



Defending values, driving reform, delivering impact: new measures to strengthen EU humanitarian action

Brussels, 27 May 2026

The [Joint Communication on Humanitarian Aid](#) adopted today sets out how the EU will remain a reliable and principled donor in a global aid system under severe pressure.

Humanitarian needs are at an all-time high with 239 million people worldwide in need of assistance, yet current global humanitarian funding can assist fewer than half of the people in need, leaving millions without life-saving support. The number of crises and their duration grow, while funding cuts and insecurity are making life-saving aid increasingly difficult to deliver.

The European Commission and the High Representative are responding with concrete solutions to ensure principled humanitarian aid reaches people in need across the globe. This builds on three pillars: protect, perform and partner.

President of the European Commission, Ursula **von der Leyen**, said: *"As the leading humanitarian donor worldwide, the European Union continues to defend the dignity of those in need, as well as those who risk their lives to help them. With this package, we are ensuring life-saving aid is delivered more efficiently, even in the toughest environments. At the same time, we are building resilience to reduce dependency on aid."*

Protect

The EU will take concrete actions for humanitarian assistance to be delivered safely and without impediments. This means stepping up humanitarian diplomacy in a collaborative Team Europe effort. All available tools, including political and human rights dialogues, advocacy at international level, and coordination in multilateral forum as well as peace mediation and stabilisation will be used to this end.

The EU will also step up measures and funding for the safety of humanitarian workers – from prevention of security incidents to care for victims. Voices of affected people matter – the EU will facilitate a greater role for local actors in the humanitarian response, empower communities, and ensure that our response is inclusive of all, in particular the most vulnerable.

Perform

Through reforming humanitarian supply chains, the EU will maximise cost-effectiveness from procurement to last mile delivery. The EU will also scale-up funding modalities that promote efficiency and predictability of aid and the dignity of beneficiaries, including cash assistance, anticipatory action, multi-year funding, pooled funds and support for local actors. Collective services that enable humanitarian aid delivery, including good quality and shared data on people's needs, will also be further supported.

Partner

The EU will support resilience and peace, as well as provide durable solutions to reduce dependence on humanitarian aid. The EU will be working more closely with international financial institutions, the private sector or philanthropies on innovative ways to provide financing to fragile areas, and people that need it the most, helping them transition from fragility to resilience. Humanitarian Team Europe can deliver more together, and options for pooling resources in a more impactful way will also be explored.

Background

The international humanitarian system has been shaken to its core with the outbreak of armed conflict, the disastrous humanitarian situation in Gaza, Ukraine or Sudan, and severe funding cuts are

affecting all aspects of humanitarian work.

The number of people forcibly displaced or seeking asylum has doubled over the past decade, reaching 117.3 million in 2025. Around 20% of all children worldwide – approximately half a billion – are living in, or fleeing, conflict zones. Sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, has continued to increase, prominently targeting women and girls. Global food insecurity and malnutrition are becoming more widespread, with the number of people experiencing acute hunger reaching catastrophic levels.

The European Union and its Member States are providing the largest share of global humanitarian funding (35% in 2025). The European Commission alone has allocated almost [€2 billion for humanitarian aid](#) this year. The EU will continue to provide needs-based, inclusive and non-discriminatory assistance to save lives and preserve human dignity.

These efforts receive strong and consistent popular support from EU citizens. In 2024, 91% of respondents to the Commission's [Eurobarometer survey](#) considered it important that the EU funds humanitarian aid.

For more information

[Questions and answers](#)

[EU Humanitarian Aid](#)

[Joint Communication on Humanitarian Aid](#)

[Joint Staff Working document: a strategic approach to EU's Humanitarian Diplomacy](#)

[Commission Staff Working document: Humanitarian Supply Chains](#)

[Joint Staff Working document: Integrated Approach to Fragility](#)

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Quote(s):

"As the leading humanitarian donor worldwide, the European Union continues to defend the dignity of those in need, as well as those who risk their lives to help them. With this package, we are ensuring life-saving aid is delivered more efficiently, even in the toughest environments. At the same time, we are building resilience to reduce dependency on aid."
Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission - 27/05/2026

"In a global humanitarian system facing cuts and shortfalls, the EU and its Member States remain the world's largest and most reliable donors. With our new approach to humanitarian diplomacy, we will make better use of every tool at our disposal to safeguard aid delivery, secure humanitarian access, protect civilians, and ensure respect for international humanitarian law. It will also help ensure that humanitarian issues are front and centre in our external action."
Kaja Kallas, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission - 27/05/2026

"Humanitarian needs are rising worldwide. They have increased eightfold in just 20 years. But this is not only about numbers. Humanitarian workers are being attacked, civilians are being used as a weapon of war, and the principles that should guide humanitarian action are being undermined. The European Union is clear about what we stand for. We are a leading, principled donor. We will defend humanitarian space and respond to needs wherever they arise. As firm supporters of multilateralism, we will also make a concrete contribution to a humanitarian system that delivers better, with greater efficiency, effectiveness and resilience."
Hadja Lahbib, Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management - 27/05/2026

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[Read-out of the weekly meeting of the von der Leyen Commission by Hadja Lahbib, European Commissioner, on the communication on humanitarian aid](#)