

## EUPRHA Concept Paper

The purpose of this paper is to set the basic framework in which the EUPRHA project will work, in terms of basic concepts and scope for the project

### 1. What is humanitarian action?

An organised set of actions oriented to protect, help and assist people in distress or need, based on certain ethical values and attitudes.

This encompasses:

- protecting human life and dignity,
- satisfying basic needs,
- alleviating suffering,
- protecting human rights, and
- prevent and reducing future risks.

### 2. What is the Humanitarian scope for this project, where is the focus?

This project will focus on what is needed within the Higher Education sector in Europe to meet the needs of humanitarian actors, seen both from the perspective of individual learners but also the needs within NGOs for their staff and the staff of private humanitarian contractors, research centres and national and international humanitarian agencies.

### 3. What it is not for the purposes of this project

- Medium to long term development,
- Crises that are not humanitarian in nature,
- Human rights education,
- Migration phenomena beyond humanitarian displacements.

### 4. What are the challenges?

- Engaging humanitarian actors and education users efficiently: The project and various project members will need to engage at a number of points throughout the life of the project with NGOs, (and other humanitarian actors), who are potentially our biggest supporters and 'customers' of project's outcomes.
- Designing relevant framework that supports educators: The NGO sector has developed some initiatives related to a Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework, (e.g.: in the UK CBHA<sup>1</sup>). Also NOHA has developed a specific set of competencies for its Master in Humanitarian Action. Other initiatives across the globe are taking place in this regard.
- This project needs to keep these initiatives in mind, evaluate it and look to adopt competencies from these frameworks wherever appropriate where it meets the needs of the universities, to facilitate transferability<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> CBHA: Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies.

<sup>2</sup> ELRHA Global Survey on Humanitarian Professionalisation, 2012.

“The EU defines the circumstances in which it will provide humanitarian assistance and aid. It does not provide a definition of humanitarian action.

**Paragraph 8.** “The objective of EU humanitarian aid is to provide a needs-based emergency response aimed at preserving life, preventing and alleviating human suffering and maintaining human dignity wherever the need arises if governments and local actors are overwhelmed, unable or unwilling to act. EU humanitarian aid encompasses assistance, relief and protection operations to save and preserve life in humanitarian crises or their immediate aftermath, but also actions aimed at facilitating or obtaining access to people in need and the free flow of assistance. EU humanitarian assistance is provided in response to man-made crises (including complex emergencies) and to natural disasters as needed.”

**Paragraph 9.** “Local response to crisis and disaster risk reduction, including disaster preparedness and recovery, are essential to saving lives and enabling communities to increase their resilience to emergencies. Capacity building activities to prevent and mitigate the impact of disasters and to enhance humanitarian response are also part of EU humanitarian aid.<sup>3</sup>”

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<sup>3</sup> Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission (2008/C 25/01).

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### 5. Where is humanitarian education delivered and why are universities engaged?

Where is humanitarian education delivered?

1. University programmes at a variety of levels,
2. Adult education programmes,
3. NGO internal programmes,
4. Private and state training providers,
5. Accredited prior learning (work based experience).

Why are universities engaged?

1. Create a coordinated stakeholder at the educational-participatory level.
2. Develop a tool for transparency and articulation of professions and the required knowledge, skills and competences as well as the corresponding training.
3. Development plan for the countries with lower level of exposure to HA but with interest for development in this field.

We should remain aware of the capacities within the Humanitarian sector as a whole (Universities, Agencies, NGOs, etc) to deliver on Humanitarian education and training and focus on the added value this project will bring to the sector<sup>4</sup>.

Following a decade in which the humanitarian sector has sought to develop global standards, codes and representative bodies, there is growing momentum to explore the potential for creating a unified system of professional development, accreditation and association, which could increase accountability, raise the quality and consistency of humanitarian service, open up the profession to talented new recruits, and raise the status of the humanitarian service provider to a level on a par with other professional groups. This would support the infrastructure for career paths with lifelong learning opportunities and support the retention of humanitarian workers over decades to come. This also prepares for the forecasted increases in natural and complex disasters where large swathes of civil society in many countries will necessarily be involved in relief work.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Walker, *What does it mean to be a professional humanitarian?*, in *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, Feinstein International Centre, 2004.

*The Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship* talks about the definition in terms of the underlying principles and these are to be taken into consideration throughout this EUPRHA project.

1. The objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations.

2. Humanitarian action should be guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, meaning the centrality of saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found; impartiality, meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations; neutrality, meaning that humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out; and independence, meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

3. Humanitarian action includes the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities, and the provision of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health services and other items of assistance, undertaken for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Endorsed in Stockholm, 17 June 2003.