

UK Review of Competencies of EU institutions:

CAFOD input into the British government review of competencies with EU institutions: Directorate-General Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection- ECHO

Introduction:

CAFOD is the official relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Working through local partners, CAFOD has a humanitarian staff of 41 who currently support national NGO partners in providing humanitarian assistance in 30 countries across the world. CAFOD aims to strengthen communities' and partners' response to disasters and link its relief and development work. CAFOD prioritises work through local church organisations as they have a permanent presence in the country and a country-wide structure which is rooted in local communities.

EU Impact on the national interest

- i. What are the comparative advantages or disadvantages in these areas of the UK working through the EU, rather than working independently or through other international organisations?

Advantages/complementarities:

1. The European Union is the world's 2nd largest humanitarian donor, providing US\$14.9 billion between 2000 and 2009. In 2011 humanitarian aid provided by the Commission reached 117 million people in 91 countries. As a large humanitarian donor the EU works closely with and compliments HMG's own commitment to providing principled humanitarian assistance based on need.
2. The role, outreach and performance of the European Union as a humanitarian actor gains strong approval within the European public, - in the most recent Euro barometer survey it received a public approval rating of 88% amongst EU citizens. This can provide an important added support to the British government's own role as

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a humanitarian donor, and indicates that there is widespread public support for government provision of humanitarian aid.

3. ECHO's reach considerably surpasses that of the British government. With 470 field based expatriate and local staff it has a strong cadre of technical advisors in 38 countries. This compares to the relatively small number of field based British government humanitarian advisors. These EU technical advisors can provide a level of analysis, information gathering and monitoring, as well as play an important role in the promotion of coordination, which DfID CHASE given its more limited field presence cannot. For example ECHO's field teams provide timely SITREPs for use by Member States during crises, something which HMG can only undertake itself if it has humanitarian staff on the ground. This rapid provision of information helps inform Member States, including the British government in its decision making on funding.
4. This field presence also enables ECHO to contribute towards donor analysis and influence to promote improvements within UN agencies, for example its technical advisors can provide information and analysis prior to UN agency board and donor support group meetings. This is particularly important in fragile and conflict affected countries where DfID does not have a bi-lateral aid programme or a humanitarian advisor.
5. DG ECHO humanitarian aid is primarily provided via partner organisations which include 180 NGOs, 13 national societies of the Red Cross and 16 UN agencies. ECHO spent 50% of its humanitarian through NGOs in 2011, more than a third of which, some Euro162 million, was to UK based NGOs. This compares to 26% of DfID humanitarian spend which goes through NGOs. – this indicates that there is a clear complementarity, with ECHO picking up and going further than the British government in its support to civil society organisations whilst HMG funds more through UN agencies and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.
6. HMG is the biggest bilateral donor to the UN managed pooled funds, - the CERF the CHF and the ERFs. In contrast ECHO does not fund any of these mechanisms, so there is no duplication in this regard.
7. The central role of EU as a humanitarian player enables an enhanced level of coordination and complementarity between and within member states, in a way which the British government acting without the EU could not achieve: e.g. the establishment of the Committee on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) is an important fora for coordination and strategy discussions between EU Member States.
8. The EU is a strong actor in multi-lateral fora, an approach which compliments and reinforces the British government's own position, e.g. on UN humanitarian reform issues, the Transformative Agenda and its role within the Good Humanitarian Donorship Fora (GHD)etc.

ECHO is a good donor and a standard leader within the sector:

9. ECHO is consistently ranked amongst the best humanitarian donors, for example in OECD-DAC reviews and in the DARA HRI and receives consistently high marks from the European Court of Auditors.

10. All projects are audited and results indicate that amongst European Union institutions it has one of the lowest margins of error and one of the highest spending rates.
11. The existence of the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with 180 European NGOs, means that ECHO can rapidly release funding to pre-qualifying partners.
12. Procedures within ECHO mean that its funding is relatively efficient, timely and flexible and its humanitarian aid funds are always used up each year.
13. The existence of a flexible Emergency Response Fund the EAR, is an important mechanism which enables ECHO to respond rapidly.

Policy making and implementation through parallel competences

ii. What is the impact of the current system of parallel competences on policy making and implementation in these areas, especially in terms of:
a) efficiency, effectiveness and value for money;
b) transparency (including checks against fraud and corruption); and
c) working with other international partner organisations (e.g. UN, World Bank etc.)?

1. ECHO's Global Needs Assessment (GNA) is one of the best regarded tools in the humanitarian sector for assessing needs. It also produces the Forgotten Crises Assessment. Both these indexes require a considerable amount of resources to ensure they are comprehensive and up to date. The result is that the analysis provided is used by a number of Member States in helping them to decide on humanitarian allocations. This is something individual member states, such as the British government, could not undertake in such a comprehensive manner on their own.
2. The strong leadership of ECHO has enabled it to provide advice and support to smaller Member States and it has arguably played an important role in enhancing the quality of humanitarian donorship of European Union member states, particularly the newer and smaller EU member states which have few humanitarian specialist staff
3. ECHO strong engagement as a humanitarian donor in international forums such as GHD, UN agency donor support groups or OECD-DAC discussions on humanitarian issues supports and compliments HMG's own approaches.

Future options and challenges

- ii. Are there ways in which the EU could use its existing competence in these areas differently, or in which the competence could be divided differently, that would improve policy making and implementation?
1. CAFOD considers that on examination of the current arrangement of parallel competences between the British government as one of the European Union Member States and the EU it is apparent that there are more advantages than

disadvantages. There is a very definite overall complementarity between the 2 with little real duplication and so we would urge that there is no fundamental change in the way competences are divided.

iii. What future challenges or opportunities might the UK face in the areas of humanitarian aid, and what impact might these have on questions of competence and the national interest?

1. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid provides a strong policy framework which forms one of the fundamental pillars of HMG's Humanitarian Policy and practice.
2. As a union of member states the EU is often perceived as able to be a more neutral actor in fragile states as it is arguably less influenced by bi-lateral geo-political, economic or historical considerations, than many individual countries are, and who at times blur the distinctions between humanitarian aid and political, military and security objectives. As such it is in the UK's interest as a principled humanitarian donor to ensure effective cooperation between Member States at EU level.
3. One example of this added value of the EU role in humanitarian affairs came in April 2011 when preparations were being made by the European Union to send a European –led military mission (EUFOR) to Libya to support the United Nations humanitarian assistance. In its conclusions, the EU Council reinforced adherence to existing commitments made under the Lisbon Treaty and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, which explicitly state that humanitarian assistance should be delivered in accordance with the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence. Member States came to an agreement that if this military operation was initiated, it would operate in accordance with the Humanitarian Principles and the MCDA Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defense Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies. Crucially, these guidelines require that any military assets used under these criteria must remain under civilian coordination and must respect the needs-based and neutral nature of humanitarian aid. Importantly it was also decided that EUFOR could only be deployed at the request of UN OCHA. This was a crucial decision, which maintained the integrity of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and HMG's own commitment to upholding humanitarian principles. Nevertheless, the fact that some other Member States questioned this approach underscores the importance for HMG of these kinds of forums through which to debate and convince others. But it does raise fears as to how such a situation would be dealt with in the future, and what the outcomes might be. It also underscores the need for continued vigilance and commitment to upholding the humanitarian principles as enshrined in the Humanitarian Consensus and the important role that DG ECHO can and does play in defending this for the benefit of all Member States as they strive to uphold the Principles.

4. The British government has been the lead country over the last 18 months in promoting the disaster resilience agenda, publishing its approach to resilience as long ago as November 2011. This agenda has now been taken up by the European Union, which published an EU communication in October 2012.
5. The work of the EU adds considerable value to the British government efforts, for example the EU is one of 5 Resilience Champions (along with World Bank, UNDP, British Government and the United States of America) which is leading the thinking in this field. Moreover the recent Council Communication on Resilience is an important contribution to this effort and it is likely to have a greater impact on influencing other European member states than anything which DfID could do on its own.
6. There have been two differing approaches to exploring resilience by DFID and EU. The EU draws from its large programmes on food security and dominant crises. In contrast DFID took a disaster resilience approach and then encouraged multiple dialogues for cross-sectoral learning. There is no 'better' approach, rather we consider that they are complimentary although the DFID process may go further to embed disaster resilience in its country programmes and encourage approaches that tackle current and future challenges, rather than being driven by past/current dominant events
7. Through transparent dialogue with the NGO and academic sectors DFID has led a learning process since Nov 2011. This is now culminating in a series of work packages and funds for disaster resilience and resilience focussed capacity building. Ensuring that disaster resilience is owned by all sectors.
8. In contrast the EU has taken longer to publish its communication, and has primarily drawn from its two programmes Supporting Horn of African Resilience (SHARE)⁵ and l'"Alliance Globale pour l'Initiative Résilience Sahel" (AGIR). The EU's resilience thinking therefore places emphasis on longer-term slow onset crisis through reducing underlying vulnerabilities in terms of food security.
9. The EU's communication on resilience was driven by the dominating food crisis rather than looking ahead to future issues such as urban or technological disasters. In contrast DFID's approach has been driven by dialogue and knowledge exchange.

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