

SCREENING CHAPTER 30
on
EXTERNAL RELATIONS
10 July 2006

Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian Aid is another form of external assistance. Some 10% of the external assistance budget of the Commission is managed as humanitarian aid. Whether channelled through the Commission or bilaterally, it also counts towards the target of 0.56 % of GNI for external aid by 2010 to which all Member States of the Union are committed, as has already been discussed.

Given the need to bring speedy relief to those in need, humanitarian aid as administered by the Commission enjoys certain easements to the standard financial regulations. It also has a speedy decision- making process whereby urgent funding decisions can be taken without prior formal information and consultation of the Council or the Parliament. Normal funding decisions follow a normal comitology procedure. However what interests us here is its definition and goals, which may well be different to those applied in other countries.

Humanitarian Aid and its goals are defined in Regulation (EC) 1257/96 of 20 June 1996, of which a copy is being supplied to you.

I would particularly draw your attention to the seventh recital, the principles of which are then repeated at the beginning of Article 1:

The recital 'humanitarian aid, the sole principle of which is to prevent or relieve human suffering, is accorded to victims without discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic group, religion, sex, age, nationality or political affiliation and must not be guided by, or subject to, political considerations' leads to the rule that 'The Community's humanitarian aid shall comprise assistance, relief and protection on a non-discriminatory basis to help people in third countries, particularly the most vulnerable among them, and as a priority those in developing countries, victims of natural disasters, man-made crises, such as wars or outbreaks of fighting, or exceptional situations or circumstances comparable to natural or man-made disasters'.

This definition and ruling cannot be overemphasised. Assistance given solely to ethnic minorities, however close they may be to the hearts of the donor, in a region where drought or other natural conditions were affecting all inhabitants would therefore not fall under the EC's definition of humanitarian aid.

The EC and its Member States combined provide some 50% of the world's humanitarian aid. We are proud of what we are achieving. It is by coordinating and cooperating closely both within the EC and with other donors that we have reached this level and improved the quality of the aid. Within the Member States there is general public support for such activities. This is due to there being an active civil society aware of the needs in and obligations towards other countries and societies. Again in common with my colleagues from the Directorate- General for Development I would urge you to foster the expansion of such independent organisations

within your countries. This will help build up the political support you require as you seek the funds to build up your level of external assistance. It will also provide you with the actors eligible to receive funds from the Commission to implement the humanitarian aid policy that will have been decided together.

Annex: Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 2006