



Annual report 2022



RED CROSS
EU OFFICE

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Message from the Red Cross EU Office

As the world was still recovering from COVID-19, another humanitarian crisis impacted Europe in 2022. The response to the Russia-Ukraine international armed conflict significantly impacted our work throughout the year and continues to do so. National Red Cross Societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) have been working tirelessly on the response, based on our fundamental principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

While COVID-19 had already stressed the importance of mental health and wellbeing, the conflict dramatically exacerbated psychosocial and mental health needs. It exposed millions of people to extremely distressing situations as they feared for their safety, the loss of loved ones or severe damage to the infrastructure of their homes. National Red Cross Societies in Europe are responding to these needs by providing mental health services and psychosocial support. In 2022, the Red Cross network reached 328,000 people from Ukraine with mental health support.

The international armed conflict has caused displacement of a magnitude which Europe has not seen in decades. Beyond Ukraine's borders, National Red Cross Societies across the European Union (EU) have supported people along their different routes and as they settle into their new homes. 1.8 million people from Ukraine were supported to find shelter in temporary collective accommodation or with host families, through rental assistance or housing rehabilitation.

In front of this backdrop, this report represents some examples of how, together with our members, we have stepped up our collaboration with the EU institutions on the areas of social inclusion, migration and asylum, humanitarian aid, civil protection and development cooperation. We kept advancing on our traditional themes such as climate change and long-term care, while exploring new areas of influencing. For the first time, we produced an analysis of the EU budget to ensure that in 2023 it would follow a principled and people-centred approach to boosting resilience, strengthening social cohesion and reaching the most vulnerable groups.

Until now an internal document for our members, this Annual Report 2022 is the first fully public edition of its kind. It serves as a tool to showcase how we are implementing the Red Cross EU Strategy 2022-2027 which, together with our members, we committed to undertake in relation to our engagement with EU institutions from 2022 to 2027. Our different activities, presented in this report, respond to our three interlinked and mutually reinforcing goals: to heighten Red Cross influence on EU policy, to increase EU resources for our domestic and international work, and to serve our members on EU-related issues.

We hope you enjoy the read.

Cover photo:

Polish Red Cross volunteers and IFRC staff work in a cash assistance distribution centre for people displaced from Ukraine, which also provides friendly spaces for children, in Warsaw, May 2022.

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Our response to the Russia-Ukraine international armed conflict

Since the escalation of the conflict on 24 February 2022, the Red Cross has been responding to

humanitarian needs in Ukraine and in bordering countries by providing principled humanitarian assistance and strengthening response capacities. 58 National Red Cross Societies, including 27 of our members, have provided on-the-ground and remote, financial and in-kind support to impacted people.

Heightening influence

To respond to the humanitarian crisis, the European Union (EU) mobilised the different instruments at its disposal, including the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and more standard humanitarian aid. The European Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) was central to coordinating the EU response to the humanitarian crisis. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) provided a Liaison Officer to the ERCC for four months to support information exchange between the Red Cross and the EU. This was part of an agreement made between the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) and the IFRC aimed at enhancing the operational cooperation and coordination.

On 3 March, EU Member States took the unprecedented decision to activate the EU Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), allowing most of the people fleeing Ukraine to access immediate protection status, comprehensive information about rights, and rapid access to education, housing, the labour market and healthcare. Since the activation, we have shared with EU institutions concerns and practices in relation to its national implementation. Specifically, we asked for a uniform application of the TPD across the EU on the basis of the [European Commission's guidelines](#). We supported the efforts of our members by producing an analysis of the TPD, regular assessments of the European Commission's guiding documents, and recommendations on the EU response to the displacement from Ukraine.

We also facilitated participation of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society in high-level events. Its Director-General, Maksym Dotsenko, highlighted the humanitarian impact of the conflict at the European Humanitarian Forum. In October, in collaboration

with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation in Brussels, we welcomed the Ukrainian Red Cross Society in Brussels and organised bilateral exchanges with DG ECHO, DG Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) and DG Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), complementing dialogues in Kyiv with the EU delegation and DG ECHO representatives.

Increasing EU resources

In 2022, we stepped-up our engagement with DG SANTE and DG HOME in their response to displacement from Ukraine. The IFRC and its Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support partnered with DG SANTE to develop and implement psychological first aid tools to respond to, and offset, the very real psychological needs of people fleeing the international armed conflict. The project received an initial €7.4 million through EU4Health for the most impacted Member States. It started in July 2022 with National Societies in Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine participating. In February 2023, the project was extended to 19 additional Member States, with a broadened budget of €28.4 million. The project will run until mid-2025.

As part of the Commission's [10-Point Plan for Ukraine](#), DG HOME launched the [Safe Homes initiative](#) in March to leverage private housing within the accommodation response, and develop guidelines for Member States to follow when organising accommodation in private homes. We contributed to the initiative by collecting and sharing National Red Cross Societies' expertise in private hosting schemes. After presenting Red Cross inputs to Member States representatives and Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson at the launch of the Safe Homes initiative on 13 July, we had the opportunity to develop a project proposal to test and operationalise the guidelines. The Safe Homes programme, a year-long project with a budget of €5.5 million, incorporates an operational and a lessons-learned module and covers activities related to private hosting by National Red Cross Societies in 10 EU Member States.

Serving members

Throughout 2022, as part of our efforts to analyse and influence the EU's response to Ukrainian displacement, we provided regular updates to our members about the European Commission's policy and funding initiatives and facilitated their inputs on their individual Ukraine responses towards the EU institutions.

Heightening influence

Positioning the Red Cross on long-term care at EU level

In September 2022, in parallel with the launch of the [Communication on a European Care Strategy](#) by the European Commission, we launched [Red Cross Approach: Caring for older people in age-friendly communities](#). The first Red Cross publication on the topic, the booklet showcases good practices, challenges and lessons learned by 17 National Red Cross Societies in the EU on healthy ageing processes and long-term care services. Through a principled approach centred around meeting the needs of older people, National Red Cross Societies showed their extensive experience in developing community-based programmes to support access to services and in promoting healthy ageing practices for older people to live with dignity in age-friendly environments as well as intergenerational exchange. Using evidence of existing programmes, the booklet describes the Red Cross' three-fold approach: volunteerism in long-term care, age-friendly communities and home care.

During an event hosted by MEP Frances Fitzgerald in the European Parliament, six National Red Cross Societies presented national practices highlighting the Red Cross' commitment to ensuring access to high-quality home and community-based care for older people. Our members stressed the need to encourage active and healthy ageing by optimising health, stimulating inclusion and enabling wellbeing in older age. They also underlined the need for national governments to invest in home care services, allowing older people to live independently and remain in their familiar environment.

The idea of creating this publication originated in 2021 after we identified, together with our members, the need to better support older people and their families, which had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The long-term care needs of older people have long been treated as a secondary policy area, shifting the responsibility to family members, particularly women. COVID-19 exposed the shortfalls of Europe's care systems: insufficient access and availability of services, inadequate monitoring mechanisms to measure the quality of services, staff shortages and over-reliance on informal carers.

The work leading up to the publication was crucial to position the Red Cross as a relevant actor on the issue of care as the European Care Strategy was being developed. To inform its strategy, the



The French Red Cross hosts an activity with animals at the Florence Nightingale residential centre for dependent older people in Argenteuil, April 2022.
© Alex Bonnemaïson / French Red Cross

European Commission's DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) and the DG for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) organised a consultation in March 2022. With contributions from 16 National Red Cross Societies, we identified several areas of action and relevance: the need to invest in services to foster independent living among older people, to strengthen the social inclusion of older people by fighting loneliness and promoting intergenerational exchanges, and to support families and informal carers. We also provided recommendations on access to affordable and high-quality long-term care.

Sustaining efforts to influence the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum

2022 was a key year for National Red Cross Societies' advocacy work on the Pact on Migration and Asylum, with hints towards the start of the negotiations on the Pact legislative files. In June, Member States endorsed a [solidarity declaration](#) which includes a temporary voluntary mechanism for the relocation of people rescued at sea. In September, the European Parliament and the trio of Presidencies of the Council of the EU [agreed to finalise negotiations](#) on the Pact and the 2016 reform package of the Common European Asylum System by February 2024. During the final months of 2022, the [recast Reception Conditions Directive](#), the Qualification Regulation, and the EU Resettlement and Humanitarian Admissions Framework were adopted.

During the French Presidency of the Council of the EU, together with the French Red Cross, we met with government counterparts to share examples of the impact the Pact might have on the provision of humanitarian assistance and access to asylum for arriving migrants. Similarly, the German Red Cross, the Netherlands Red Cross and the Swedish



After the announcement that Pozzallo (Sicily) was assigned as a Port of Safety, survivors and crew get ready for disembarkation of the 306 survivors rescued in 8 separate operations, July 2022. © Annalisa Ausilio / IFRC

Red Cross also held meetings with policymakers in the European Parliament and the Council of the EU to discuss challenges in identifying and treating persons with vulnerabilities, maintaining family unity in asylum and border procedures, using immigration detention in administrative procedures, and expanding safe pathways to Europe.

In parallel with the Pact negotiations, the European Commission introduced the 'instrumentalisation package' comprising proposals for an amended Schengen Borders Code and for a regulation addressing instrumentalisation in migration and asylum. We submitted amendments to both pieces of legislation, seeking to remove the term 'instrumentalisation' and its codification in EU law as this approach risks permanent derogations in asylum, reception and return standards, impacting the access of migrants to fair procedures and the public perception of migration.

These legislative changes occur amid an increasing number of violent incidents and loss of life at the EU's sea and land borders. With National Red Cross Societies and the IFRC, we have closely engaged with the European Commission, Member States' representations and other civil society organisations to highlight the humanitarian impact of the lack of coordinated search and rescue activities, as demonstrated through the findings of the IFRC and SOS Méditerranée cooperation in the Central Mediterranean.

We will continue influencing EU governments to prioritise humanity and EU values during the last phase of the Pact negotiations, in coordination with other key actors of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, including the ICRC thanks to its experience documenting the needs of migrants along the routes to Europe.

Increasing EU resources

Promoting an EU budget that reflects the increasing needs of vulnerable communities

Each year, the European Parliament and EU Member States negotiate on which priorities the annual allocations of the seven-year EU Multiannual Financial Framework will be spent. This negotiation procedure is based on a draft proposed by the European Commission.

In June 2022, we shared our views on the draft with our members to support them in their dialogue with national governments to feed into the positions of the Council of the EU. Meanwhile, we shared our recommendations with key members of the European Parliament engaged in the EU budget negotiations.

For 2023, based on our members' priorities, we called on the EU to address the most pressing challenges, responding to the impacts of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and supporting the socio-economic recovery from COVID-19 while guaranteeing predictability, transparency and access to funding for local actors.

Particularly, for intra-EU programmes, we called for more investments in frontline services, health and inclusion to overcome rising social exclusion and poverty, as well as ensuring that non-profit service providers are supported and that EU funding for health reaches the people most in need, including through mental health services and psychosocial support.

On EU funding for migration, we advocated for the EU to ensure adequate financial support to meet the increasing needs of receiving, protecting and integrating third country nationals arriving in Europe. We also called for upholding human rights compliance in the financing of decentralised agencies involved in migration and border management,

such as Frontex, and for enhancing compliance with protection standards in all operations.

On disaster management and humanitarian aid, we called for EU funding to be principled, predictable and transparent. The localisation agenda aims to increase international investment and respect for the role of local actors, to expand the reach, effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian action. We called for increased support to locally led adaptation and resilience building across EU programmes and for dedicated support to local actors in partner countries outside the EU.

After the institutions adopted their respective positions, without reaching an agreement on a common text and starting the ‘conciliation procedure’, we published our recommendations asking for a people-centred approach to boost resilience, strengthen social cohesion and reach the most vulnerable people.

Finally, on 23 November 2022, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament approved the 2023 EU budget of EUR 186.6 billion (+10% more than the initial budget), focused on funding for programmes and policies seen as vital to addressing the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine, including the energy crisis, contributing to post-pandemic recovery, and strengthening the green and digital transitions. In line with our recommendations, we welcomed increased allocations to the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and some additional funding for EU external action.

While this seemed like an adequate budget for 2023 – excluding the decrease of EU4Health funding – the flexibility and amount of money left to address potential future crises is not enough. We will continue to engage and provide recommendations

After the floods in Pakistan, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, supported by the Norwegian Red Cross and IFRC, provides humanitarian assistance to affected families by providing health services, installing water treatment plants and distributing cash, food, tents, blankets and hygiene kits, September 2022.
© Norwegian Red Cross



on key issues of concern to ensure that future EU budgets provide the means to respond to the increasing needs of vulnerable communities in and outside the EU.

Showcasing the Red Cross' localisation and climate action work

Local actors, including National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and their local branches, play a leadership role in crisis response operations in their own countries, as they can ensure early response and access, acceptance and cost effectiveness. However, technical and legal barriers often prevent organisations and donors from collaborating directly with local actors.

In 2022, we seized various opportunities at EU level to highlight the importance of increasing funding for local actors to respond to the most pressing needs and provide a secure space, as well as to increase the reach, effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian action. Over the summer, we engaged our members in a consultation on the development of DG ECHO localisation guidance to reiterate these needs. The 6th European Union–African Union Summit gave the opportunity for us to call for flexible and targeted funding for local actors such as National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Throughout the year, we also engaged with EU institutions to position National Red Cross Societies and their work to address the impacts of climate change. The IFRC developed the Global Climate Resilience Platform, a multi-year fundraising initiative with the aim of significantly improving and expanding the community-based climate action work of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world. Building on analyses of the EU context and initiatives, we supported the process and engaged in discussion with EU decision-makers to strengthen the definition of relevant priority areas. In 2022, we also supported the promotion of the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations, developed by the IFRC and the ICRC in the previous year. This intends to help humanitarian organisations play their part and highlight their relevance in responding to the climate and environmental crises. In April, just after the first European Humanitarian Forum, the European Commission became a supporter on behalf of the EU.

The previous efforts of our members to position the Red Cross as a relevant actor to address the impacts of climate change allowed us to elaborate on common areas of interests between the EU and

the Red Cross Red Crescent network, and brainstorm on future opportunities. These engagements led to joint collaboration on the EU and international scene such as COP27. There, our members held several panels at the EU Pavilion, with interventions by EU representatives on topics such as anticipatory action and nature-based solutions. These panels were a means to reiterate possible EU support to Red Cross work on climate-related issues, including through global approaches such as the Global Climate Resilience Platform.

The efforts to engage with EU institutions to increase the visibility of Red Cross work led to DG ECHO allocating more than EUR 8 million to the IFRC to support its Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) throughout 2022. This essential fund rapidly allocates support to National Societies for early and anticipatory action and immediate disaster response. Over the year, from flooding in Latin America to diseases outbreaks in East Africa and earthquakes in Asia, the EU supported 67 DREF operations in 52 countries.

Serving members

Showcasing the Red Cross disaster risk management work in high-level events

At a time of unprecedented humanitarian needs, record numbers of people experiencing displacement, and the impacts of climate change pushing the humanitarian system to breaking point, more needs to be done to find sustainable solutions to protracted crises, better anticipate disasters, and invest in local capacities. Throughout 2022, we facilitated the participation of our members in high-level events organised by the EU to discuss many of the most pressing global issues.

On 21–23 March, the first European Humanitarian Forum took place in Brussels, co-organised by DG ECHO and the French Presidency of the Council of

A mountain rescue team of the regional German Red Cross branch in Saxony safeguards firefighters navigating steep terrain following forest fires, August 2022. © DRK LV Sachsen



the EU. The main objective was to create a platform for various stakeholders to discuss how to meet humanitarian challenges and make humanitarian action more efficient given increasing gaps in funding. Our members actively contributed to the forum's preparation and were well represented at the event, speaking on five panels and running seven humanitarian talks. Among the key partners invited to the forum, the IFRC was represented by two Under Secretary Generals who contributed to panels on climate change, localisation and humanitarian leadership. In addition, six National Red Cross Societies from EU Member States spoke at sessions on a wide range of topics, including innovative financing, crisis communication and addressing mental health and psychosocial support needs in humanitarian settings. The Director-General of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society also joined a special session organised to discuss the humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

On 28 and 29 June, we participated in the European Civil Protection Forum. Organised every two years by DG ECHO, this brought together European practitioners and decision-makers to take stock of common achievements in disaster risk management, share best practices and discuss ways to address new challenges together. The forum also aimed at strengthening cooperation between the EU, strategic international partners and the European neighbourhood. The Red Cross was represented at two high-level panels. Maarten van Aalst, Director of the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre at the time, spoke at the plenary session on prevention and Brigitta Sáfár, Head of Disaster Management at the Hungarian Red Cross, participated in the workshop on response. Two other National Red Cross Societies were present with stands: the Austrian Red Cross presented their project [StrengthVOL](#), funded by the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, which aims to integrate Red Cross volunteers into the national civil protection systems in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. The French Red Cross, together with the Dauphine University of Paris, displayed its research on how a data ecosystem can support disaster risk reduction as a cooperation effort in a cross-border region.

Trio National Society approach to better influence EU Presidencies

In 2022, we continued strengthening our engagement with the rotating Presidencies of the Council of the EU. Member States holding the Presidency work closely together in groups of three (trios), setting long-term goals and preparing a common agenda



French Red Cross young volunteers participate in a commemoration ceremony of the anniversary of 8 May 1945 in France, 2018. © Martine Mouchy


determining the major issues that will be addressed by the Council over an 18-month period. In January 2022, a new trio made up of France, Czechia and Sweden took up duties chairing the Council. With our support, the National Red Cross Societies from the trio of Presidencies worked together in a coordinated manner to influence the Presidency agendas and look together across the three presidencies.

Between January and June, France held the Presidency of the Council. At the beginning of this period, the French Red Cross set up a programme with four main priorities: youth, homelessness, response to crisis and social economy. Throughout this time, different events were organised. On 8 February, together with the French Red Cross, we hosted a high-level conference on combatting homelessness in Europe, in which more than 15 National Red Cross Societies participated, including the Czech Red Cross and the Swedish Red Cross. Sponsored by the French Presidency, the event was an opportunity to present the [Red Cross Approach to Combatting Homelessness](#), and to discuss strategies to support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless through prevention, response and actions to exit homelessness. In March 2022, in the context of the French Presidency, the French Permanent Representation invited the then Director-General of the French Red Cross, Jean-Christophe Combe, to participate in the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting

with EU Ministers and the Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, on the health and social issues faced by people displaced from Ukraine in Europe.

Czechia held the Council Presidency during the second half of the year. The Czech Red Cross continued heightening Red Cross influence on topics such as crisis response and resilience, including support to Ukraine and pandemic preparedness. On 24 October, together with the French Red Cross and the Spanish Red Cross, we participated in a conference organised by the Czech Presidency on energy poverty to share the work of the Red Cross in mitigating the impact of increasing energy prices across Europe. It was an opportunity to show the effects of rising energy prices on energy poverty, but also on the cost of services run by National Red Cross Societies, which could lead to a reduction in the scope of the services provided and people reached.

In 2023, we will work with the Swedish Red Cross during the last Presidency of the trio. We will also facilitate a smooth transition between the current trio of National Red Cross Societies and the upcoming one, formed by the Spanish Red Cross, the Belgian Red Cross and the Hungarian Red Cross, to ensure continuity in engagement on Red Cross priority issues.

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Representing National Societies in the EU, Norway and Iceland, and the IFRC

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The International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is committed to, and bound by its seven fundamental principles
HUMANITY | IMPARTIALITY | NEUTRALITY | INDEPENDENCE | VOLUNTARY SERVICE | UNITY | UNIVERSALITY