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FACT SHEET

Central African Republic

EU response to the crisis

The EU has been at the forefront of the international efforts to stabilize the Central African Republic (CAR), to support the transition process and help put the country on track towards a sustainable recovery. This political process should be broad-based, inclusive and locally-led, with strong citizens' involvement if it is to stand the test of time. The EU maintains a regular dialogue with the CAR authorities, in close coordination with its international partners.

The EU is CAR's main development partner and the main provider of humanitarian assistance. Since 2013, the EU has contributed a total amount of €85.5 million for humanitarian activities. A package of €119 million was adopted in 2014 for development and cooperation programmes and since 2013 another €32.5 million has been channeled to CAR through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace. An EU Trust Fund ("Bêkou") endowed with €74 million, has also been set up in order to boost CAR's resilience, following the so-called "*Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development*" approach. The EU also provided €125 million of support to MISCA (the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic) from the African Peace Facility – the goal was to reinforce MISCA's operational capacity before its transformation into a full UN Peace Keeping Operation (MINUSCA).

EU priorities in the Central African Republic

The EU's comprehensive approach covers a number of priorities:

1) Security

Security is essential in order to restore stable government to CAR and to allow social and economic activity to be re-established.

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EUFOR RCA was the EU's principal tool in this area: EUFOR RCA was a military operation deployed by the European Union, launched in April 2014 and operational until March 2015. Major-General Philippe Pontières (FR) served as EU Operation Commander. The overall cost of the operation was approximately € 32 million. Deployed in the Bangui area, it contributed to the international efforts to provide a secure environment and to protect the populations most at risk, creating the conditions for the provision of humanitarian aid. EUFOR achieved a smooth hand-over to MINUSCA when it closed earlier this year.

EUMAM RCA is the recently launched military advisory mission (March 2015): this has longer term goals – firstly to advise the CAR authorities on how to ensure security across the entire territory of the country and secondly on the preparation of the upcoming Security Sector Reform. More specifically, EUMAM RCA will advise the CAR armed forces (FACA) on managing existing resources, and on how to build the capacity and quality needed for modernised effective and accountable Armed Forces, ahead of preparation of broader reforms that will be primarily supported by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

The mission will also advise the FACA on policy and plans, management of human resources, Rule of Law, training, logistics, medical, finance and budget, as well as staff organization and management. The areas of governance and of oversight of armed forces in democratic societies, human rights, gender and legal issues will be addressed. EUMAM RCA is located in Bangui. Brigadier General Dominique Laugel is the EU Mission Commander, with a team of up to 60 staff.

2) Humanitarian emergency

The Central African Republic has gone through the worst humanitarian crisis since its independence. More than half of the 4.6 million population are in immediate need of humanitarian assistance. There are 436,000 internally displaced people, including almost 44,000 in the capital. Over 461,000 Central African nationals are refugees in Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Republic of Congo, with almost 220 000 new arrivals since December 2013.

The European Union is the largest humanitarian donor in CAR. The European Commission and Member States have substantially scaled up their humanitarian engagement in the light of the evolving needs, from €20 million in 2012, to €81 million in 2013. In 2014, humanitarian aid (Commission and Member States) amounted to over €130 million. In 2015 and to date, already more than €47 million have been committed by the EU (EC and Member States) of which €14 million by the European Commission as a response to the most urgent needs in CAR. These funds support protection, access to health care, food and nutrition assistance, drinking-water distribution, sanitation services, logistics and humanitarian coordination. Life-saving assistance is provided to those in need within CAR as well as to refugees in neighbouring countries. In addition, the EU has organised repeated airlifts of life-saving items and aid personnel into CAR to help the victims.

A team of European humanitarian experts is closely monitoring the situation in the field, assessing the needs and overseeing the use of EU funds.

3) Stabilisation

Through a 2013 €12 million stabilisation package, financed by the EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), the EU provides support to restore police facilities in Bangui, to build independent media capacity, to promote community dialogue and peace, to deploy Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) observation missions, and discourage and prevent armed violence at community level.

A €4.8 million IcSP project to support communities at risk is focused on protecting and preserving mixed communities in certain areas of Bangui (where Christians and Muslims continue to co-habit and to interact), helping to maintain a basis for future reconciliation. Building on the extremely positive impacts of this so far, an extension will be implemented, with a budget of €10 million, in the most fragile provinces of CAR – as well as working on retaining mixed communities this will address the pressing needs generated by return movements from ex-combatants and their dependents, and youth at risk of being manipulated and recruited into criminal gangs and armed groups. The action also contributes to the rehabilitation of local economies.

Another €4.65 million IcSP project offers support to the transition process in CAR. In order to facilitate political dialogue it provides support to the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD) who will establish a permanent dialogue mechanism to accompany the transition process. In addition, as Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights of those affected by the displacement will inevitably be a major concern, the project provides support through the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and seeks to strengthen HLP rights with local authorities, humanitarian actors and community leaders while also organising an information campaign for those affected.

A new €3 million IcSP action is currently being launched. It aims to provide support to civic education, to build civil society capacity for election observation and to strengthen civilian oversight of the Ministry of Defence (a critical aspect of any Security Sector Reform).

The EU Delegation also implements a number of projects supporting NGOs' efforts to strengthen civil society in addressing the challenges of the transition, including on the response to the grave human rights abuses that have taken place in CAR since the beginning of the current crisis.

An inclusive electoral process will be a vital part of the transition and the overall political process. CAR is to conduct a referendum, legislative and presidential elections within the transition period. The EU has committed €20 million to provide support for the elections, through the UNDP.

4) Resilience and sustainable recovery

The EU's development cooperation has slowed down considerably due to the security and institutional situation, but it has been maintained. EU development activities aim to foster economic recovery, create livelihoods and help restore state presence.

The EU is also working on the transition from emergency response towards longer-term development assistance through an approach linking relief, rehabilitation and development. To respond to the needs of the population, the EU has prepared a package of development actions. The 2014 package includes four projects:

Restoration of basic social services in the CAR: Education and Health (€27 million). Support for the 2015 electoral process in the Central African Republic (€20 million). Support for the preservation and consolidation of the Central African Republic state (€33 million).

Bêkou (which means hope in Sango language) is the first EU Trust Fund. It was established in July 2014, by the European Union and three of its Member States (France, Germany and the Netherlands), with the aim to support projects that better link humanitarian and development actions and prepare the recovery of the Central African Republic. For an original total amount of €74 million (€51 million from the European Commission, €10 million from France, €10 million from Germany, €3 million from the Netherlands), it gives more flexibility to our cooperation in this specific and complex context of the CAR.

As of today, six projects have been approved by the Trust Fund's Operational Committee, on health (€15 million), on urban rehabilitation (€4.5 million), on gender (€1.5 million), on food security (€10 million), on limiting the effects of the CAR crisis in region, focusing on refugees in the east of Cameroun (€4.5 million) and on a program to promote independence of economic actors and economic re-launch (€11 million). The first contracts were signed at the beginning of 2015 and activities on the field have already started, benefiting around 1 million people.

Currently a State Building Contract 2015-2016 is under preparation for a total amount of €40 million, out of which, if agreed by the Member States, €25 million will be disbursed in 2015 and €15 million in 2016, as budget support for the preservation of vital state functions.

5) Regional impact of the crisis

In order to mitigate the regional impact of the CAR crisis on neighbouring countries, the EU has been active to provide targeted humanitarian assistance for recent arrivals from CAR in border regions in Chad, Cameroun and DRC (€14 million). Through an ongoing IcSP-funded cross-border project in Chad and Cameroon, it also facilitates the integration of returnees/refugees in host communities and helps prevent potential radicalisation (€12 million).
