG ECHO, UNHCR and other EU services and institutions (e.g. DG INTPA and EU Delegation) was highlighted as a limiting factor for the partnership contribution to the Nexus at operational level. The fact that in some countries different UNHCR field staff were responsible for the relationship with different EU Services also hindered cooperation towards the Nexus.</li> <li>Some examples of good practices with regard to DG ECHO-UNHCR cooperation towards the Humanitarian-Development Nexus were identified (e.g. in Burundi, Syria and Uganda).</li> </ul>

***The partnership's contribution to field and sectoral coordination on the ground was generally limited and varied significantly across countries. There was no evidence of the impact of the partnership on sectoral coordination at regional and global level (JC 6.1 and JC 6.2).***

In the countries where UNHCR and DG ECHO collaborated over the evaluation period, UNHCR's field and sectoral coordination happened through different platforms depending on the country, but most commonly included: coordination in the context of the cluster system and working groups (where UNHCR played a leading role); meetings of the Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT); coordination structures under the Refugee Coordination Model; specific national/regional response plans and coordination mechanisms (e.g. R4V), the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) in Chad, the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP) in Türkiye and the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP)); and bilateral meetings. Figure 77 provides some examples of UNHCR' participation (and role) in coordination structures in countries where DG ECHO funded UNHCR over the evaluation period.

Figure 77. Examples of UNHCR's participation (and role) in coordination structures in the context of DG ECHO funded actions



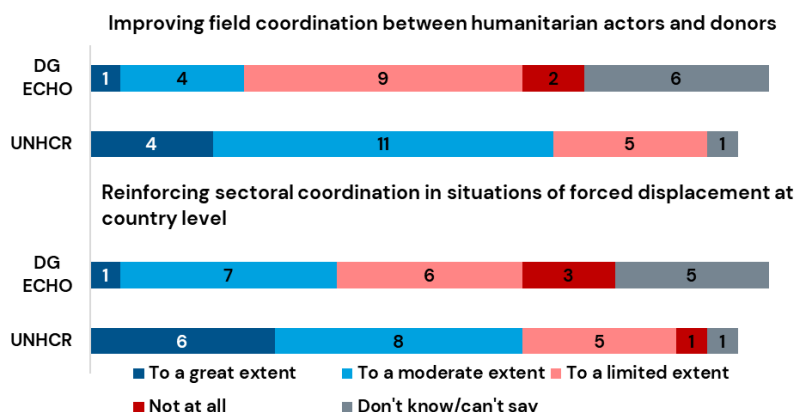
Source: ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination).

**Overall, the partnership's contribution to enhanced field and sectoral coordination on the ground was generally limited and considerably varied across countries.**<sup>716</sup>

DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted had different views as to whether the partnership contributed to improving field and sectoral coordination. While most UNHCR respondents stated that, overall, the partnership positively impacted field and sectoral coordination at country level, DG ECHO staff was less positive on the impact of the partnership on coordination on the ground (see Figure 78).

<sup>716</sup> KIIs, desk review, Case study 4.

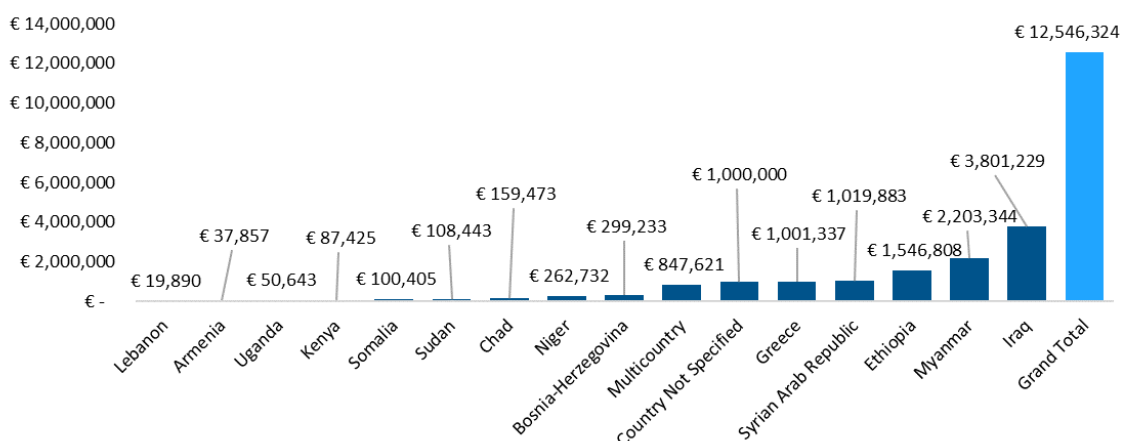
Figure 78. Number of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff who considered that the partnership contributed to improving field coordination between humanitarian actors and donors and to reinforcing sectoral coordination in situations of forced displacement at country level



Source: ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (DG ECHO, N=22; UNHCR, N=21)

In the field, the partnership was – in most cases – primarily based on funding (i.e. donor-implementer relationship) and therefore the extent to which it contributed to field and sectoral coordination was highly dependent on the **level of funding provided by DG ECHO to UNHCR's coordination activities**.<sup>717</sup> Over the evaluation period, DG ECHO's financial contribution to UNHCR coordination activities represented 1% of the total funding provided to the organisation (a total of EUR 12.5 million). The highest share of DG ECHO funding to UNHCR's coordination activities went to Iraq (EUR 3.8 million) followed by Myanmar (EUR 2.2 million) and Ethiopia (EUR 1.5 million) (see Figure 79). The relatively small size of financial contributions provided to UNHCR's coordination activities was reported to have limited the impact of the partnership on field and sectoral coordination in some countries.<sup>718</sup>

Figure 79. DG ECHO funding to UNHCR's coordination activities per country and grand total between 2017 – 2021.



Source: ICF. Based on HOPE/EVA data extraction.

Other factors that influenced the partnership's ability to contribute to enhanced field and sectoral coordination included:<sup>719</sup>

- **UNHCR's coordination role (e.g. lead/ co-lead of the response/cluster):** as shown Figure 77, UNHCR's role in field and sectoral coordination varied considerably across

<sup>717</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination); ICF. 2023. KIIs.

<sup>718</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination); ICF. 2023. KIIs.

<sup>719</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination); and ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO Documentation; ICF. 2023. KIIs;

countries, humanitarian contexts (i.e. refugee contexts, IDP contexts, mixed settings), and sectors. UNHCR's capacity to influence humanitarian coordination was directly linked to its coordination role and thus so was the partnership's ability to influence field and sectoral coordination.

- **UNHCR's operational capacity and performance on field and sectoral coordination:** the extent to which the partnership was able to contribute to reinforcing field and sectoral coordination was also dependent on UNHCR's operational capacity (including UNHCR's field presence, technical and implementing capacity) and the quality of their coordination activities.<sup>720</sup> Data collected showed some differences in the quality of UNHCR's coordination efforts across countries and sectors (and over the years). In most UNHCR funded actions reviewed as part of the project mapping, DG ECHO field staff rated UNHCR's coordination ability and readiness as adequate (31 out of 40 actions mapped). However, some quality issues were also raised by DG ECHO staff in relation to UNHCR's performance in the coordination sector, including for example:
  - The creation of parallel/duplicated coordination structures (e.g. parallel coordination mechanisms in Colombia to respond to the needs arising from internal conflict and needs of Venezuelan refugees;<sup>721</sup> and insufficient coordination between refugee responses and the humanitarian coordination system, especially in areas with mixed caseload e.g. in Sudan);<sup>722</sup>
  - A too low level of UNHCR human resources allocated to coordination (e.g. in Chad where the position for a protection cluster coordinator remained vacant for a long time;<sup>723</sup> or in Nigeria where UNHCR field presence was limited to only some of the affected States);<sup>724</sup>
  - Concerns around transparency and lack of information sharing in the context of humanitarian coordination structures (e.g. in South Sudan);<sup>725</sup>
  - Not enough efforts to ensure inter-sectoral coordination (e.g. in Uganda).<sup>726</sup>
- **The extent to which DG ECHO shared information on funding to other humanitarian partners with UNHCR and other Framework partners:** some UNHCR staff and another DG ECHO Framework partner consulted in the context of the field visits and through key informant interviews stated that overall, DG ECHO could provide more information (in a more systematic way) on which organisations they are funding and for which types of activities to further facilitate coordination among DG ECHO-funded partners. Some stakeholders interviewed highlighted as a good practice the approach taken by other humanitarian donors of bringing together all organisations funded to discuss the type of activities implemented.<sup>727</sup>
- **The quality of the DG ECHO-UNHCR relationship on the ground:** the quality of the cooperation between DG ECHO and UNHCR in the field varied across countries and sometimes depending on individuals (see also JC 3.2). Therefore, the extent to which the partners joined efforts to contribute to enhancing field and sectoral coordination also depended on the quality of their overall cooperation on the ground. Uganda for example,

---

<sup>720</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination); and ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO Documentation; ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff.

<sup>721</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination); and ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>722</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO Documentation.

<sup>723</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>724</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO Documentation.

<sup>725</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO Documentation; ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>726</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>727</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination), Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions); ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR HQ: 2, UNHCR Field: 1).

was highlighted as an example of a country where the good quality of DG ECHO-UNHCR dialogue and exchanges positively contributed to UNHCR's coordination efforts.<sup>728</sup>

**Other contextual factors (external to the partnership)** that impacted UNHCR's coordination efforts and, hence, the partnership's ability to contribute to reinforcing field and sectoral coordination, included restrictions following the Covid-19 pandemic, security issues, the political situation in the country, the maturity of existing coordination structures, the number of humanitarian actors with field presence, and the overall availability of funding for coordination (other than DG ECHO funding).<sup>729</sup>

In spite of the challenges and obstacles encountered, the evaluation also provided some **examples of ways in which the partnership contributed – at least to some extent – to enhanced field and sectoral coordination in some countries**. For example, through its **advocacy efforts**, DG ECHO contributed, to some extent, to improving field and sectoral coordination in some countries. In South Sudan for instance, DG ECHO advocated for the establishment of the protection cluster (led by UNHCR) and for its reinforcement over the years which helped enhancing coordination in that sector. In Bangladesh, DG ECHO was one of the main promoters of the “one camp approach” which required the maintenance of similar standards in different camps aiming to ensure that common strategies and systems were used across all the camps, regardless of the Areas of Responsibility (AoRs) of the operating agencies (UNHCR and IOM).<sup>730</sup> Exchanges with UNHCR and IOM on this matter eventually led to the creation of a new sector for Site management, Site development and Shelter/NFI co-led by both UNHCR and IOM.<sup>731</sup> In Jordan, DG ECHO – as a member of the donor group – supported a reorganisation of the humanitarian coordination structure, which UNHCR then implemented in cooperation with other relevant agencies.<sup>732</sup> In Myanmar, DG ECHO was one of the main promoters of a peer-to-peer review that resulted in some recommendations to UNHCR to enhance field coordination.<sup>733</sup>

Moreover, over the evaluation period, both partners also **promoted the use of multi-sector/multi-agency needs assessments**, which contributed to some extent to a more coordinated response.<sup>734</sup> Evidence of joint needs and/or vulnerability assessment exercises, joint monitoring and/or joint planning (e.g. with other UN agencies i.e. IOM, UNICEF and WFP, other humanitarian actors, national/local authorities) were found in 38 out of the 40 UNHCR funded actions reviewed.<sup>735</sup> Additionally, DG ECHO also directly supported some joint actions/programmes between UNHCR and other UN Agencies that contributed to increasing the coherence of the response in the field (e.g. the UNHCR-WFP Joint Action For Multipurpose Cash Assistance in Lebanon, and the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub).

In the context of the partnership, **DG ECHO also financially supported UNHCR in the development / reinforcement of information management systems to support humanitarian coordination**. The collection, analysis and sharing information that could be used by the different actors involved in the humanitarian response was seen by stakeholders as key to ensure a coordinated approach. Some examples of the partnership's contribution to enhanced information management included:<sup>736</sup>

---

<sup>728</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR HQ: 2).

<sup>729</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; and ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>730</sup> ICF. 2023. Field interviews (DG ECHO Country and Field Office); ICF. 2023. Documentation review (ISCG, Principles of Rationalization in the Rohingya Refugee Response in Bangladesh).

<sup>731</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination).

<sup>732</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination).

<sup>733</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (1 DG ECHO Field).

<sup>734</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination).

<sup>735</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>736</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions); ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination) and Case Study 5 (the partnership contribution to enhanced needs-based protection responses).

- **In the context of the Venezuelan crisis**, under the RV4 platform, DG ECHO supported the establishment of Information Management Working Groups (IMWGs) at country/sub-region level. The IMWGs contributed to:
  - Needs assessment coordination. Including the development of a multi-sectoral methodology to gather and analyse needs of the different population groups. Nonetheless, despite the positive results, less partners than planned effectively and systematically shared data on beneficiaries.
  - The establishment of a monitoring framework on progress towards the achievement of objectives and indicators set out in the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP). Although less partners than planned contributed to the monitoring framework, these efforts resulted in common monitoring and implementation variables that could be compared across platforms and tracked over time.<sup>737</sup>
- **In Ecuador**, DG ECHO financially supported UNHCR in its protection monitoring and border monitoring activities in the context of Grupo de Trabajo para Refugiadas y Migrantes (GTRM). Stakeholders consulted reported that these activities were very useful for ensuring evidence-based programming and a coordinated field and sectoral response. Both activities implemented by UNHCR (in collaboration with other agencies) contributed to the provision of consolidated data to the GTRM (especially at local level) and to the other humanitarian actors, which relied on this information to plan and organise the response.<sup>738</sup>
- **In Chad**, DG ECHO supported the implementation of UNHCR's P21 project which established a harmonised protection monitoring system at regional level in the Lac region. The implementation of the P21 approach contributed to generating a more coherent picture of the protection situation in that region that allowed to better plan and implement protection responses.<sup>739</sup>
- **In Greece**, with DG ECHO's (financial) support, UNHCR produced and published monthly Information Management products that were key to facilitate coordination among key actors.<sup>740</sup>

On the other hand, with the exception of single funding provided to support UNHCR's role in the cluster system in some countries, **DG ECHO's support to UNHCR's lead or co-lead role in the cluster coordination system was generally limited.**<sup>741</sup> Only a minority of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted through the survey considered that the partnership contributed – to some extent – to supporting UNHCR's role as lead/co-lead in the cluster coordination system (see Figure 80).<sup>742</sup>

---

<sup>737</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions). See: ECHO/-AM/BUD/2018/91045 and ECHO/-AM/BUD/2021/91062.

<sup>738</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination).

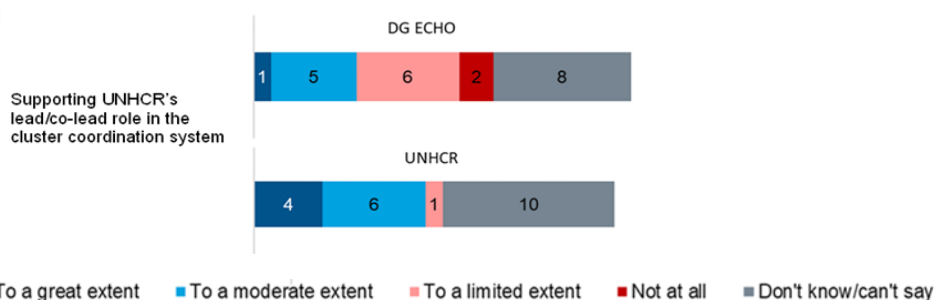
<sup>739</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 5 (Partnership contribution to needs-based protection interventions).

<sup>740</sup> ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions). See: ECHO/-EU/BUD/2018/01003.

<sup>741</sup> ICF. 2023. Case study 4 (Partnership contribution to coordination); ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff.

<sup>742</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (5 DG ECHO staff out of 22 responses considered that it contributed to moderate extent and 1 DG ECHO staff that it contributed to a great extent; 4 UNHCR staff out of 21 responses considered that it contributed to a great extent and 6 UNHCR staff that it contributed to a moderate extent).

Figure 80. Number of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff who considered that the partnership contributed to supporting UNHCR's lead/co-lead role in the cluster coordination system



Source: ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (DG ECHO, N=22; UNHCR, N=21)

UNHCR staff consulted reported that while DG ECHO generally encouraged its Framework partners to coordinate with existing cluster systems (including those led/co-led by UNHCR), they often did not require Framework partners to coordinate with UNHCR as the leading Agency in the context of refugee responses (i.e. Refugee Coordination Model). This was reported to have hampered UNHCR's coordination role in refugee settings.<sup>743</sup> In DG ECHO's view, under the Refugee Coordination Model, UNHCR sometimes took a leadership role for sectors where they were not the best positioned and could have relied on other more specialised humanitarian actors (e.g. UNICEF for EiE).<sup>744</sup> Moreover, in some cases, DG ECHO also reported inadequate coordination between the refugee response led by UNHCR and the general humanitarian coordination system.<sup>745</sup>

When it comes to **field coordination in the specific context of the Covid-19 response**, data collected provided little evidence of the partnership's contribution to enhancing field coordination in this context. Only a minority of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted through the survey considered that the partnership contributed to strengthening coordination of humanitarian responses in the context of the Covid-19 response.<sup>746</sup>

**There was no evidence of the impact of the partnership on sectoral coordination at regional and global level.** Most DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted through the survey could not tell whether the partnership contributed to enhancing sectoral coordination at global<sup>747</sup> and/or regional level.<sup>748</sup>

**The partnership had a limited impact on DG ECHO and UNHCR cooperation towards a Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (Triple Nexus) approach at strategic level. At operational level, the extent to which the partnership contributed to the Nexus greatly varied across countries (JC 6.3).**

Both DG ECHO and UNHCR were committed to the operationalisation of the Nexus. The reinforcement of complementarity and coordination to ensure an effective transition from emergency assistance to durable solutions is one of the main areas of cooperation between the EU

<sup>743</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR HQ: 3).

<sup>744</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO Documentation.

<sup>745</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO Documentation.

<sup>746</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (5 DG ECHO staff out of 22 responses agree that the partnership contributed to a moderate extent to strengthening the coordination of humanitarian responses in the context of the Covid-19 response, 3 DG ECHO staff to a limited extent, 5 DG ECHO staff not at all and 9 DG ECHO did not know; 9 UNHCR staff out of 21 responses agree that the partnership contributed to a moderate extent to strengthening the coordination of humanitarian responses in the context of the Covid-19 response, 3 UNHCR staff to a limited extent, 1 UNHCR staff not at all and 8 UNHCR staff did not know).

<sup>747</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (17 DG ECHO staff out of 22 responses did not know or could not tell; 14 UNHCR staff out of 21 responses did not know or could not tell).

<sup>748</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (13 DG ECHO staff out of 22 responses did not know or could not tell; 13 UNHCR staff out of 21 responses did not know or could not tell).



(including DG ECHO) and UNHCR under the 2005 MoU. Over the evaluation period, UNHCR identified building a strategic partnership with the EU as a priority in its work towards the Nexus.<sup>749</sup>

**At strategic level**, the EU-UNHCR Strategic Dialogues provided for opportunities to discuss issues related to the Nexus among UNHCR and the different EU Services (i.e. DG ECHO, DG NEAR, DG INTPA, EEAS). The discussions around the Nexus were recurrent and included exchanges on how to reinforce the Nexus approach (e.g. increase use of MPCT as a bridge mechanism, the use of social protection systems and integration of forcibly displaced into national systems, importance of supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), making use of the new NDICI Instrument, etc.) as well as on best practices in the implementation of the Nexus. During the 2021 EU-UNHCR Strategic Dialogue, the partners (together with other EU Services) exchanged information on the operationalisation of the Nexus and explored opportunities for UNHCR to contribute to the “Team Europe” approach (in the context of the EU’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic).<sup>750</sup> The importance of reinforcing cooperation towards the Nexus was also mentioned in several of the EU statements before the UNHCR standing Committee sessions. During those sessions, the EU (including DG ECHO) reiterated its commitment to working closely with UNHCR to strengthen the Nexus in forced displacement situations.

Despite the above, evidence collected shows that the partnership had a limited impact on cooperation towards the Nexus at strategic level.<sup>751</sup> Some stakeholders consulted reported that, having common spaces for dialogue with the different EU Services (e.g. EU-UNHCR Strategic Dialogue) was useful to discuss common priorities, objectives and strategies, but that **the type of (joint) cooperation and exchanges between the different actors did not directly contribute to fostering a Nexus approach in practice**.<sup>752</sup> The lack of alignment and common messages on the Nexus among the different EU Services was reported to have hampered effective cooperation at strategic level in this context.<sup>753</sup> One of the EU Services consulted described the type of exchanges under the EU-UNHCR Strategic Dialogue as “separate dialogues taking place at the same time” which did not allow to effectively cooperate towards the Nexus. In the same vein, different priorities for the Nexus among different EU Services (linked to their different mandates) in some cases also hindered a common approach to the Nexus.<sup>754</sup> Additionally, differences in timeframes for programming across EU Services also made it difficult to enhance cooperation towards a Nexus approach. One stakeholder consulted also mentioned that UNHCR could be more transparent on their exchanges with the different EU services and jointly discuss Nexus priorities / issues in existing common spaces rather than using bilateral communication channels.<sup>755</sup> It was also reported that DG ECHO played a key role in encouraging UNHCR to use common spaces for dialogue among the different EU Services to discuss the Nexus.<sup>756</sup>

Some stakeholders consulted mentioned that more strategic thinking on how to work together with UNHCR towards the Nexus could be beneficial<sup>757</sup> and that DG ECHO could play a strong role on this

---

<sup>749</sup> UNHCR. Evaluation of UNHCR's Engagement in Humanitarian-Development Cooperation. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/61af7be94.pdf>.

<sup>750</sup> DG INTPA. Team Europe Initiatives. Available at: [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/team-europe-initiatives\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/team-europe-initiatives_en).

<sup>751</sup> ICF 2023. KIIs; Only a minority of DG ECHO staff consulted through the Online Survey (5 out of 22) considered that the partnership contributed to a great extent or a moderate extent to facilitating cooperating towards the Nexus at strategic level. Half of DG ECHO staff consulted (11 out of 22) and most DG ECHO field staff (7 out of 11) did not know whether the partnership contributed to the Nexus at strategic level. 4 DG ECHO staff out of 22 considered that it had a limited impact and 2 that it did not have any impact. Only a minority of UNHCR staff (6 out of 1) considered that the partnership facilitated cooperation towards the Nexus at strategic level. Most UNHCR staff did not know it that was the case (12 out of 21), 2 out of 21 considered that the partnership had only a limited impact and 1 that it did not impact cooperation towards the Nexus at strategic level.

<sup>752</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other EU Services: 2, DG ECHO HQ: 1, UNHCR HQ: 1)

<sup>753</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other EU Services: 2, Other donors: 1, UNHCR HQ: 1).

<sup>754</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other EU Services: 1).

<sup>755</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other EU Services: 1).

<sup>756</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other EU Services: 1).

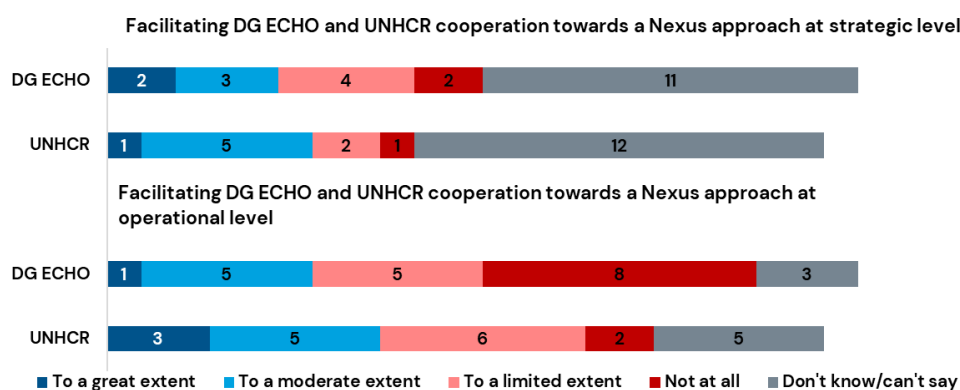
<sup>757</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other EU Services: 2).

as the lead of the EU relations with UNHCR.<sup>758</sup> It was suggested that this could be done for instance, by having more regular strategic meetings on cooperation with UNHCR among EU Services<sup>759</sup> and preparing a joint agenda for discussions with UNHCR based on the outputs of internal strategic discussions among the different EU Services (instead of asking the different EU Services to provide separate inputs to the agenda as it is currently done).<sup>760</sup>

At **operational level**, evidence collected shows that cooperation towards the Nexus could be further strengthened. The extent to which the partnership facilitated cooperation towards the Nexus greatly varied across countries. Where this cooperation existed, this was mostly in the context of the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, often not involving any peace actors / peace actions.

Only a minority of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted through the survey considered that the partnership facilitated their cooperation towards a Nexus approach at operational level (at least to a certain extent).<sup>761</sup>

Figure 81. Number of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff who considered that the partnership contributed to facilitating DG ECHO and UNHCR cooperation towards a Nexus approach at strategic and operational level



Source: ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (DG ECHO, N=22; UNHCR, N=21)

Some of the factors that hindered the partnership's ability to contribute to the operationalisation of the Nexus included:

- The impossibility to work towards the Nexus due to the challenging humanitarian context and/or political situation in the country (e.g. South Sudan, Lebanon, Myanmar and Afghanistan);<sup>762</sup>
- Insufficient dialogue and cooperation between DG ECHO and other EU Services on the ground (i.e. DG INTPA, DG NEAR and the EU Delegations) (e.g. in Afghanistan, Türkiye, Bangladesh, Venezuelan crisis);<sup>763</sup> and
- The fact that in some countries different UNHCR field staff were responsible for the relationship with different EU Services.<sup>764</sup>

Through the funding provided to some UNHCR activities, the partnership contributed – at least to some extent – to enhancing cooperation towards the Nexus in a few countries, for example by

<sup>758</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other EU Services: 1).

<sup>759</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other EU Services: 2).

<sup>760</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (Other EU Services: 1).

<sup>761</sup> ICF 2023. Online survey of UNHCR and DG ECHO staff (1 DG ECHO staff out of 22 responses considered that the partnership contributed to facilitating DG ECHO and UNHCR cooperation towards a Nexus approach at operational level to a great extent, 5 to a moderate extent and 5 to a limited extent; 3 UNHCR staff out of 21 responses to a great extent, 5 to a moderate extent, 6 to a limited extent).

<sup>762</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs; ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO documentation.

<sup>763</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs (UNHCR Field: 4, UNHCR HQ: 1, DG ECHO Field: 2).

<sup>764</sup> ICF. 2023. KII (UNHCR Field: 1).

enhancing synergies with development / peace interventions, ensuring an adequate transition towards longer-term interventions, building national capacity etc. References to the Humanitarian-Development Nexus and/or links with development actions were found in 25 out of the 40 UNHCR funded actions reviewed (see Table 47 for examples). References to links with peace interventions / cooperation with peace actors were only found in three funded actions (i.e. in Uganda and Colombia).

Table 47. Examples of references to the Nexus and/or links with development actions in UNHCR funded actions between 2017-2021

Country	Example of links with development/peace interventions
<b>Colombia</b>	In addition to DG ECHO funding, UNHCR received funding from the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) to strengthen the resilience of IDPs, Venezuelans and Colombian returnees, promote their integration and peaceful coexistence by reinforcing the local and national response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and enabling community engagement and protection environments.
<b>Chad</b>	UNHCR funded actions were complementary to the “Inclusive Development of Host communities project (DIZA)” funded under the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and implemented by UNHCR and the French Agency for Development (AFD) with the objective of promoting the socio-economic integration of refugees and host populations. Complementarities with the “Refugees and Host Communities Support Project (PARCA)” funded by the World Bank were also sought. However, in DG ECHO’s view, existing synergies between those projects (and with development actors) could have been better exploited. <sup>765</sup>
<b>Türkiye</b>	Some of components of the funded action sought to increase the long-term sustainability of the refugee response (e.g. UNHCR’s registration support to PMM and PDMs, which went beyond traditional humanitarian aid by focussing on national capacity development and strengthening national ownership). Moreover, UNHCR closely coordinated its actions with development actors and programmes. Through its leadership role in the 3RP, UNHCR contributed to building a comprehensive framework that aimed at linking humanitarian actions with longer-term investments
<b>Greece</b>	UNHCR funded actions were built around the handover to DG HOME (in 2019) and the Greek government. To facilitate the handover a workshop was organised by DG HOME with the participation of DG ECHO, UNHCR and the Greek Ministry for Migration Policy.
<b>Jordan</b>	UNHCR hold discussions with the EU in the context of the EU Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis (MADAD) on longer term "nexus" funding to assist with basic needs social transfers provision which would allow for the handover of some of DG ECHO’s interventions to MADAD. In this context, it was eventually agreed that the MPCT component of the UNHCR funded action would be handed over to MADAD in 2020.
<b>Lebanon</b>	UNHCR funded actions were in line with the EU’s Joint Humanitarian Development Framework (JHDF). UNHCR actions funded by DG ECHO were complementary to other UNHCR activities funded under the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) (e.g. upgrade of water supply facilities and enhancement of access to protection for refugees, stateless and other vulnerable persons) as well as some interventions funded under MADAD (i.e. for the provision of secondary health).

ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

The stakeholder consultation also provided a few examples of **good practices in the promotion of the Humanitarian-Development Nexus** approach in the framework of the partnership:<sup>766</sup>

- In **Syria**, DG ECHO, DG NEAR and UNHCR joined efforts to ensure access to shelter and landowners rights. DG ECHO supported UNHCR’s activities in ensuring access to shelter

<sup>765</sup> ICF. 2023. Analysis of DG ECHO documentation; ICF. 2023. Project mapping (40 actions).

<sup>766</sup> ICF. 2023. KIIs.

while DG NEAR supported UNHCR's advocacy efforts at Damascus level to ensure respect for land rights.

- In **Türkiye**, DG ECHO made some suggestions to UNHCR on how to work towards the Nexus. Based on this suggestions UNHCR prepared a list of activities to be implemented to transition towards longer- term approaches. However, following the 2023 earthquake some of those activities were put on hold.
- In the context of the **Burundi crisis**, DG ECHO played a key role in supporting UNHCR in implementing a Humanitarian-Development Nexus strategy. DG ECHO pushed for UNHCR to adopt a Nexus strategy to respond to existing humanitarian needs. This strategy was later used by DG ECHO and UNHCR to jointly advocate with DG INTPA and the EU Delegation to step in and contribute to the transition from humanitarian assistance to longer term solutions. EU development actors ended up providing EUR 40 million to the Burundi situation.
- **In Uganda**, UNHCR highly appreciated DG ECHO's involvement in the operationalisation of the Humanitarian-Development Nexus and their support in advocating for development actors to step in and complement the humanitarian responses ensuring a transition to longer term solutions (especially in the health and protection sectors). Thanks to DG ECHO's support, UNHCR managed to build a partnership with DG INTPA and work towards a transition to longer term approaches.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarises the main conclusions from the evaluation of DG ECHO's partnership with UNHCR (2017-2021), based on the findings reported in Section 7 of the report. The conclusions are presented by evaluation criterion.

### 8.1 Conclusions

**Coherence:** Evidence collected shows that DG ECHO and UNHCR were highly complementary in their mandates. Even though the provision of protection is at the core of both DG ECHO and UNHCR's mandates (and of the partnership), the partners had a somewhat different understanding of what protection entails at operational level. These differences in the understanding of protection were discussed by DG ECHO and UNHCR at strategic (i.e. in the context of EU-UNHCR Strategic Dialogues and DG ECHO-UNHCR High-level Dialogues) and operational level over the evaluation period.

DG ECHO and UNHCR were also highly aligned in their strategic priorities and objectives. Some of the partners common priorities included:

- Ensuring protection of persons in situations of forced displacement;
- Supporting the IDP agenda;
- Ensure a better response to the needs of people displaced due to disasters and climate change;
- Ensuring access to education in emergencies;
- Promoting innovation and digital technologies in humanitarian action; and
- Preserving the environment and minimising the environmental footprint of the provision of humanitarian aid.

DG ECHO and UNHCR also shared common priorities in the context of the Grand Bargain commitments (i.e. localisation, increasing flexibility in the delivery of humanitarian aid, and increasing the use of cash) as well as on other cross-cutting issues (e.g. Promoting respect for IHL, IHRL and International Refugee law, coordination and the Triple Nexus).

The degree of alignment in terms of operational priorities was generally good but varied across countries. However, with a few exceptions, differences in prioritisation at operational level did not have a negative impact on the partners' cooperation. Some of the main areas of misalignment in terms of prioritisation under the partnership at operational level included: differences in terms of prioritisation of sectors / transfer modalities; and differences in DG ECHO and UNHCR views on durable solutions and long-term interventions and their links with humanitarian aid.

Evidence collected shows that overall, DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their approaches to needs assessments, vulnerability and risk analysis. At operational level, however, the quality of UNHCR's needs and risk analysis and their alignment with DG ECHO's requirements varied from action to action and depending on the country.

The degree of alignment between DG ECHO and UNHCR targeting strategies also varied across countries and contexts. Some misalignments in DG ECHO and UNHCR targeting strategies were identified in contexts where UNHCR targeted beneficiaries on the basis of status (i.e. refugees and asylum seekers), nationality, or a pre-determined list of vulnerabilities instead of on the basis of risk analysis as required by DG ECHO.

DG ECHO and UNHCR were well-aligned in their advocacy priorities at global level. Some examples of common advocacy priorities included: promoting IHL, IHRL and International Refugee Law; advocating for access to the territory and registration for refugees; and ensuring delivery of humanitarian aid to PoC in a safe and dignified manner. At country level, the partners also generally shared similar advocacy priorities although in some contexts, they were not fully aligned or disagreed on their preferred approach to advocacy (e.g. DG ECHO expected UNHCR to be more vocal on key advocacy issues with government actors).

Evidence collected also provided a few examples of joint advocacy activities at strategic level. At country level, cooperation on advocacy happened mostly through other means (e.g. funding to advocacy efforts, exchanges of information and advocacy messages, and in the context of coordination structures).

The evaluation period also saw an increased alignment in DG ECHO and UNHCR communication and visibility efforts and enhanced commitment in this area from both partners. Nevertheless, challenges in the dissemination of communication materials to an EU-wide audiences as well as quality issues regarding field visibility were also identified.

**Efficiency:** Opportunities for efficiency gains were identified at various levels to different degrees, even if discussions between the partners mostly focused on other considerations. However, the impact of discussions on efficiency gains were limited. Consulted DG ECHO staff and UNHCR staff indicated the following reasons behind this:

- DG ECHO: lack of detailed and timely information on project/activities and limited flexibility of UNHCR to take on board DG ECHO's recommendations.
- UNHCR: insufficient information about which partners and activities/projects are funded by DG ECHO and a misalignment of the partner's timelines.
- The impact of the partnership in decreasing management-related costs, including administrative burden, was not significant. The partners have distinct views on the reporting requirements. While DG ECHO considers that the reporting by UNHCR could be further improved and is not as comprehensive as the reporting provided by other partners (which do not benefit from the simplified reporting rules as UN agencies do), UNHCR considers DG ECHO reporting requirements to be too heavy and cumbersome (especially when compared to those of other donors and the amount of funding).

The partnership contribution to improving the cost-effectiveness of the partners' humanitarian responses varied across countries and projects, with strategic and high-level dialogs having a limited influence on this aspect. Overall, UNHCR presented a more positive assessment of the impact partnership on cost-effectiveness and timeliness than DG ECHO, with the latter indicating that the impact was limited mostly due to proposals and reports delayed and lacking detailed information, targeting not always aligned with DG ECHO priorities, limited availability of UNHCR to adjust activities and discuss/follow DG ECHO's recommendations and the characteristics of the structure of UNHCR, which is centralised and heavy. Nevertheless, some best practices and positive examples of the impact of the partnership on cost-effectiveness were shared by DG ECHO, including the expertise and dimension of UNHCR that allows DG ECHO to address certain crises (which might not have been possible or less cost-effective if UNHCR would not have been involved) and the joint work on some cash-programmes.

The identified challenges between the two partners at operational level specifically related to cost-effectiveness, were rarely scaled-up or discussed at strategic strategic/global level, limiting the influence of strategic and high-level dialogs on cost-effectiveness at operational level.

**Effectiveness:** The strategic partnership approach contributed to improving the cooperation between DG ECHO and UNHCR, particularly through discussions held during High-level and Strategic dialogue meetings. The partners interacted through regular and timely dialogue and information exchange (formal and informal) at: 1) strategic level, through the annual Strategic dialogue meetings (involving other EU services), the annual High-level dialogue meetings (bilateral) as well as UNHCR's governing body meetings (where DG ECHO coordinated/represented the EU); 2) operational level, through monitoring missions and visits jointly organised as well as formal and (mostly) informal dialogue between field officers. The extent to which regular bilateral dialogue took place at country, however, level varied considerably (in terms of number and quality of interactions).

At strategic level, to follow up on discussions held during the annual High-level Dialogue between DG ECHO and UNHCR and the annual Strategic Dialogue between the EU and UNHCR, the partners

set up a monitoring mechanism to keep track of the implementation of the agreed action points, including potential issues raised. The monitoring mechanism has evolved throughout the evaluation period and allowed the partners to keep track of follow up actions on each of the points discussed/raised during the meetings, the state of play of each action point, next steps, actors involved and the target timeframe for the completion of the action. Nevertheless, during the evaluation period the partners did not set up a mechanism to identify and act upon lessons learned.

Additional efforts could be invested by both partners in creating a stronger bridge between the strategic (HQ) and operational (field) levels, particularly in regard to the flow of information to and from strategic discussions. While there was the possibility for field officers to contribute to Strategic and High-level dialogue, the results of which were then cascaded to country offices (particularly in DG ECHO), there is a risk that the communication of the results might be dependent on the commitment of single officers in cascading the information.

The partnership also provided for opportunities to deal with issues hindering cooperation at different levels (e.g. disagreements on operational and strategic priorities, mandate-related constraints, potential conflicts of interest etc.). At strategic level, the Strategic and High-level meetings provided opportunities to raise issues and agree on potential solutions, and the partners proactively followed up on the progress through the regular bilateral monitoring exercises. In the field, formal and/or informal exchanges between country offices, such as the joint monitoring visits, allowed the partners to address issues hindering cooperation.

There is also scope to further reinforce mutual cooperation by creating opportunities to discuss more cross-cutting operational issues. Due to several factors and to the nature of the topics/issues discussed, the current dialogue structure at HQ level (i.e. High-level dialogue) did not allow to discuss more operational cross-cutting issues which would apply to all countries in which DG ECHO and UNHCR cooperate (e.g. proposals, reporting requirements, etc.).

Overall, DG ECHO and UNHCR cooperation and information exchange under the partnership contributed to enhancing their respective needs assessments and vulnerability analyses. Although UNHCR actions funded by DG ECHO were based on robust needs assessments carried out through several methodologies and, in some cases, in partnership with other humanitarian actors, discussions held at all levels (i.e. HQ through the High-level dialogue and field through exchanges in the context of reporting exercises) positively influenced needs assessments and/ or vulnerability analyses. Some room for improvement was identified with regard to targeting activities, for which some misalignments were found between the partners. While DG ECHO required its partners to use vulnerability and needs-based targeting criteria, in some cases UNHCR targeted beneficiaries on the basis of status (i.e. refugees and asylum seekers) or nationality instead of vulnerability. Furthermore, more could be done at country level to align targeting strategies, as several differences were found in all regions. Nevertheless, the quality of the DG ECHO and UNHCR's humanitarian response was positively influenced by the funding provided by DG ECHO and by the exchange of information between the partners.

Virtually all DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted agreed that over the evaluation period, both partners were committed to the partnership at all levels, within both organisations. However, views were diverging as to whether the relationship developed under the partnership further increased this commitment, with UNHCR staff perceiving the effects of the relationship overall as more positive to this extent. At strategic level, the partnership underwent some changes that reflected – at least to some extent – a strengthening of the partners' mutual commitment (e.g. creation of specific unit within DG ECHO, establishment by UNHCR of the EU Communication and Visibility Team based at REUA). At operational level, the type of relationship developed under the partnership varied across countries (also depending on individuals) and so did the impact of the partnership on the partners' commitment to it on the ground.

Overall, DG ECHO and UNHCR had a good understanding of their respective mandates and roles and the partnership positively contributed to further enhancing this understanding. Data collected also provided however, some evidence of different understandings/nuances around UNHCR's mandate

with regard to IDPs (in connection to the work of other UN agencies) and in sectors other than protection.

Evidence collected also shows that the DG ECHO-UNHCR partnership had a limited impact on enhanced field and sectoral coordination, which in addition considerably varied across countries. While most UNHCR staff considered that the partnership had at least a moderate impact on field and sectoral coordination, DG ECHO staff consulted was less positive on the impact of the partnership on coordination at country level. Some of the main factors that influenced the partnership's ability to contribute to improved field and sectoral coordination included:

- The level of DG ECHO funding to UNHCR's coordination activities and the extent to which DG ECHO shared information on funding to other humanitarian actors with UNHCR (and other Framework partners);
- UNHCR's coordination role (e.g. lead/ co-lead of the response/cluster) and the quality of UNHCR's coordination activities; and
- The quality of the DG ECHO-UNHCR relationship on the ground.

Evidence collected provided some examples of ways in which the partnership contributed – at least to some extent – to enhanced field and sectoral coordination in some countries. This was primarily done through:

- DG ECHO's advocacy efforts for the establishment/reinforcement of the cluster system
- DG ECHO and UNHCR promotion of the use of multi-sector/multi-agency joint needs assessments.
- The funding provided for the development/reinforcement of information management systems to support humanitarian coordination (e.g. joint/inter-agency needs assessments, border monitoring, protection monitoring etc.).

When it comes to coordination in the context of the Covid-19 response, data collected provided little evidence of the partnership contribution to enhancing field coordination in this context. Only a minority of DG ECHO and UNHCR staff consulted considered that the partnership contributed to some extent to strengthening coordination of humanitarian responses in the context of the Covid-19 response. Moreover, there was no evidence of the impact of the partnership on sectoral coordination at regional and global level.

When it comes to cooperation towards the Nexus, at strategic level, evidence collected shows that the partnership had limited impact on DG ECHO and UNHCR cooperation on this aspect. While the EU-UNHCR High-Level and Strategic Dialogues provided for opportunities to discuss common priorities and objectives and issues related to the Nexus, the type of exchanges and the level of dialogue between the different actors did not directly contribute to fostering a Nexus approach in practice.

At operational level, the extent to which the partnership contributed to the Nexus greatly varied across countries and depending on the humanitarian situation and political context. Where cooperation on the Nexus existed, this was mostly in the context of the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (often thus not involving any peace actors / peace actions). Overall, insufficient communication and dialogue between DG ECHO, UNHCR and other EU services and institutions (e.g. DG INTPA and EU Delegation) was highlighted as a limiting factor for the partnership contribution to the Nexus at operational level. The fact that in some countries different UNHCR field staff were responsible for the relationship with different EU Services also hindered cooperation towards the Nexus.

Some examples of good practices with regard to DG ECHO-UNHCR cooperation towards the Humanitarian-Development Nexus were identified (e.g. in Burundi, Syria and Uganda).



## 8.2 Recommendations

As requested in the ToR, this section presents three key strategic recommendations which have come out of this evaluation. Each recommendation is accompanied by a short background setting out the rationale and a series of suggestions on how to operationalise it.

### 1. DG ECHO should engage with UNHCR to reinforce existing dialogue opportunities to increase mutual learning at strategic level and to reinforce the link between the strategic and field levels

Overall, the evaluation concluded that the strategic partnership approach led to an improvement in the cooperation between DG ECHO and UNHCR. This was primarily achieved through productive discussions conducted during High-level and Strategic dialogue meetings. The partners engaged in consistent and timely dialogue and information sharing, both in formal and informal settings, particularly at strategic level.

Nevertheless, during the evaluation period the partners did not set up a mechanism to identify and act upon lessons learned, and DG ECHO should make sure that the information exchange related to the High-level and Strategic dialogue between the field and HQ is reinforced.

In this context, in order to increase mutual learning at strategic level and to reinforce the link between the strategic and field levels, DG ECHO should:

- Engage with UNHCR to set up an exercise to identify and act upon lessons learned. Lessons learned exercises aim to identify both the positive and negative experiences of the partnership as a whole, particularly to reflect on what could have been done better at different levels (e.g. strategic, policy and operational, and the interface between these levels). A lessons-learned session should ideally be organised for both High-level and Strategic dialogues every two years (separately, due to the difference in participating stakeholders). Identified lessons should be discussed, documented and acted upon by both partners, and ideally embedded in the existing shared monitoring tables. In the case of the Strategic dialogue, DG ECHO (as lead for EU relations with UNHCR) should ensure the smooth collection and dissemination of information related to identified lessons with the other European Commission services involved (e.g. DG ECHO, DG INTPA, DG NEAR) and EEAS/EUDEL, allowing them time to review them and provide feedback.
- Consider developing a way to further collect/ disseminate information with Regional/ Country/ Field offices, to minimise information gaps between the strategic and operational levels. In the case of DG ECHO, while geographical units (including field offices) were regularly consulted on issues and topics (related to the dialogues, further efforts are needed to ensure that the flow of information from the field to HQ (and vice versa) is timely, effective and not depending on the commitment of single DG ECHO Officers (e.g. Heads of Country offices) in cascading the information. This could include for example:
  - Collecting relevant information which would inform the High-level and Strategic dialogue from the Regional/Country/Field offices: DG ECHO could consider introducing a template document which is periodically (e.g. once a year, three months before each dialogue meeting) shared with all officers directly working with UNHCR (at all levels, including Policy and Geographical Units), ensuring that relevant information and feedback is effectively collected. To assess progress at operational level, the template should ideally reflect the action points of the monitoring tables (particularly the points which have a direct connection with operations) and leave space for additional feedback which could trigger further discussions at strategic level. Furthermore, the information collected in each Field/ Country office should ideally be passed to the relevant Regional office to be compiled and sent to Unit D1;
  - Disseminating the results of High-level and Strategic dialogue: DG ECHO should consider either: 1) expanding their distribution lists to Country and Field offices staff directly working with UNHCR (as well as Policy and Geographical Units, if not included in the current list); 2) creating an internal communication mechanism (e.g. webpage, newsletter, etc.) where key results are summarised.

### 2. DG ECHO should engage with UNHCR to develop further opportunities for operational and cross-cutting dialogue

Throughout the evaluation period, the High-level and Strategic dialogue meetings allowed DG ECHO and UNHCR to discuss and address issues at the strategic level, while there were other operational and cross-cutting issues which were not regularly addressed by the partners, either at HQ level or at regional/country level. Consequently, to fill the

current information-exchange gaps, it is recommended that DG ECHO discuss with UNHCR the possibility to establish a shared space for addressing cross-cutting (i.e. applicable to all countries/sectors) and operational (e.g. needs assessments, targeting strategies, etc.) issues outside of the current dialogue opportunities (e.g. in a way similar to the previous Operational dialogue), for example to:

- Develop a better mutual understanding of the **approach to advocacy (operational)**: the evaluation highlighted that, at country level, while the partners generally shared similar advocacy priorities, they were not fully aligned or disagreed on their preferred approach to advocacy in some contexts;
- Discuss improvements in **reporting and proposals (cross-cutting)**: the evaluation found that, depending on the country and context, the alignment between DG ECHO and UNHCR's needs assessments, risk analysis and targeting strategies varied. For example, misalignments regarding targeting strategies were identified in contexts where UNHCR targeted beneficiaries on the basis of status (i.e. refugees and asylum seekers), nationality, or a pre-determined list of vulnerabilities instead of on the basis of risk analysis. Similarly, both partners reported UNHCR's issues to comply with indicators requested by DG ECHO (particularly Key Outcome Indicators);
- Discuss how the partnership can further enhance **field and sectoral coordination (operational)**: the partnership's contribution to improving field coordination and reinforcing sectoral coordination in situations of forced displacement was generally limited and varied significantly across countries (due to several factors - e.g. the level of DG ECHO funding, UNHCR's operational capacity and performance, etc.). Additional dialogue could, for example, help find ways in which DG ECHO can better support UNHCR's sectoral coordination role and contribute to field coordination; and
- Discuss opportunities to further enhance **cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness (cross-cutting)**: the partnership contributed to enhance cost-efficiency (including decreasing management-related costs) to a limited extent, and further efforts should be done to continue exploring opportunities for increasing cost-efficiency and on improving cost-effectiveness and timeliness of humanitarian response.

Due to the nature of the cross-cutting and operational issues identified and given that, as pointed out by stakeholders, the High-level dialogue may not be a suitable platform for discussing such issues (given the high-level participants and its emphasis on strategic matters), it is suggested that DG ECHO discuss with UNHCR the possibility to create this space for dialogue at **regional level**, involve the relevant officers from Policy and Geographical Units, and hold the meetings at least once a year. This approach would allow the partners to discuss issues which can be country/context-specific, and find solutions tailored to the needs and specificities of each region. It is also advised that, periodically (e.g. once a year, after the dialogue) Regional offices report on the result of the dialogue to HQ units responsible for the High-level dialogue, in order to assess the need to scale-up identified issues to the strategic level.

### 3. DG ECHO should advocate for a reinforced and more coherent EU strategic dialogue and cooperation with UNHCR, particularly on the operationalisation of the Nexus

The evaluation indicates that DG ECHO could play a stronger role towards the further enhancement of the partnership between the EU and UNHCR by fostering a more integrated approach towards the operationalisation of the Nexus, with all European Commission services (such as DG ECHO, DG INTPA, DG NEAR, DG HOME) and EEAS/EUDEL working collaboratively to develop and share more coherent messages. The objective of the Triple Nexus is to promote coordination between humanitarian, development and peace actors, leveraging their synergies and complementarities while respecting the autonomy and mandates of each involved party. With the growing prevalence of protracted crises, there is a heightened significance in discussions concerning the practical implementation of the Nexus. A more integrated approach would facilitate discussions and progress towards implementing the Nexus and place greater emphasis on jointly discussing and formulating shared EU strategies and priorities (e.g. pertaining to specific geographical areas and Nexus activities in selected sectors), which would then be the basis of the Strategic dialogue discussion with UNHCR.

The evaluation found differences in how DG ECHO and UNHCR view the work on durable solutions and long-term interventions, and their links with humanitarian aid, in some contexts. While UNHCR works across the whole displacement cycle (from the moment person is displaced until they find durable solutions), DG ECHO focuses on the provision of emergency assistance. This difference was also reflected in funding, as there were some issues with prioritisation in some countries (e.g. due to UNHCR's "longer-term priorities" not aligning with DG ECHO's priorities). In order to fill this gap, as a lead of EU relationships with UNHCR, DG ECHO could liaise with other European Commission services to minimise funding and strategic gaps related to the 'grey zone' between humanitarian aid, development and peace actions.

Therefore, to advocate for a reinforced and more coherent EU dialogue and cooperation with UNHCR, it is recommended that DG ECHO engage with other Commission services (e.g. DG INTPA, DG NEAR, DG HOME) and EEAS/EUDEL to jointly discuss and develop common messages, strategies and priorities. This can be done, for example, through discussing the establishment of a working group which would meet once a year (e.g. two-three months before the EU-UNHCR Strategic dialogue meeting) to:

- Develop a comprehensive EU approach to responding to specific emergencies (e.g. at thematic and/or geographic level), which would encompass both humanitarian and development cycles and address how EU emergency, development and peace activities can interlink, ensuring an adequate transition towards longer-term interventions and building national capacity, enhancing resilience, etc.;
- Further facilitate common understanding and entry points for joint programming/policy development and harmonise/coordinate funding opportunities for UNHCR, particularly "bridging" activities for the Nexus at operational level.

### **GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE EU**

#### ***In person***

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct information centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you at: [https://europa.eu/european-union/contact\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)

#### ***On the phone or by email***

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696, or
- by electronic mail via: [https://europa.eu/european-union/contact\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)

### **FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE EU**

#### ***Online***

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: [https://europa.eu/european-union/index\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en)

#### ***EU publications***

You can download or order free and priced EU publications from EU Bookshop at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publications>. Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see [https://europa.eu/european-union/contact\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)).

## ***The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - ECHO***

### ***ECHO Mission***

The primary role of the Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) of the European Commission is to manage and coordinate the European Union's emergency response to conflicts, natural and man-made disasters. It does so both through the delivery of humanitarian aid and through the coordination and facilitation of in-kind assistance, specialist capacities, expertise and intervention teams using the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)

#### ***Follow us:***



:[https://twitter.com/eu\\_echo](https://twitter.com/eu_echo)



:<https://www.facebook.com/ec.humanitarian.aid>



:[https://www.instagram.com/eu\\_echo/](https://www.instagram.com/eu_echo/)



:<https://www.youtube.com/user/HumanitarianAidECHO>

