

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP)

Ukraine, Western Balkans and Eastern Neighbourhood

AMOUNT: EUR 188 500 000

The full implementation of this version of the HIP is conditional upon the approval of the transfer by the Budgetary Authorities.

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2024/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes¹ is to serve as a communication tool from DG ECHO² to its partners and assist them in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

0. MAJOR CHANGES SINCE PREVIOUS VERSION OF THE HIP

Second Modification – September 2024

Ukraine

The continued strikes on Ukraine's civilian infrastructure and energy facilities across the country are further disrupting vital services and are placing the most vulnerable population under increasing strain. Hostilities are intensifying especially in the eastern part of the country, leading to forced displacement and mandatory evacuations. This is particularly concerning in view of the upcoming winter season, when energy shortages are expected to leave millions of Ukrainians without access to basic services including heating and running water, forcing people to rely heavily on humanitarian aid.

An additional **EUR 55 million** will bolster the winterisation response in the country, including through cash and in-kind assistance to address the most immediate needs of the population during the winter season. The additional funding will also strengthen partners' emergency response capacity in light of the intensification of hostilities and increased displacement.

Moldova

Substantial needs persist among the refugee population in Moldova despite ongoing humanitarian efforts. Harsh weather conditions in the upcoming winter are expected to increase the vulnerabilities of both, refugees and Moldovan host communities, due to increased living costs, in particular additional heating expenses. The most vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and single-headed households, especially in underserved areas and in the Transnistrian region, will be most affected. Refugees may also face substantial barriers in accessing government-led social assistance programs for the winter. Moreover, there is an urgent need to strengthen contingency planning and preparedness activities in the country,

¹ Technical annex and thematic policies annex

² Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

in view of the planned end of Russia’s gas transit accord with Ukraine in December 2024 as well as potential increased displacement from Ukraine in the next months.

An additional **EUR 5 million** will help support the most vulnerable refugees and host communities who are unable to meet their winterisation needs by filling existing gaps in the government-led response.

First Modification – July 2024

Ukraine

Continued attacks on critical infrastructure across Ukraine over the past months have led to substantial damage to the energy systems and loss in power production capacity, further intensifying the humanitarian needs in the country. Several hundred thousand people face a disruption of vital services, such as the provision of electricity, heating, and drinking water, and severed access to health and education.

An additional amount of **EUR 35 million** will contribute to addressing the acute humanitarian needs of vulnerable people in critical areas, with a particular emphasis on preparing the war-affected population for the upcoming winter.

Moldova

The number of refugees from Ukraine residing in Moldova has continued to rise slowly but steadily in the past months. Currently, over 120 000 individual Ukrainian refugees and around 10 000 Third-Country Nationals reside in the country, putting unprecedented strain on local services and the country's social assistance system. Increased tensions between refugees and host communities are observed, and refugees continue to face protection challenges and restrictions regarding access to basic services.

An additional amount of **EUR 5 million** will contribute to addressing the additional needs of the most vulnerable refugees, in particular in the fields of protection and basic needs, and to enhancing the preparedness for additional refugee flows.

1. CONTEXT

The HIP for Ukraine, Western Balkans and Eastern Neighbourhood covers the following countries:

- i. Ukraine
- ii. Republic of Moldova
- iii. Other countries of the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia (South Caucasus), Belarus.
- iv. The Western Balkans

1.1 Ukraine

DG ECHO partners’ needs assessment for 2023 identified extreme humanitarian needs in Ukraine³. The vulnerability of the population affected by the war is assessed to be very high. Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine is having a devastating impact on millions of

³ REACH_UKR2206B_HSM_SituationOverview_Round-10_May-2023.pdf (impact-initiatives.org)

Ukrainians since 24 February 2022. Ukraine's INFORM severity index ranks it at 4.3/5 with an increasing trend as of June 2023, and the Human Development Index at 0.773. The war continues to result in civilian deaths and suffering, unprecedented humanitarian needs, with recurrent and flagrant violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), massive displacement, large-scale destruction of social and critical infrastructure, significant socio-economic decline.

As of September 2023, over 3.6 million people remained internally displaced and over 4.5 million people returned to often damaged or destroyed areas of origin⁴. Out of the total displaced households, 50% have at least one vulnerable member (people with disabilities or chronically ill). Over 6.2 million Ukrainians remained abroad, most of them in Europe where 5.8 million Ukrainian refugees reside. The reintegration of returnees remains challenging because of a lack of financial resources, inappropriate housing conditions, severe socio-economic decline, limited access to social protection services, and a concerning security situation.

Despite the continued dire humanitarian needs, the overall humanitarian funding is considerably lower than in 2022 with the Humanitarian Response Plan only funded at 51.5% as of 3 October 2023.⁵ Although the whole of Ukraine is critically affected by the war, the areas closer to the front and border lines with the Russian Federation and areas under Russia's military control remain the most affected due to the security situation. They have the highest level of humanitarian, while western and central areas of Ukraine continue to host large numbers of displaced people. Across the frontlines, humanitarian access by international organisations to Russian-occupied areas remains severely constrained.

Ukraine is further prone to natural hazards, as well as to human-made disasters with grave environmental consequences, as recently demonstrated by the Nova Kakhovka dam explosion, or threats around the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. Additional risks also come from the accumulation of debris from shelling, water contamination, and ever-increasing density of land mines and unexploded ordnances.

1.2 Republic of Moldova (hereinafter Moldova)

DG ECHO partners' needs assessment for 2023 identified moderate humanitarian needs in Moldova. The vulnerability of the population affected by the crisis is assessed to be overall low⁶. However, Moldova remains highly impacted by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Around 110 000 refugees (of whom 68% are women, 30% children, and 19% elderly) are currently living in the country; roughly 95% are hosted by local families and/or renting private accommodations, while the rest is residing in Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs).

The Temporary Protection (TP) Directive, modelled on the EU example and launched in March 2023, is meant to provide refugees with a more stable legal status in the country for a year and allow them to access important rights and services. As of August 2023, only 17 000 Ukrainian refugees have pre-registered. Third-country nationals (TCN) are not eligible to be registered under the TP. The refugees residing in the Transnistria region (around 8000-10 000 individuals) struggle to provide the required documentation in order to obtain registration.

⁴ <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/ukraine-general-population-survey-round-14-snapshot-report-population-figures-and>

⁵ <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/234/summary/2023>

⁶ INFORM Report 2023

The dire economic situation and the security outlook (cyber-attacks, political tensions, massive disinformation campaigns on top of pre-existing tensions around the Transnistria region) put the country at serious risk of further economic and societal shocks. Furthermore, growing social tensions between vulnerable Moldovans and Ukrainian refugees, due to the perception of uneven access to financial assistance, are reported.

Finally, Moldova is vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards like droughts, hail, floods, and severe storms. These hazards can have a severe impact on agricultural production, on which 60% of the population is highly dependent, leading to annual losses of up to 3% of the national GDP.

	Ukraine	Moldova
INFORM Risk Index (0-10)⁷	5.1/10	3.4/10
Hazard and Exposure	5.4/10	2.3/10
Vulnerability	5.4/10	3.7/10
Lack of Coping Capacity	4.5/10	4.5/10
INFORM Severity Index (0-5)⁸	4.3/5	1.9/5
Impact of the crisis	4.6/5	1.5/5
Condition of people affected	5.0/5	2.4/5
Complexity of the crisis	3.1/5	1.4/5
Number of People in Need	17 600 000	380 000
Human Development Index (0-1)	0.773	0.767
Total Population⁹	43 000 000	2 620 000

1.3 Other countries/regions

DG ECHO's needs assessment for 2023 identified humanitarian needs in the **South Caucasus region**. The vulnerability of the population affected by the Russian aggression against Ukraine in Georgia as well as the displaced Karabakh Armenians in Armenia is assessed to be very high.

Tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan in and around Nagorno-Karabakh have continued to be high throughout 2022 and 2023. As of September 2023, the situation has drastically deteriorated when Azerbaijan conducted a military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh, followed by a ceasefire. As a direct consequence, thousands of ethnic Armenian residents of the region fled to Armenia. Additional and urgent EU support will be required in 2024, primarily to address the humanitarian needs of the conflict-affected populations displaced to Armenia. EU funding will ensure they receive access to basic needs, health care, shelter, food, and livelihoods assistance.

Georgia is prone to natural disasters and hosts around 26 000 Ukrainian refugees that have arrived and remained in Georgia since the beginning of Russia's war of aggression against

⁷ INFORM Risk is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters <https://drmhc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk>

⁸ The INFORM Severity Index is a way to objectively measure and compare the severity of humanitarian crises and disasters globally. <https://drmhc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Severity>

⁹ World Bank data, year 2022: <https://data.worldbank.org/?locations=UA-MD>

Ukraine.¹⁰ As the local capacities are close to exhaustion, the humanitarian needs of this refugee population, who doesn't have official registration in the country, may require support of DG ECHO pending further assessment.

As for the region of the **Western Balkans**, migration and risks and consequences of natural hazards should be carefully monitored. Funding of life-saving activities will be considered, based on a sound, coordinated needs assessment by the relevant EU services.

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

2.1. People in need of humanitarian assistance

	Ukraine	Moldova	Armenia/Azerbaijan
Category of beneficiary (such as IDPs, refugees, food insecure people etc.)	Conflict affected population: 17.6 million people	According to RRRP 2023: Refugees: 200 000 Host communities: 180 000 110 000 people (average number of refugees staying in the country)	Conflict affected population: 136 000 people Host communities: 95 000

2.1.1 Ukraine

The estimated total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance is 17.6 million across Ukraine, according to the UN 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)¹¹ for Ukraine, which is currently under revision. The HRP seeks to address the needs of 11.1 million of war-affected vulnerable people¹². People in need of humanitarian assistance are spread across different geographical areas, by order of vulnerabilities: i). Ukrainians residing in Russian occupied territories, where access remain severely limited; ii). War-affected population in areas of active hostilities located close to the front lines and international border with Russian Federation; iii.) Internally displaced, returnees, and people residing mostly in areas retaken by Ukraine; iv). IDPs living in areas far from the frontline (central, northern and western Ukraine); v.) Ukrainian refugees in third countries.

This HIP does not cover interventions and assistance to Ukrainian refugees present in EU Member States, as such assistance does not fall under DG ECHO mandate.

2.1.2 Republic of Moldova

The Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) for 2023 published by UNHCR estimated a total of 380 000 people in need in Moldova, including 200 000 refugees and 180 000 members of the host communities¹³. The RRRP is currently being revised for 2024.

¹⁰ UNHCR Georgia mid-year protection monitoring report dated July 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/georgia/unhcr-georgia-mid-year-protection-monitoring-report>

¹¹ <https://www.unocha.org/ukraine>

¹² 40% women, 33% men, 27% children; 22% older people and 15% people with disabilities, of which 3.8 million IDPs, 2.5 million returnees and 4.8 million people affected by war who stayed in their area of origin.

¹³ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/276?sv=54&geo=10784&secret=unhcrrestricted>

The average number of refugees residing in Moldova has stabilised at around 110 000 – provided there are no massive new influxes from Ukraine. Out of these, around 19 700 (as of end of October 2023) have pre-registered for Temporary Protection (TP); eventually, these beneficiaries should be integrated into the Social Services system of the government.

Therefore, a progressive shift to a more targeted assistance focusing on the most vulnerable is expected during 2024. Humanitarian assistance should then cater to the residual caseload, including, among others, vulnerable groups, beneficiaries that are unable to obtain documents for TP registration, and third-country nationals.

2.1.3 Armenia/Azerbaijan

The Armenia Refugee Response Plan for 2023-2024 estimated a total of 231 000 people in need in Armenia. Following the recent escalation, the Government of the Republic of Armenia reported that between 24 September and 4 October 2023, 100 632 displaced people arrived in the country. This constitutes almost 3 per cent of the entire Armenian population, and adds to the 36 000 refugees, asylum-seekers, displaced and stateless people of all nationalities who were already present in the country.

According to OCHA¹⁴, between 100 and 1000 people in need remain in the Karabakh region.

2.2. Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

2.2.1. Ukraine

Food security/basic needs: The most urgent and critical needs are in locations with high levels of insecurity, with disrupted food supply and retail capacities and limited or sporadic humanitarian access. According to OCHA, more than 6 million people in 2022 and 2.5 million people as of August 2023 have been supported by multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA)¹⁵, which remains the most appropriate modality to address basic needs. A significant number of people will continue to need this assistance in 2024. The caseload might be diminishing in view of transition process towards a Ukrainian shock responsive social protection (SRSP) system, in line with the ongoing multi-stakeholder ‘Perekhid Initiative’, and – possibly - better access to livelihoods opportunities. The winter period adds significant additional challenges, and therefore humanitarian assistance should remain flexible and responsive to seasonal changes.

Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFIs): Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine has brought significant damage to residential buildings and critical public infrastructure, causing displacement, or otherwise impacting at least 8.3 million people across Ukraine, who need dignified accommodation and/or temporary shelters. The most vulnerable displaced people are seeking refuge in collective shelters, putting pressure on the capacities of local communities and on the environment. As the war continues in Ukraine, new complex displacement may yet occur. The return to liberated areas is hampered by the large-scale destruction of infrastructure and private housing. Winterisation needs are very high because of massive attacks by Russia on electricity, power generation and heating infrastructure throughout Ukraine, with extreme needs in frontline areas. At least 1.7 million people need emergency winterisation assistance.

¹⁴ [UN humanitarian team wraps up assessment mission to Armenia, Azerbaijan | OCHA \(unocha.org\)](#)

¹⁵ <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ukraine/?emulatemode=1>

This figure could increase in 2024 as new attacks can cause significant damage of energy infrastructure, and the financial resources of IDPs at collective centres and hosting communities are depleted.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH): Due to the attacks on water and wastewater system infrastructure and power outages, 11 million people across Ukraine are in need of water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance¹⁶. These include IDPs in collective centres and host communities, in addition to communities affected by hostilities-related damages to systems and limitations in water treatment facilities. The figure of people in need varies as the war continues and further damages on WASH infrastructure are likely. There is a need to foster complementarities and promote linkages with large-scale funding for water infrastructure at local level, and, therefore, cover urgent and immediate needs to support the water and sanitation infrastructure. Water trucking is needed in some of the urban and rural communities affected by the Kakhovka Dam destruction, in the absence of reliable water supply.

Protection: Overall, it is estimated that 14.7 million people will need protection assistance in 2024, of which 3.4 million children¹⁷. Exposure to shelling and armed violence, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)¹⁸, legal needs related to loss of documents, grave violations against children, restriction or total lack of freedom of movement, psychological distress and trauma, are reported among the most life-threatening protection risks. Moreover, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has further exacerbated the vulnerabilities of specific groups of people. The lack of legal documents as well as the need for legal aid to ensure access to newly established Governmental support schemes (such as the eRecovery, IDP and affected population allowances) remain very high, often resulting in barriers to exercise the full basic rights, especially for vulnerable people and/or minorities.

Mine Action: While dedicated survey activities are ongoing to better define the actual extent, the HRP estimates that more than 25% of Ukraine's territory are contaminated by Unexploded Ordnances (UXO) and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)¹⁹. The presence of landmines and cluster munitions continues to pose a threat for the civilian population, several hundred incidents related to ERW contamination are reported on a yearly basis. Contamination represents a multidimensional barrier to ERW, impacts humanitarian access, presents obstacles for safe returns and resumption of basic services, socio-economic and livelihoods activities, since it affects urban and rural settlements alike. It is highest in areas that have been under occupation or have experienced active hostilities: Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Mykolaiv particularly. Explosive ordnances are a risk to residents and IDPs, as well as to humanitarian actors, which may be undertaking assessments or providing humanitarian assistance in areas with contamination.

Health, including Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS): The health sector is continuously stretched due to destruction of health infrastructure and disruption of the medical supply chain in health facilities, hampering essential and emergency health care services. About 14.6 million people are in need of healthcare services²⁰. Needs include primary healthcare (specifically in rural areas), emergency health and trauma care for people with disabilities, pharmaceutical supply chain and MHPSS (including clinical and mental health services, where main needs are in primary health care centres and specialised institutions).

¹⁶ [Humanitarian Response Plan 2023](#)

¹⁷ [idem](#)

¹⁸ including Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)

¹⁹ [Humanitarian Response Plan 2023](#)

²⁰ Humanitarian Response Plan 2023

Education in Emergencies: 5.3 million children and teachers are in need of educational assistance²¹ and this figure is likely to remain the same in 2024. The ability to learn is severely affected by acute and ongoing exposure to conflict-related trauma and psychological stress. School closures, with damage to education facilities, and access challenges to distance learning, have exacerbated learning gaps.

Security: Due to the unstable security situation in Ukraine, there is a need for daily support to humanitarian partners operating in Ukraine. This support may be delivered through collective systems of security advisories and by providing essential security reporting, coordination, crisis assistance, training, and liaison services.

Logistics: Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has led to the closure of all airports. Seaports were used only marginally under the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which were regularly constrained. As a result, there is a significant pressure on land corridors and international borders in the west of Ukraine to facilitate most of the country's imports and exports. The last mile delivery of humanitarian assistance in areas close to the front line is further complicated by a high level of insecurity and related risks.

2.2.2 Moldova

While the Regional Refugee Response Plan 2024 is being drafted, with the multi-sectorial needs assessment planned over the summer 2023, the following key sectors of assistance can already be identified:

Basic needs assistance: Many Ukrainian refugees are currently residing in Moldova without an income²². People mainly depend on their savings and on humanitarian support to meet their most basic needs.

Protection: Most of the displaced people are living within local communities, either in rented accommodations or with host families. The remaining, often the most vulnerable (including elderly, women, and children), live in Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs). In 2023, the Government of Moldova has launched several processes aimed at regularising the status of refugees in the country, including through the Temporary Protection (TP) directive and the gradual closure of the RACs, with subsequent relocation of refugees. Therefore, the need for legal aid and accompaniment of vulnerable individuals is likely to increase. Protection monitoring will also be pivotal to a more in-depth analysis of movements (both in and out of Moldova), as well as intentions resulting from a changed legal framework in Moldova and the developing situation in Ukraine. Finally, there are reports of growing tensions between refugees from Ukraine and vulnerable local Moldovans due to perceived unequal access to assistance. Therefore, it will be crucial to ensure that humanitarian aid does not further erode social cohesion in the country.

Shelter: Access to mid-term accommodation solutions remains difficult for refugees that struggle to find income-generating activities in Moldova and/or have their productive household members still in Ukraine. Moreover, the hosting capacities of the RACs are limited, and decreasing due to the planned gradual closure of accredited RACs. Without host families, the Government of Moldova would not have been able to manage a large influx of refugees and the subsequent protracted caseload. Therefore, cash assistance for host families (be it cash

²¹ idem

²² According to Employment Agency figures, only 2,000 refugees are employed, while 10,000 are estimated to be working but not declared.

for rent or support for winterisation) remains crucial. Cash for shelter will also be crucial in supporting the relocation of refugees from the RACs to a different housing modality.

Healthcare: The Government of Moldova had originally granted refugees access to free health services; this puts a strain on local financial and human resource capacities. This exemption was lifted with the implementation of the TP directive. Currently, there is a need to support and strengthen the local healthcare system to provide services (including sexual and reproductive health and mental health services, where needed) to the additional refugee caseload. This includes capacity-building, provision of medical supplies and equipment, and access to emergency medical care for refugees under the national health insurance system.

Education in Emergencies: The Government of Moldova has allowed refugee children to enrol in the Moldovan formal education system. Despite the language barrier, some of the refugee children are taking advantage of this opportunity, while others will continue receiving their instructions from the Ukrainian formal education system, through distance learning. Support to access formal education, with a thorough analysis of conflict sensitivity and feasibility, might be needed.

2.2.3 Armenia/Azerbaijan

The following needs and vulnerabilities of displaced people and host communities can be identified in Armenia:

Protection: displaced people who have arrived in Armenia have acute protection and assistance needs due to their sudden displacement and previous prolonged isolation. This has had a profound impact not only on their ability to cope financially, but also emotionally. With the upcoming winter, including possibly harsh weather conditions towards the end of 2023 and at the beginning of 2024, access to winter-specific assistance is particularly challenging for vulnerable groups, such as older persons, and persons with disabilities.

Shelter: during government registration, initial assessments show that most displaced people are concerned about access to safe and affordable housing, as well as their ability to pay rent and utility costs as a result of increased prices in Armenia. While government authorities have swiftly responded by providing shelter and housing in different regions, the number of displaced people is expected to outnumber the available spaces in affordable social housing. There is an urgent need to repair and rehabilitate existing social housing and collective shelters, and to identify additional, sustainable and affordable housing options. In addition, it is important to provide socio-economic inclusion prospects in close cooperation with the municipalities. Host community members who have welcomed the displaced people into their homes also need urgent support.

Basic needs assistance: displaced people are at risk of multidimensional poverty due to the many needs they are facing, especially those at heightened risk, including single women, female-headed households, children (including unaccompanied and separated children), persons with chronic health conditions as well as persons living with disabilities and HIV, LGBTIQ+, and older persons. Thus, early identification of the most vulnerable and ensuring proper case management and support for inclusion in national systems from the onset is essential to restore access to basic services. They also require immediate livelihood recovery and access to tools to support them towards self-reliance, access to decent work and enhanced economic security.

Health: displaced people in general have access to the national health care system in Armenia. However, there is a need to bolster the health system to manage the sudden increase of health service recipients, including patients with specific needs and chronic conditions. Primary and secondary healthcare facilities, especially in rural areas are facing challenges to supply the necessary care, workforce, and medicines and provide specialized services. The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) needs of the displaced people are acute. Access to quality maternal and child healthcare is of particular importance, including immunization of children.

While no comprehensive needs assessments are available for Nagorno Karabakh, the most acute humanitarian needs at the time of writing can be identified as i) protection and support of the population remaining in the region; ii) physical search for people who were left behind, among others vulnerable groups, including the elderly, sick and disabled; and iii) restoring family links.

3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

3.1. National / local response and involvement

3.1.1 Ukraine

Most of the response has been provided by the central, regional and local authorities, local communities, local civil society organisations, charities and private businesses, sometimes in partnership or funded by international actors. Ukrainian authorities are demonstrating strong leadership in assistance to victims of war through Government-funded programmes and schemes for IDPs and affected population (eDopomoga, eRecovery etc).

The number of humanitarian operators has grown exponentially in Ukraine since the onset of the war, with about 660 international and local organisations listed in the HRP. Additional local civil society groups, community-based organisations and self-organised groups of volunteers are playing a crucial role in delivering aid to affected populations across Ukraine. In contrast, only limited information is available about people in Russian-occupied areas.

3.1.2 Moldova

The overall responsibility of the refugee presence in the country is under the Inter-Ministerial Commission led by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, while the service provision is under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The ongoing Social Protection reform (RESTART) supposed to be rolled out as of January 2024, is led by the Ministry for Labour and Social Protection with support from the UN Resident Coordinator Office and consultants from UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, and FCDO²³. Among others, it will centralise the delivery of services through the creation of nine territorial administration units. Strengthening the capacity of local actors will be key, in order to support the rich network of civil society organizations (CSOs) and local NGOs in the country, which have been at the forefront of the response from the very onset of the emergency.

With the reform, the TP-registered refugees should also be included under the government-led assistance and their caseload fully absorbed. However, there is no clear roadmap of how this will be achieved and/or coordinated. As there has been no significant increase in new arrivals

²³ UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

from Ukraine, the relatively stable number of refugees on the Moldovan territory should allow for an inclusive absorption into the governmental system.

The government has launched a platform (aid.md) as a reference for partners and donors in the context of the transition; UNHCR (in charge of the coordination around the refugee response) is also setting up the RAIS (Refugee Assistance Information System) to support the coordination of cash-based humanitarian assistance. The RAIS is expected to ultimately feed into the aid.md platform.

3.1.3 Armenia/Azerbaijan

The Armenian Government is leading the response to ensure protection and life-saving needs of the displaced people, including the medium and longer-term planning and response. A joint Government-UNHCR coordination mechanism, the Refugee Coordination Forum, is being established to support the government in coordinating the response.

Lack of humanitarian access is the main obstacle to a national and local humanitarian response in Nagorno Karabakh.

3.2. International Humanitarian Response

3.2.1 Ukraine

The HRP 2023, which targets 11.1 million people, requests USD 3.9 billion. As of 3 October 2023, the HRP funding stands at 51.5% Overall, the level of international humanitarian assistance is expected to drop significantly in 2024. Besides humanitarian funding, recovery and reconstruction funding are expected from development donors in 2024, including the European Commission's Ukraine Facility, which is planned to be adopted by the EU by the end of 2023 and foresees around USD 50 billion for 2024-2027. Linkages and complementarities between these two funding streams need to be identified and appropriate progressive transition (from humanitarian to rehabilitation, recovery, and development) needs to be pursued.

The overall humanitarian contribution from Team Europe (European Commission and its Member States) amounts to over EUR 2.7 billion since the beginning of the war in February 2022. Apart from the EU, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and Norway are some of the main humanitarian donors to Ukraine.

3.2.2 Moldova

The RRRP for 2023, currently being revised by the UN, identified an estimated 380 000 people in need, out of which 200 000 refugees and 180 000 among host communities. The Plan targeted 270 339 beneficiaries and required almost USD 427 million for a concerted assistance provided by 47 international organizations and 26 local responders²⁴.

The main humanitarian donors in Moldova, beyond the European Union, are Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The general trends show decreasing levels of humanitarian funding; meanwhile, most of the development actors prioritise energy, governance, infrastructure, and security. Humanitarian donors will need to focus their limited resources and keep on catering to humanitarian needs, while advocating vis-a-vis development

²⁴ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/276?sv=54&geo=10784&secret=unhcrestricted>

actors to highlight gaps and priorities in the context of the transition between humanitarian and development assistance.

3.2.3 Armenia/Azerbaijan

The Armenia Refugee Response Plan (RRP) (October 2023 – March 2024) identified an estimated 231 000 people in need, out of which 136 000 displaced and 95 000 in host communities. The plan requested USD 97 million for a concerted assistance provided by 60 RRP partners. Recognising the Government has the primary responsibility to protect the people in need, UNHCR, with the support of the Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, will help the government to coordinate the response, guided by the Refugee Coordination Model. This should be done in a complementary and cohesive manner, ensuring that multisectoral activities are impactful, address people's needs, and are in line with government priorities.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) remains the only humanitarian organisation operating in Nagorno-Karabakh.

3.3. Operational constraints in terms of:

3.3.1 Ukraine

1) access/humanitarian space:

Access to the majority of beneficiaries is mostly free and unrestricted. Because of active hostilities and a high level of insecurity, limitations and restrictions are in place in areas close to the front lines, also due to access control by the Ukrainian army. The occupied territories of Ukraine remain, with few exceptions, largely inaccessible since the Russian occupying forces and de-facto authorities do not grant free and unhindered humanitarian access.

2) partners (presence, capacity), including absorption capacity on the ground:

International organisations and NGOs have adequate presence on the ground including in areas close to the frontlines, except in the Russian-occupied areas. Local implementing partners should be actively reached out to and supported as they usually do last-mile delivery, reaching the most vulnerable. International actors should mitigate security risks to the extent possible for local partners by for example looking at cost-sharing models and provide training on basic principles of accountability.

3) other:

The EU is supporting common logistics services, which are used by humanitarian partners in Ukraine. If demand for such services persists, continuation of funding for such services will be considered. Common procurement and supply chain platforms might be considered too, shall they have positive impact on efficiency of humanitarian assistance delivery.

3.3.2 Moldova

1) access/humanitarian space:

Moldova offers an overall conducive environment to humanitarian assistance, where physical and administrative access are not at stake. However, in the Transnistria region, only a handful of humanitarian partners have established presence.

2) partners (presence, capacity), including absorption capacity on the ground:

UN agencies, as well as international and national NGOs have adequate presence on the ground. The vast network of local first responders (CSOs and NNGOs), who significantly improved their emergency management capacity over the last year, will need stable and continued access to predictable funding despite the downward trend in humanitarian funding.

3.3.3 Armenia/Azerbaijan

1) access/humanitarian space:

Armenia offers an overall conducive environment to humanitarian assistance, where physical and administrative access are not at stake. The ICRC is still the only partner authorised by the Azerbaijan government to operate inside the Karabakh region.

2) partners (presence, capacity), including absorption capacity on the ground:

In Armenia humanitarian partners were able to quickly scale up their capacity on the ground. The RRP counts on 60 partners, out of which 11 are UN agencies, 6 are international NGOs, 41 are national NGOs and 2 are organisations led by the displaced people.

ICRC is the only humanitarian organisation present inside Nagorno-Karabakh.

4. HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

4.1 Ukraine

As Russia's war on Ukraine continues, humanitarian assistance will still be necessary in Ukraine in 2024 and beyond. Given the funding constraints, DG ECHO will need to focus its assistance in Ukraine on the most vulnerable beneficiaries and hard-to-reach areas. At the same time, there is a need for early recovery and development support, and for peace building efforts. DG ECHO will continue to fund more sustainable interventions that should ideally lead to a transition of a number of activities to other EU instruments.

All donors working in Ukraine are committed to supporting Ukraine in further recovery and reconstruction of the country. Nevertheless, international development donors will focus on Government-controlled areas, where conditions are conducive for recovery programming, also considering durable solutions for return and reintegration. Areas closer to frontlines remain the ones with the most acute humanitarian needs. In these places and situations, DG ECHO and other humanitarian donors can maximise their added value.

Humanitarian actors need to work closely with development and peace actors on a transition from blanket targeting to targeted humanitarian assistance to address the needs the most

vulnerable. DG ECHO has been advocating in multiple donor platforms for sustained funding, as reduced humanitarian funding will not be enough to cover all needs.

Coordination is necessary also on environmental issues and green reconstruction efforts, ensuring that the humanitarian response is aligned with those priorities.

4.2 Moldova

Humanitarian assistance should continue to be provided in the country as long as needed, considering the developments and the instability around Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. A protection lens should remain for as long as the refugee crisis endures, and throughout the ongoing transition phase.

In the context of the reform, humanitarian actors must preserve their mandate in order to cater to the most vulnerable caseload that will not be economically integrated and/or absorbed by the national social protection schemes (e.g.: vulnerable minorities, refugees that are not eligible for TP).

Meanwhile, humanitarian donors should advocate vis-à-vis development actors to highlight gaps and priorities for the transition between humanitarian and development assistance (notably in sectors such as multipurpose cash/social assistance, education, and health). For each sector, DG ECHO and humanitarian actors should keep providing targeted assistance to the most vulnerable. Additionally, an exact costing exercise should be carried out for each sector to estimate how much service delivery would cost for the expected caseload and whether the government can fully absorb it, or whether additional development assistance should be mobilised. Cooperation with development donors (in particular EU Member States) is therefore crucial in order to identify as early as possible a robust coordination mechanism and potential areas of transition and areas of co-existence.

4.3 Armenia/Azerbaijan

The first phase of the emergency (exodus/transit) has ended as of 30 September 2023. The second phase of the emergency response should use an area-based approach focusing on clusters of municipalities with high presence of displaced people and include local actors. Social cohesion and inclusion of host communities will be paramount. The third phase (1 to 3 years) will be about recovery and reintegration of the displaced people into Armenian society with the support of development actors.

Cooperation with DG NEAR and EUDEL is key to set up a robust coordination mechanism and identify potential areas of transition from the onset. The transition from the immediate humanitarian response to longer-term development initiatives must be government-led and will require coordinated efforts by both humanitarian and development actors. Every effort must be made to limit the reliance on humanitarian assistance and progressively include displaced people in national development plans and programmes and strengthen national systems.

Humanitarian assistance should continue to be provided in as long as needed in the Karabakh region. Humanitarian, development, and peace actors should continue regular exchanges on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and advocate for a resolution of the conflict, as well as rights to return for the people who wish to go back to Karabakh and unhindered humanitarian access.

5. ENVISAGED DG ECHO RESPONSE STRATEGY AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF HUMANITARIAN AID INTERVENTIONS

5.1. Envisaged DG ECHO response

General considerations for all interventions: The humanitarian response shall be compliant with EU thematic policies and guidelines that are described in detail in the HIP Policy Annex.

5.1.1 Priorities

5.1.1.1 Ukraine

While recognising the vast scope of needs throughout the country, and considering budgetary constraints, DG ECHO's intervention will continue to target conflict-affected people, focusing on the most vulnerable individuals and groups. DG ECHO promotes the mainstreaming of a preparedness and risk-informed approach in all its response operations.

In terms of geographical targeting, partners will be required to address the most critical humanitarian needs, particularly in areas close to the frontline; in newly liberated and retaken areas in northern, eastern and southern parts of Ukraine; in areas hosting large numbers of IDPs, experiencing large influxes of returnees or receiving sudden influxes of new IDPs; and in the Russian-occupied territories, security conditions allowing and provided that minimum accountability and monitoring can be maintained. Fair and equitable partnership with local organisations should be actively sought by international actors.

DG ECHO will prioritise immediate multi-sector emergency assistance as follows:

Shelter/NFI/winterisation: DG ECHO will support distribution of shelter emergency kits, provision of shelter-related non-food items (NFIs), rehabilitation and basic refurbishment of private housing and critical infrastructure, including domestic WASH facilities, and rehabilitation of collective centres for IDPs. Winterisation support, including assistance for ensuring thermal comfort at the household/individual level of affected population, is also envisaged, and may include assistance in solid fuel, heating appliances, insulation of housing, equipping emergency heating points and utilities. The preferred modality of assistance will be cash depending on the access to local markets and labour. The delivery of in-kind assistance might be considered as well, building on last year's delivery of winterisation aid. If distributed in-kind, depending on the availability, partners should choose more environmentally friendly solid fuels. Partners are also expected to ensure and promote synergies of shelter interventions with existing Government compensation schemes for damaged and destroyed property.

Food security/basic needs: DG ECHO will support distribution of food and access to basic needs for the most vulnerable, depending on access to local markets, using the most suitable intervention modalities (e.g., multi-purpose cash transfers, voucher, in-kind). The provision of in-kind assistance should remain the exception. Emergency livelihoods assistance will be considered as well.

WASH: DG ECHO will support emergency repairs and the provision of critical materials; equipment and consumables for the operation of existing water and sanitation infrastructure, including water supply and sewerage; wastewater services, as well as machinery for maintenance of the systems. Exceptionally, it will support water trucking or the provision of

bottled water and hygiene kits when there is no alternative. Partners will be required to identify complementarities with large-scale support schemes to water supply companies, and existing urgent gaps which will need to be covered to ensure proper functioning of critical WASH infrastructure.

Protection: DG ECHO will prioritise integrated protection interventions focused on the systematic monitoring of protection risks, child protection, the identification of and timely assistance to victims of violence and extremely vulnerable individuals and families, including through psychosocial support, case management, referrals and accompaniment, provision of information to affected communities, provision of legal aid.

Mine action: DG ECHO will support notably victim assistance, with strong protection linkages, explosive ordnance risk education and humanitarian demining, including with a view to supporting the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

Health: support will include the provision of emergency and primary health services, mainly in rural areas closer to the frontline mobile clinics, to reach people deprived of health care services, trauma kits and assistance in trauma recovery, pathway and rehabilitation of (prosthesis/orthosis) and service provision for war-wounded people but also for people with disabilities; emergency referral systems, medicine and medical supplies, sexual and reproductive health care, and comprehensive care for victims of SGBV. Special attention will be given to MHPSS interventions.

Education in Emergencies: DG ECHO will support access to face-to-face education via light rehabilitation and establishing of temporary learning spaces in the proximity of bomb shelters; provision of materials/supplies to students, teachers; psycho-social support and life-saving messages (mine risk education) to children and school staff. Support to distance learning should be well-justified. Targeting should be done in a coordinated manner and aligned, to the best possible extent with Ministry of Education priorities while linkages with child protection will be favoured.

Preparedness: To complement its mainstreaming efforts, DG ECHO also supports integrated preparedness actions as early response to a hazard and/or threat (e.g. establishment of early warning systems, development of contingency plans and Standard Operating Procedures, emergency prepositioning of stock).

Coordination as well as advocacy efforts, should be strengthened to streamline and safeguard the delivery of assistance by humanitarian community.

5.1.1.2 Moldova

DG ECHO's overarching priority will be the provision of targeted humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable while accompanying the Social Protection transition in the country.

Focus will be on those sectors where DG ECHO has a clear added value/role to play, notably on multipurpose cash assistance for basic needs, food, protection, and health. Education in Emergencies will be considered as well; protection elements must be mainstreamed in every action, regardless the sector of intervention. DG ECHO promotes the mainstreaming of a preparedness and risk-informed approach in all its response operations.

Basic needs: considering that Moldova has a functioning economy, and most of the displaced people are settled in urban and semi-urban areas, DG ECHO will prioritise cash assistance as

the best modality to address access to basic needs (including winterization support) and basic services.

Protection: in light of the recent developments in the country (TP directive and gradual closure of RACs), DG ECHO will support integrated protection actions that include protection monitoring, with a specific focus on the principle of *non-refoulement*, and the identification of and assistance to those who will not/cannot be absorbed by the national system, including those living in Transnistria, as well as provision of legal aid.

Health: DG ECHO will support the provision of health services (including emergency medical care, sexual and reproductive health, and mental health services) to the refugee caseload. Additionally, capacity-building and provision of medical supplies and equipment to the local healthcare system could be considered. Proper management of healthcare waste should be ensured.

Overall, there is a need to focus on needs-based assistance, with data-driven targeting (i.e. focusing on those not currently covered by humanitarian response/ not be eligible for assistance under the TP, such as third-country nationals, refugees in Transnistria and refugees residing in unaccredited RACs).

Finally, advocacy and coordination among the humanitarian community and together with development donors will need to be strengthened to:

- a. ensure the humanitarian space and mandate are maintained in the transition.
- b. support the vibrant national civil society network in the country.

5.1.1.3 Armenia/Azerbaijan

DG ECHO will give priority support in Armenia for:

i) Shelter with cash for rent/utility bills approach; ii) Non-Food Items such as hygiene kits, winterisation kits, household kits, dignity kits, heaters, etc.; iii) Food assistance and Basic Needs via voucher or cash; iv) Health with a priority to MHPSS and referrals and v) Protection (legal aid, Child protection, GBV, family links and reunification, child-friendly spaces).

In Nagorno-Karabakh focus will be on the continuation of the ICRC action in the region. ICRC teams continue supporting the population remaining, including physical search for people who were left behind, among others vulnerable groups, elderly, sick and disabled, as well as restoring family links.

Disaster Preparedness (DP): DG ECHO support will focus on the development/update of contingency national plans (on the basis of risk/vulnerability assessments) as well the development/reinforcement/update of Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) and emergency repositioning of stocks by the Armenian government.

5.1.2 Programmatic partnerships

DG ECHO could support programmatic partnerships in areas considered appropriate, in particular in the sectors of humanitarian coordination and advocacy. Please see the HIPTA section 3.e for technical and administrative details.

5.1.3 Multi-Year Funding

DG ECHO could support multi-year funding actions in areas considered appropriate²⁵.

The aim of multi-year funding actions is to generate additional efficiency gains and improve the design and delivery of humanitarian assistance. The submitted proposals should demonstrate these gains, which should be monitored during the implementation of the action and will have to be reported in the final reports of the action.

Education in Emergencies and Disaster preparedness are areas which do not need a special justification when submitting a multi-year funding project.

Please see the HIPTA sections 3.g and 4.d for technical and administrative details.

5.2. Other DG ECHO interventions

The Emergency Toolbox HIP may be drawn upon for the prevention of, and response to, outbreaks of Epidemics. Under the Emergency Toolbox HIP, the Small-Scale Response, Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT) and Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) instruments may also provide funding options.

Activities under this HIP might be complemented by the activation of the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC). The EHRC is a DG ECHO led global initiative, aiming at supporting humanitarian partners for the delivery of humanitarian assistance with a gap-filling approach. Under the EHRC the Commission has at its disposal several tools that can be activated in case of sudden onset disasters, e.g., a series of Common Logistics Services (including air operations, warehousing services, last-mile ground transportation, etc.), a stockpile of emergency items, and deployment of humanitarian expertise.

²⁵ See factsheet on EU Humanitarian Aid Multi-Year Funding available on the DG ECHO Partners' website.