

THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON HUMANITARIAN AID FOR EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

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ABSTRACT *Humanitarian aid is one of the European Union's essential policies. This paper analyzes to what extent the European Union formulate and implement humanitarian aid mechanisms for earthquake victims. The main legal instrument for the European Union's humanitarian aid is Council Regulation No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996. Moreover, the European Office for Emergency Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) is a European Union Office established on 1 April 1992 to handle with the relief operations. The main goal of the ECHO is to provide emergency assistance and relief for earthquake victims. The ECHO does not implement humanitarian projects itself but funds activities which are implemented through other humanitarian organizations such as Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and United Nations special agencies and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.*

The European consensus on humanitarian aid will promote a more rational, consistent and comprehensive approach to humanitarian aid for earthquake victims. Indeed, the European Union Commission has adopted a Communication on 13 June, 2007 providing great efficiency and coherence in delivering humanitarian aid. This paper will examine this new Communication and other relevant legal instruments. In addition, some comments are also provided on the relationship between NGOs and the European Union. In Particular, this paper examines the Framework Partnership Agreements with other organizations. This agreement has been in force since 2004. It provides among other things, rules and procedures that apply to all contracts awarded for building, supplies, work and services by ECHO's partners and the partners' rights and obligations.

This paper concludes that in order to provide effective and more beneficial humanitarian aid, the European Union should work closely with other international and national organizations, in particular with the NGOs and the United Nations. Furthermore, the European Union should continue to undertake and promote the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence while delivering the humanitarian aid for earthquake victims.