



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL HUMANITARIAN AID AND CIVIL PROTECTION - ECHO

Director-General

Brussels, 28/03/2014
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Sent by e-mail only

To All ECHO Partners

Subject: Update on the European Union Humanitarian Aid budget

Dear Partner,

I would like to up-date you on the state of play regarding our budgetary situation and the progress made to overcome the current shortfall in payment credits.

First of all, I would like to recognise the strong commitment at the highest political level of the Commission and the particularity supportive role of Commissioner Lewandowski to give ECHO a priority despite the very tough situation concerning payment appropriations in EU Budget 2014.

Following the firm guarantees obtained in January that the Commission will indeed make the budgetary proposals for the necessary reinforcements throughout the year to allow the full implementation of the 2014 World Wide Decision, we implemented the phased approach by selecting and adjusting projects to optimise the use of the available funds. In a series of dedicated meetings we provided as much as information as possible and I sincerely hope that you got the clarity you needed for taking your management decisions on the way forward. In the meantime, contracting of the first phase has reached cruising speed, and the use of the available payments follows largely along the path as planned.

Secondly, we have been mobilising support for our case amongst the main stakeholders and decision makers. A particularly positive and encouraging event was the joint presentation and discussion of Commissioners Georgieva and Lewandowski before the European Parliament's Committees for Budget and Development in early March. This has prepared the ground for a positive reception of the concrete proposals that the Commission will bring forward at different stages during the year.

Thirdly, the scarcity of payment credits also affects the possibilities for mobilising new funds to respond to new or increased needs not yet covered by the WWD. For that reason, with the agreement of EuropeAid, we will be preparing 11th EDF Bridging Facility proposals to submit to EU Member States for humanitarian assistance to respond to specific needs in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (party to the Cotonou Agreement) over the coming weeks. This strengthens ECHO's response without

increasing the gap between commitment and payment credits available in the normal budget.

Finally, the Commission has – yesterday - put forward to the Council and the European Parliament a request for the transfer of € 150 million of payment appropriations to the Humanitarian Aid budget line thanks to the contributions of EuropeAid and the Directorates-General for Enlargement and Regional and Urban Policy for which we are immensely grateful. This should allow a decision to be taken by the European Parliament before the elections. Following the strong signs of support received both from EP and Member states, we are confident that this cash injection will actually materialise, as required, before the summer. These cash funds will allow the prefinancing of new contracts once the next set of budgetary proposals are tabled in May/June and 'Phase II' of contracting can be launched as planned. We continue to work with the same intensity and commitment to get the next steps on track as politically agreed.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your understanding and active collaboration in achieving our objective, which is to guarantee the continued support to the most vulnerable people in need around the globe even in times of economic difficulties and heavy budgetary constraints.

Yours sincerely,

[Signed]

Claus H. SØRENSEN
Director-General