

EU steps up humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh and Myanmar

As more and more refugees arrive in Bangladesh from Myanmar, the European Commission announces additional humanitarian aid of €3 million to address the most pressing needs of Rohingya civilians. The funding comes on top of the €12 million announced in May 2017 when Commissioner **Stylianides** visited Rakhine State in Myanmar.

“The European Union is providing further emergency humanitarian aid as the situation continues to be critical. This additional funding will help provide emergency shelter, water, food and health assistance for newly arrived refugees in Bangladesh and people in need in Myanmar, as soon as humanitarian access to the latter is restored. The EU continues to call for full humanitarian access and the respect for international human rights law in Myanmar. The immediate restoration of humanitarian assistance in northern Rakhine State is needed in order to address what is already a precarious humanitarian situation, and to avoid an escalation of the crisis. I thank the government and people of Bangladesh for their hospitality in sheltering many refugees. The European Union remains committed to support those who are forced to flee their homes during these difficult times”, said the Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos **Stylianides**.

As with all EU humanitarian aid this new funding will be channelled impartially by international NGOs, the United Nations or the Red Cross to the affected populations. The EU has been providing humanitarian support in Myanmar and Bangladesh for many years. Since 1994, the European Commission has provided €232 million in humanitarian aid to Myanmar. Total EU humanitarian aid to Bangladesh since 2007 amounts to €153.6 million.

For More Information

[Statement of the HR/VP Federica Mogherini on the latest developments in Rakhine State, Myanmar and the border region in Bangladesh \(11/09/2017\)](#)

[Statement of Commissioner Christos Stylianides on the humanitarian situation in Myanmar \(05/09/2017\)](#)

[Commissioner Christos Stylianides visit to Myanmar](#)

Mark your calendars – Gender Equality

Index 2017 coming soon!

We will soon be ready to give an update on the status of gender equality in the EU. Is it getting better or worse? Which countries have progressed the most? Where do we need to improve? On 11 October 2017, you will get the full picture from the Gender Equality Index!

In this edition, we introduce several new elements that give a more accurate picture of the realities faced by women and men living in the EU. The Index also shows trends in gender equality over the past ten years.

One new element is the focus on intersecting inequalities. This Index gives a more nuanced picture of our society, as we look at how gender intersects with other factors such as disability, age, education, country of birth and family type.

We have also expanded the domain of power. In addition to political and economic power, we are also looking at who is behind the news headlines, who controls the money in research funding and who decides in the sporting world.

For the first time, the Index will look into healthy and less healthy behaviours of women and men. Who has a healthy diet and exercises regularly? How similar are the smoking and drinking habits of women and men?

EIGE will present the Gender Equality Index 2017 in Brussels on 11 October. Tune in from wherever you are by watching EIGE's live-stream of the event, starting from 9:00 CEST. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for live tweets and updates throughout the day, using the hashtag #EIGEIndex

The Gender Equality Index is a tool to measure the progress of gender equality in the EU. The Index has six core domains – work, money, knowledge, time, power and health – and two satellite domains: violence against women and intersecting inequalities. It gives more visibility to areas that need improvement and ultimately supports policy makers to design more effective gender equality measures.

For more information, please contact Rainer Wenning, rainer.wenning@eige.europa.eu

To read more about the Index, visit our [website](#)

Image: NothingIsEverything/Shutterstock.com

European Energy Union: make it a triple win, says European civil society

Concerns over the social costs and the financing of the energy transition ran through all panel discussions at the EESC's European Energy Dialogue, organised by the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels on 8 September. The event focused on the European Commission's proposed [Clean Energy for All Europeans package](#) as seen by a wide spectrum of civil society stakeholders debating with European institutions and market players.

Hailed by all players as a very positive set of measures bringing together for the first time energy and climate action into a coherent programme, the Clean Energy for all Europeans package raises nonetheless some serious concerns. Dubbed a **"regulatory trilemma"** by one speaker because of its ambition to combine environmental protection and security of supply with affordability, it raises civil society's doubts as regards the social dimension – first and foremost the way it deals with the **burning issue of energy poverty**, which is estimated to affect 50 million people in Europe.

In opening the conference EESC President **Georges Dassis** said: *"Everyone is in favour of renewables. But the Commission should be careful to ensure that the financing of such energies, which I strongly support, does not weigh equally on those that are at the top and at the bottom of the income pyramid. An energy policy is inconceivable without a social policy"*.

"It seems that the EC's preferred position is to rely on technology, smart meters, active consumers, local energy communities and competition to provide a fair deal for consumers", noted Frédéric Coffre, Vice-President of the National Energy Ombudsman Network (NEON). **But is it realistic, asked civil society stakeholders, to expect people living from pay check to pay check to invest in solar panels or photovoltaic equipment, or to spare the money to buy more energy efficient appliances when they have to choose between buying food and heating their homes? They should not be forced into making investments that they cannot, or are not ready to, make, nor expected to subsidise the investments made by the more affluent. Social tariffs should not be banned but may need to be considered as necessary to protect vulnerable consumers, said civil society stakeholders.**

Participants also voiced concerns about the job implications of the energy transition, and the need for measures to shield regions that rely on the production of fossil fuel such as coal and shale from the adverse consequences of the energy transition. ETUC's Confederal Secretary Montserrat Mir, also stressed that *"an energy transition based on the offshoring of manufacturing activity and the import of low cost goods cannot be a just transition. To keep citizen support we need a transition that creates quality jobs"*.

As the brunt of funds would have to come from private capital, all agreed that a stable investing environment to encourage long-term engagement was of paramount importance. The lack of fiscal incentives was underlined as the missing element in the Energy Union. Price incentives were pointed to as the most effective tool to raise awareness and get people to be creative in a drive to avoid costs and reduce energy consumption. *“Why do we still use public money to support investments that are environmentally harmful?”*, wondered some, while others suggested shifting tax away – for example from labour towards carbon – as an instrument which had been shown to produce growth.

While energy scores very low in consumer satisfaction compared to other services, it is also the area where Europe can bring citizens the most tangible benefits, and the Energy Union is potentially one of the few projects around which all 27 Member States can converge. In closing the conference **Pierre-Jean Coulon**, president of the EESC section responsible for energy (TEN), said: *“Building an Energy Union is not just creating one more institution for the sake of its symbolic value. It is building the capacity for European citizens to live a bit better tomorrow than they did yesterday. This is our role, it is the role of each and every one of us and if there is one way we can achieve this, it is not individually, but collectively.”*

To learn more about the EESC’s recent work on energy:

To find out more:

Upcoming events and initiatives

- 7 November – European Parliament event on the financing of the energy transition
- 26 October – WWF event on stakeholder participation in the definition of national plans
- WWF joint statement seeking support for on the content of long-term strategies
- Joint project by WWF, Ecologic Institute and Institute of European Studies to help stakeholders around the EU engage in the development of Member States’ energy and climate plans and strategies.

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[VIDEO: How has the EESC made a difference](#)

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Statement by Commissioner Christos Stylianides on the EU assistance mobilised for hurricane hit islands

"Hurricane Irma has left a trail of devastation across many countries. It is our moral duty to help those in need whose lives and homes are being destroyed or severely threatened. We stand in full solidarity with all those in the Caribbean and in the USA during and after the storm. For as long as it takes. Last week we mobilised our emergency response tools and our 24/7 Emergency Response Coordination Centre has been in continuous coordination with our EU Member States on any assistance required. Today additional EU funding is on its way. We have now released an initial amount of humanitarian assistance of €2 million for the most affected islands in the Caribbean. This will help support key sectors such as water and sanitation, health, waste management and logistics. Further EU funding for reconstruction efforts is of course available in terms of longer term assistance. This new support comes on top of our EU Copernicus satellite support, which has been providing essential mapping services since last week. EU humanitarian experts deployed across the region continue to help the local authorities and coordinate aid deliveries. Let me make it clear that any country in the region can request our help through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. We stand ready to provide any further assistance to the affected countries." The statement is available [here](#). [Video](#) and [photo](#) coverage of Commissioner Stylianides recent visit to the Commission's Emergency Response Coordination Centre are also available. A [factsheet](#) is available 'EU: a world leader in helping those affected by crises'. (For more information Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of GTA by Cinven and CPPIB

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over GTA of Switzerland by Fifth Cinven Fund, managed by Cinven Capital Management (V) General Partner Limited ("Cinven") of the UK, and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board ("CPPIB") of Canada. GTA is engaged in intermediation of travel services, in particular business-to-business intermediation of hotel accommodation. Cinven is a private equity firm providing investment management and investment advisory services. CPPIB is an investment management organisation which invests the funds of the Canada Pension Plan. CPPIB and Cinven jointly control the Hotelbeds Group, a travel service provider, and Travel Holdings Parent Corporation, a travel brokerage company. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the companies' moderate combined market positions resulting from the proposed transaction and the presence of a number of strong competitors providing hotel intermediation across the EEA and at national level. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8520](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

EU mobilises further assistance for Hurricane Irma hit islands: Statement by Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides

"Hurricane Irma has left a trail of devastation across many countries.

It is our moral duty to help those in need whose lives and homes are being destroyed or severely threatened.

We stand in full solidarity with all those in the Caribbean and in the USA during and after the storm. For as long as it takes.

Last week we mobilised our emergency response tools and our 24/7 Emergency Response Coordination Centre has been in continuous coordination with our EU Member States on any assistance required.

Today additional EU funding is on its way.

We have now released an initial amount of humanitarian assistance of €2 million for the most affected islands in the Caribbean. This will help support key sectors such as water and sanitation, health, waste management, logistics.

Further EU funding for reconstruction efforts is of course available in terms of longer term assistance. This new support comes on top of our EU Copernicus satellite support, which has been providing essential mapping services since last week.

EU humanitarian experts deployed across the region continue to help the local authorities and coordinate aid deliveries.

Let me make it clear that any country in the region can request our help through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. We stand ready to provide any further assistance to the affected countries."

Background

The EU mobilised all its emergency response tools last week before Hurricane Irma approached the Caribbean. As a first step last week, the EU's Copernicus satellite mapping system was activated to deliver high quality maps for Guadeloupe, Saint Barthélemy and Saint Martin at the request of France, and of Sint Maarten at the request of the Netherlands, as well as for the British Virgin Islands. The Commission has also activated Copernicus for areas of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

The Commission is also supporting a Disaster Relief Emergency Fund operation by the International Federation of the Red Cross, providing basic relief kits to the affected populations in Antigua and Barbuda. Furthermore, a team of EU humanitarian experts is deployed in Haiti and in the Dominican Republic. The EU also supported the US authorities during Hurricane Harvey by providing use of its Copernicus satellite service.

For more information

[Factsheet “EU: a world leader in helping those affected by crises”](#)

[Factsheet “EU Civil Protection Mechanism”](#)

[Video](#) and [photo](#) of Commissioner Stylianides’ recent visit to the Commission’s Emergency Response Coordination Centre

Video: [European Commission’s Emergency Response Centre](#)

[Website of the Commission’s Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#)