

Joanna Dobrowolska-Polak  
*Western Institute in Poznań*

## Humanitarian Diplomacy of the European Union

### ABSTRACT:

The transfer of humanitarian aid is one of the new and effective instruments of foreign policy. In fifteen years (1999:2013) the humanitarian budget – with a similar number of victims of armed conflicts – has increased almost fifty times. This growth did not change the situation of victims significantly, because the biggest donors – governments and the European Union – apply their own guidelines for the allocation of aid, target beneficiaries and hiring organizations conveying aid.

**KEYWORDS:** humanitarian aid, humanitarian diplomacy, European Union, ECHO, foreign policy, donator, humanitarianism.

In the twenty-first century nations have effectively integrated humanitarian actions into the their conduct of foreign policy. The declarations and manifest activities of the member states of the European Union, including Germany, France, Great Britain, Sweden and the Netherlands, as well as humanitarian assistance funding on the part of European Commission, have underscored the reality that humanitarian assistance funding is one of the most important instruments of foreign policy [Schriftliche Zusammenfassung des AA-Redebeitrags; 2007: 1]. The case of Germany is eloquent of this, given the complexity of its federal humanitarian actions outside its borders. Humanitarian diplomacy occupies an area simultaneously belonging to Germany's foreign policy, as well as to its national security policy. Germany's humanitarian diplomacy is further complemented by a national development policy, all of which contributes to complex foreign actions and operations, which since 1998 have been defined by Germany as a policy for peace. In the words of Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul – former Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development: “Including foreign and

Table 1. The value of global humanitarian aid in the years 1999-2013

Year	Value of aid (in million USD)
1999	296
2000	2 006
2001	3 832
2002	5 150
2003	7 755
2004	4 741
2005	13 156
2006	7 656
2007	7 913
2008	11 878
2009	12 375
2010	16 227
2011	13 474
2012	12 672
2013	14 402

Source: author's compilation of data based on statistics from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA).

Table 2. The value of aid delivered in the years 2001-2012 by the largest state donors of humanitarian assistance (the European Union and Poland are included)

No.	Donator	Value of aid (in million USD)
1	United States	31 632
2	The European Union	13 251
3	Great Britain	6 036
4	Sweden	5 220
5	Japan	5 079
6	Norway	4 220
7	Canada	3 640
8	Germany	3 490
9	The Netherlands	3 208
10	Switzerland	2 617
11	Saudi Arabia	2 327
12	Denmark	2 242
13	Australia	1 716
14	Spain	1 428
15	Italy	1 256
...		
43	Poland	32

Source: author's compilation of data based on statistics from the UN OCHA.

security policy (...) development policy [and with it, humanitarian aid] is the core of the German policy of peace” [Wieczorek-Zeul 2000: 158]. Other top state donors and the European Union give humanitarian actions a policy priority equaling that of Germany. Globally, budgetary contributions to programs of assistance to victims of humanitarian crises contributed in the years 2000-2013 have increased sevenfold. Comparing the years 1999 and 2013, it is noteworthy that the actual annual monetary value of this aid is forty-eight times higher.

## POLITICIZATION OF HUMANITARIAN AID

Policy actions in the humanitarian sphere are clearly defined and widely accepted by the international community. These include: humanitarianism (actions aimed at relief of human suffering), impartiality, political neutrality, equal treatment of victims regardless of their nationality or ethnicity, and political support and interest primarily targeting the needs of victims. The guidelines adopted by the international community, however, are often not honored by states because of foreign policy self-interest. Very often the actions “from the heart” are instrumentally used to build a positive image of the state-donor, or create a positive climate among other actively involved major donor countries or societies for the purposes of reconciliation.

The systematic increase in grants for humanitarian activity has given humanitarian actors the financial means for action, but it has also transformed the realm of humanitarian aid into the “business of humanitarian aid”. The new organizations and private corporations, which seek suitable remuneration, also lead humanitarian aid. Humanitarian agencies and intergovernmental organizations (such as the World Food Programme, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children’s Fund), by far provide the largest portion of aid, whereas organizations such as the Red Cross or Red Crescent, and classic non-governmental organizations (e.g., Save the Children, CARE International), have been forced to compete with new entrants into the humanitarian aid market. The new players are, to a lesser extent, guided by the humanitarian principles of action, and seek greater self-profit. As a consequence of the profit motive, these organizations are also more susceptible to politicized suggestions and pressures related to the implementation of aid programs.

Major donors among national governments have increasingly come to recognize humanitarian programs as means of achieving foreign policy objectives. The allocation of resources to specific regions in crisis, the promotion of a selected group of beneficiaries, or the use of a multiplicity of organizations for outsourcing, are not the results of professionalism and

experience in implementation of aid programs, but for reasons completely unconnected with humanitarian aid. The German federal government's efficient use of various actions of the humanitarian community in Afghanistan is an excellent example. After the intervention in Afghanistan, the German federal government transferred the aid to the victims through German aid organizations, or those firms with German-language names, which included among others: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, Deutscher Caritasverband, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe, and Mediothek für Afghanistan. The German federal government, in turn, specified that the allocation of the humanitarian aid was to be concentrated in regions where Bundeswehr military personnel were stationed: the north-eastern Afghanistan provinces of Kunduz, Takhar and Badachshan. Since the start of the conflict in Iraq in 2003, the primary channel for transferring German federal aid was not German organizations, but international organizations, meaning firms with English-language names: International IDEA, the International Committee of the Red Cross, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. These three organizations provided 86% of funds to Iraq. The two contrasting strategies employed by Germany can be interpreted as a political decision of the federal government seeking to maintain the perception of Germany as a country not involved in the Iraq conflict [Federal Government Decisions: VN 05-321.50 IRQ 08/07; VN 05-321.50 IRQ 05/07; VN05 321.50 IRQ 04/07; VN05 321.50 IRQ 03/07].

## MAJOR DONORS' ACTIVITIES

Donors can be classified into three subgroups based on the degree to which the country's ten largest state-owned group of donors subordinate the interests of their governments. The first two subgroups consider their nation's foreign policy goals. The first consists of the United States (the largest global donor), Saudi Arabia, and Canada. In 2013, Canada introduced changes in its policies and has implemented American humanitarian action patterns that instrumentalize humanitarian aid by making such assistance a direct tool in achieving its foreign policy objectives. This is interpreted as a deviation from the United Nations guidance that member states shall not incorporate into their canons rules governing the granting of humanitarian assistance and aid programs based on their own interests. The second group includes the European Commission, Japan, the Netherlands and Germany. Japan, since 2011, as a result of its experience with both an earthquake and tsunami, amended its humanitarian laws. The Netherlands and Germany have transposed the humanitarian ideas of the absolute value of humanity into their policies and declare their adherence to

principles and standards of humanitarian activities promoted by humanitarian organizations. These two nations, however, have not surrendered the option to decide where and how to allocate aid funds to be transferred, and provide assistance in the expectation of future benefits from such activities, e.g. stabilization of areas near abroad, reducing waves of migration, or shaping a positive image of the state-donor among aid recipient countries or the final beneficiaries – the victims of crises. The third group of donors include Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, where the national humanitarian policy meticulously adheres to the guidelines formulated by the humanitarian community. These countries have humanitarian donor programs that respond to the real and most important humanitarian needs of victims of crises. During operations, these nations respect the rules and principles adopted by the humanitarian community, support pro-humanitarian reform of aid delivery regimes, and simultaneously engage in diplomatic and legal actions related to the crises, thus promoting positive role models, while being consistent with the expectations of humanitarian organizations and agencies.

The divisions of the above can be found in the financial portfolio of each country. Canada's modification of its humanitarian aid policy to one that closely resembled the foreign policy and aid policy of the United States illustrates an important point. After the policy modification Canadian expenditures on humanitarian aid gradually declined between the years 2001 and 2011, to 47% of the levels before the change in humanitarian aid policy. This bears the hallmarks of a state whose humanitarian aid is instrumental.

On a global scale the effect of politicization is the focus of donor assistance in the regions of their vital interests. Most states instrumentalize the activities of international aid agencies, the primary institution responsible for coordinating the delivery of aid (UN OCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), and NGOs. Instrumentalization includes the use of a promise of support for implementation of specific humanitarian appeals (e.g., appeal for Afghanistan), and often encapsulation of the granting of special conditions (e.g., limiting aid delivery only to certain provinces). The result can be that the victims of armed conflicts taking place on the periphery of world politics and the global economy do not receive enough assistance to cover their most basic physical needs. Much of the money transferred to the nominally *de facto* humanitarian organizations fails to provide for assistance to those in need, while only giving the illusion of assistance. Politicized measures directed to a region particularly important to the political interests of states do not necessarily improve the situation of the population in the crisis area. The funds are spent on such objectives as: the stabilization of the area in which the donor nation's military forces operate, the impact on the civilian

population of that state in order to placate the feelings of foreigners residing in the country, and the creation of a more positive image of the state-donor. This last objective is especially common when there is a parallel marketing campaign conducted by the social and political consulting firms hired for nominally humanitarian measures.

Among the major donors a comparison of the humanitarian policies of the United States and Sweden is instructive. While the United States' transfers of humanitarian aid implementation complies with its strategic foreign policy objectives, Sweden limits the influence of its own political interests on the destinations and allocation of humanitarian aid, opting for taking effective measures to improve the situation of victims of crises as the primary driver of its humanitarian aid dispensation. Between the extremes of these two humanitarian policy models are most other countries and the European Union.

## EU ACTIVITIES IN HUMANITARIAN SPACE

The share of the European Union (the organization and all its organs) in the global humanitarian budget in 2001-2012 was 11.5%. This gave the EU the second position among major donors of humanitarian aid during this period. In 2012, the European Union, including the organization itself and the member states of the EU, came to 39.13% of global aid.

Table 3. The value of the European Commission's humanitarian aid in the period 1999-2012

Year	Value of aid (in million USD)
1999	31
2000	121
2001	346
2002	516
2003	610
2004	834
2005	1 023
2006	1 012
2007	1 154
2008	1 385
2009	1 440
2010	1 617
2011	1 641
2012	1 632
2013	1 926

Source: author's compilation of data based on statistics from the UN OCHA.

The European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council have officially adopted documents relating to the support of victims of humanitarian crises. All of these emphasize the importance of providing humanitarian aid. The following cited basic documents are a few examples. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid recognizes humanitarian aid as one of the “most important manifestations of universal human solidarity” and such assistance as a “moral obligation” [The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid 2008: 1]. The guiding principle of this activity is to indicate humanitarianism. EU documents define the term humanitarianism as an activity aimed at the relief of human suffering, and this assumes political neutrality and equal treatment to all victims. The basis of EU humanitarian aid is Title III of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (“Cooperation with Third Countries and Humanitarian Aid”). Article 214 of this document states that the actions of the European Union should “be intended to provide *ad hoc* assistance and care for people in third countries (...) and protection in case of natural disasters or man-made disasters” [Lisbon Treaty 2008: 214]. Fundamentally, EU aid is based on such basic international guidelines applicable to donors. An example of such principles is the guidelines on Good Humanitarian Donorship developed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

## EU HUMANITARIAN INSTRUMENTS

EU declarations on the importance of “interpersonal” assistance and “solidarity” with victims and the consequent effects of such declared values differ from non-European Union donors, especially from those of the United States. The EU, in order to implement the idea of common humanity resonating in the provisions of such unpoliticized assistance to victims of conflict, has developed and implemented two programs: a global assessment of humanitarian needs in crisis areas (Global Needs Assessment – GNA), and an assessment of crises in terms of under-funded programs to support their victims (Forgotten Crisis Assessment – FCA). The GNA program allows for the identification of regions and people who are particularly in need of support. The FCA involves the actual selection of crisis areas from those identified in the GNA process that lie outside the priority areas of the donor states. The FCA procedure addresses humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters and current armed conflicts, but can also result in humanitarian aid being given to unstable regions, or states classified as weak, failing, or failed. In addition, the EU is developing strategies for

responding to specific situations of instability, such as famine, and is introducing early warning systems addressing issues of military-political threat and counter-escalation. The goal of such EU strategies is to enable itself to implement responses to situations of fragility [COM 2007], while keeping within the parameters of the European Consensus on Development [The European Consensus on Development 2006]. In 2012, among other programmes instituted, the EU adopted the Framework Programme for Food Security [COM 2012]. The programme was established in connection with continuing EU support to the largest famine in recent years, affecting the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.

The transfer of EU humanitarian aid is the responsibility of the European Commission and its Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid EU and Civil Protection (ECHO). The ECHO is tasked with coordinating financial support from the EU budget and individual member states for the purposes of humanitarian aid operations. The ECHO was originally created as the Office for Humanitarian Aid in 1992 and initially had a limited scope. The increasing share of the European Union in global humanitarian aid and the constant widening spectrum of ECHO aid operations led to its transformation in 2004 to a directorate-general. In 2010, the areas of responsibility of ECHO operations were significantly expanded. In order to provide a comprehensive response to humanitarian crises, the activities of the ECHO now also include: provision of humanitarian aid to populations; coordination of EU activities for the protection of civilians living in areas of crisis; and physical security of buildings and civil installations. In 2011, ECHO's coordination activities brought EU humanitarian aid to 91 countries and covered the support of around 117 million people. The breakdown of ECHO coordinated support in 2011 was as follows: victims of humanitarian crises and infrastructure reconstruction (42%); victims of natural disasters (38%); and victims of other emergencies (20%) [COM 2012a: 5-6]. Some specific funded support operations included aid distributed in Japan (earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster); in the regions of West Africa, the Horn of Africa, Central America and South America (drought); in South-East Asia (floods and hurricanes); Cameroon (cholera epidemic); Sudan and South Sudan; the occupied Palestinian Territory; and the Democratic Republic of Congo (armed conflicts).

## LESSON LEARNED

Before the implementation of GNA and FCA procedures, that is before the beginning of the twenty-first century, the European Commission's humanitarian aid was primarily allocated to regions of vital interest to the



European Union and its member states. During the military intervention in Kosovo and the refugee crisis in Albania in 1999, 55% of aid provided by ECHO was for aid operations in the territories of the former Yugoslavia, 3% to the Middle East and the countries of the Maghreb, and 16% to ACP countries (countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific). After the implementation of FCA procedures in 2000 and 2001, the results had radically changed. In 2001, the former Yugoslavia received 15%, and in 2003, only 2% of ECHO coordinated aid. This can be contrasted to ECHO coordinated humanitarian aid to the Middle East and the Maghreb, which in 2001 received 11%, and in 2003 15%. Additionally, in the same period the ACP countries received 33% in 2001 and 45% in 2003 [COM 2002: 26; own calculation based on: ECHO 2003: 18-19].

In the years 2001-2003 the EU assistance focused on areas of non-European regions which were of vital interest for the EU and its member states. Changes in the application of supplementary GNA procedures and the allocation structure continued. In 2012, the ACP countries accounted for 51% of the EU humanitarian aid, and the Middle East and Maghreb 42%. The highest support was dedicated to victims of crises in South Sudan, Pakistan, Somalia, Congo and Chad. The European Commission's analysis of global humanitarian needs is annually updated with the development and application of new evaluation methods pertaining to the situation of victims of crises, and an on-going assessment of the efficacy of humanitarian action.

In 2012, the historically largest tranche of aid provided by the European Commission provided financial support to humanitarian assistance programs implemented in 83 countries and in the occupied Palestinian Territory. This amounted to a total allocation of 1,764,098,985 USD. The largest in terms of monetary value included the following nations or regions: the crisis in South Sudan (to which the EC transferred 131 million); Somalia (104 million); Pakistan (94 million); the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, and Sudan (88 million); Niger (74 million); and Ethiopia (73 million). The largest item in the budget was, however, a general donation to humanitarian aid in regions not determined to require immediate humanitarian assistance (135 million). Most of the funding, from among those identified humanitarian aid clusters, went to the food sector (332 million), followed by health care (291 million).

The main channels of transfer of the EU aid to the victims were organizations and agencies of the UN family (mainly the WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF and FAO), which received 42% of the funds. The EU, however, transferred almost the same amount, 37% of its humanitarian aid budget, to non-governmental organizations, primarily Save the Children, Oxfam UK

Table 4. Locations of allocated EU humanitarian aid in 2012

Country	Value of aid (in million USD)
South Sudan	123
Area deprecated name	104
Pakistan	95
Somalia	88
Democratic Republic of Congo	83
Chad	81
Niger	74
Ethiopia	73
Sudan	68
Kenya	66
Yemen	63
Occupied Palestinian Territory	52
Syria	44
Burkina Faso	42
Cote d'Ivoire	40

Source: author's compilation of data based on statistics from the UN OCHA.

and the Norwegian Refugee Council.<sup>1</sup> The EU cooperation with the UN is conducted on the basis of an agreement signed on 23 April 2003, which has made the EU a sustained donor to eighteen major humanitarian agencies and organizations within the UN family (Agreement between the United Nations and the European Community on the principles applying to the financing or co-financing by the Community of programs and projects administered by the United Nations – FAFA). The second channel for transferring the EU support is equally important because it allows the maintenance of the EU coordination with NGOs. Intergovernmental organizations outside the UN family distributed aid with a value of only 3.6% of the humanitarian budget of the European Union, and the International Red Cross 8%. The EU obliges all non-governmental partners to accept the general principles of humanitarian aid, and consequently, the EU has signed Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs) with NGOs as is appropriate to their status.

<sup>1</sup> Polish Humanitarian Action – PAH was supported 1,351,352 U.S. dollars, which accounted for 0.08% of the funds. Compared to 2008, the share of PAH in the EU's humanitarian budget increased almost threefold.

## CLOSING REMARKS

Currently, nations of the world who are major contributors to humanitarian aid include political considerations into decision-making and implementation. Some European countries, the United States, Canada, Japan and Saudi Arabia approve conditionally grants for the possibility of carrying out humanitarian aid operations on an unprecedented scale. These grants, however, are frequently motivated by foreign policy calculations, which affect the space allocation and method of fund distribution. On the other side of the spectrum are countries such as Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, which are the most prominent promoters of humanitarian engagement in the world, and consistently transmit a significant percentage of their funds to support the victims of humanitarian crises that are considered of lesser importance to global security. These major donors utilize special pre-financed funds, which are accumulated and strictly used for the current needs of victims of armed conflicts. These countries, while supporting some of the largest humanitarian organizations also transfer a large portion of the funds through smaller, unrelated or self-regulated, and non-political humanitarian organizations, like NGOs. At the other end of the continuum, countries such as the United States, Saudi Arabia and Canada, treat the sphere of humanitarian aid as an instrument for achieving foreign policy objectives. The countries of the third group of donors (Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom), represent states which have embraced the principles that guide the global humanitarian community. Countries of the first group (especially the United States and Saudi Arabia), when making decisions about the allocation of humanitarian aid, generally ignore the rules of conduct adopted by the international community regarding humanitarian guidelines. Members of the second or middle group (Germany, the Netherlands, Japan), as well as the European Union, while attempting to meet global humanitarian challenges by responding to the needs of victims, have not committed to a full implementation of humanitarian principles in their own policies, and have not abandoned their situationally dependent practice of determining the locations of their allocated aid. In contemporary humanitarian aid, there still seems to be numerous actors belonging to the group of donors who are conspicuous for their calculated funding practices while using the words “humanitarianism” and “compassion”.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Joanna Dobrowolska-Polak, PhD, Assistant Professor in Institute for Western Affairs (Poznan, Poland), Head of the Department of Coaching and Political Science at High School of Humanities and Journalism (Poznan, Poland), author of four monographs, editor of the next three, editor-in-chief of “IZ Policy Papers”, author of expertises for the MFA of Poland. Area of research: the situation of the civilian population during armed conflicts, humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian interventions. Comments are welcomed.

Contact: [joanna.polak@iz.poznan.pl](mailto:joanna.polak@iz.poznan.pl)