

# ASSORT

# Guidelines v 1.1



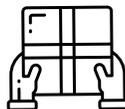
## 01 Quality



## 02 Sorting



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The ASSORT (Aid Standards for SORTing) project is a multi-group partnership that emerged from a shared recognition among aid groups that we needed a better way of working together. So many people were working towards the same goal, and providing critical support for entire communities of people. But, even though we were all trying to get the right kind of aid to communities in need as fast as they needed it, we realized we were losing time sorting and resorting aid as it passed from one organisation to the other.

**We needed a unified<sup>1</sup> standard!** So, after much discussion, a partnership was created between two sending and receiving organisations, as well as two tech-savvy aid distribution and logistics organisations, and ASSORT was born! With ASSORT in place, all organisations adopting the standard will be able to see their donations go directly from the collection box towards aid relief in the most effective and least wasteful way possible.

### How to Use This Document

This document is a detailed guide meant to help collection coordinators and long-term volunteers adopt ASSORT in their operations, as well as answer any questions about why the standards are what they are. It covers:

- How to quality check donations meant for distribution;
- How to sort donations into our standard categories and sizes; and
- How to box and label the sorted donations and ready them for shipment.

It also includes a short checklist-style document, intended to be printed off and stuck onto sorting stations to quickly educate new volunteers.

ASSORT was established as part of a joint partnership between Boxtribute, Distribute Aid, Intereuropean Human Aid Association, and HERMINE.

<sup>1</sup> ASSORT was designed to be fully compatible with the SPHERE Humanitarian Standards. For more information see: <https://spherestandards.org/humanitarian-standards/>

# 01 Quality Checking

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Quality checking is extremely important. No matter what it is, it is intended to be given, essentially as a gift, to someone who is in urgent need of aid.

## Before donating



Please wash and clean all donations! To disinfect donations and remove any parasites or bugs, wash at 60C degrees with detergent.

Note that the organisations working in the field are often overstretched and understaffed (and almost always extremely stressed). Setting up a laundry service may not be plausible.

## Stains



Donations with bleach stains, grass stains, red wine stains, suspicious brown stains on baby clothes, sweat stains, mould, or any other kind of stains are not accepted. We suggest inspecting donations before washing. If something will not come out in the wash, then don't bother washing it.

## Old donations



If you have donations that were quality checked once and then sat in storage for over a year, please check them again. Donations can deteriorate over time, especially if water or animals get into the box.

## Rips, Holes, and Repairs



Please check all buttons, zips, hems, and holes. If you are able to repair the donation with sewing skills, please do so! Jeans with designer rips (ripped on purpose) can be distributed, and are a popular item, so these items can pass through your quality control.

## Why Do We Want Clean Donations?



**Insulting** to hand out a smelly, dirty t-shirt to someone who we are ultimately trying to help.



**Difficult** for organisations to wash donations, and it is nearly impossible for many of our beneficiaries. Transitory populations (e.g. Calais and the Balkans) and stagnant populations have no access at all to any form of washing facilities.

**Hard to account for allergies** - We need to cater for everyone who may have allergies. No one wants to hand out a blanket with dog hair on it to someone who is allergic to dogs!



**Hard to account for health concerns** - When we receive sleeping bags after a festival we do not know who has slept in it and what it was used for.

**Hard to avoid tension** - It is quite likely that a new jumper will be handed out next to someone who is receiving a second hand jumper, and if there is an obviously wide disparity in quality, this can cause tension.

### Why Do We Want High Quality Donations?



**Missing buttons** - Trousers that are missing buttons to secure flies will ultimately keep falling down.

**Broken zips** - Coats and sleeping bags missing zips result in large amounts of heat being lost, especially at night. Hypothermia is a very real problem, and is potentially lethal.

**Frayed thread** - An unhemmed jumper will keep unravelling over time, multiplying the problem for the person wearing it.



**Generally shabby** - Generally shabby clothes can be uncomfortable to wear and may also deteriorate quickly.

**Holes** - Tents with holes are not waterproof and can bring in pests and debris.

**Weather** - Remember, these people we are all helping to support spend the vast majority of their time outside, exposed to the elements!

### In insensitive or Culturally Inappropriate Donations

Even if donations may not have any rips, holes, or stains, we still unfortunately may not be able to accept them, as it may cause offence and stoke tension to the people we are trying to help. Such items include:

**Clothes with political and/or religious symbols** - MAGA hats, references to Christianity or Satanism, even left wing political messages are ultimately a political statement.

**Children's school uniforms** - Anything with a school logo on it may be insulting to give out, as many children cannot go to school (any logo depicting a school's emblem).

**Culturally inappropriate clothing for women** - This includes mini-skirts, tops with spaghetti straps and anything that is see through (clothes need to cover the shoulders and knees).

**Clothes displaying graphic scenes** - e.g. with nudity, swear words, drugs.

**War or army references** - Logos of guns, stencils of 'US ARMY', dead bodies, skulls, even camouflage-style trousers can potentially be very triggering.

**Boats or sailing disasters** - Surfboards, anchors, and beach scenes are ok, but tops with strong references to a sailing or a boat disaster are not (e.g. "I refuse to sink").

**Easily misinterpreted logos** - Logos which could be easily misinterpreted as an insult (e.g. "Go Home! At sunrise", "Refused" or "There's no escape").



# 02 Sorting

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Sorting and sizing donations is a necessary step as frontline NGOs can then begin to plan a fair distribution, rapidly find items needed in an emergency, and keep track of stock. This helps to plan for future distributions as well. It's better to sort first and then size if applicable, since the sorting stage is easier and quicker than sizing. Plus, some field organisations may well prefer to do their own sizing as a final check.

We have talked to many field organisations to discover the best standard to adopt is to have an average to fit with the vast majority of organisations currently working across Europe. If you have previously categorised items in more detail (e.g. you separate jumpers, hoodies, fleeces, and round necks), then you do not need to keep on doing so. If you break an item down into 3 categories, and the receiving group mixes the 3 categories together again, then this is an inefficient use of your time. Leave sub-categorisation for the receiving groups, who can tailor these categories to the exact scenario they are facing!

Having a uniform system for sorting donations makes it easier to clear customs. Recent developments in Europe have seen new customs procedures that humanitarian aid also needs to align to.

Please try to align your categories as closely as possible to the list below, in order to promote greater interoperability through a standardised method of sorting donations for the whole of Europe! As much as possible, avoid shipping donation categories that are not explicitly requested by the receiving group. While well-intentioned, it is always best to work directly with the receiving group on what types of aid they need to save time and avoid unnecessary waste. Below is a list of the categories in bold.

If you receive a large donation of anything that does not fall into one of the above categories (e.g. football boots or football t-shirts), then the best thing to do is to reach out to the wider community to see where such items could be needed!

- **Please don't include formal office wear shirts, formal dinner jackets, blazers, or tweed jackets as they offer little protection from the raw elements and are not very robust.**
- **High heels either more than an inch or two high or open topped are not needed.**
- **Please only send gloves and shoes in pairs.**
- **Please only send new pairs of socks, underwear, and bras.**

## Sorting Clothes



— **Thick socks** - walking socks, thermal socks, thick wool socks, or anything else that would warm feet.



— **Thin socks** - ankle socks, thin cotton socks that could be worn to an office job or to a party.



— **Winter hats** - beanies, balaclavas, ear muffs.



— **Summer hats** - sun-caps, bucket hats.



— **Scarves** - includes snoods (a tube of fabric designed to be worn just around the neck, and not over the head).



— **Gloves** - fingerless are useful and popular with many beneficiaries.



— **Rubber rain boots, wellies, or gumboots** - waterproof boots made out of rubber and without holes.



— **Practical shoes** - walking boots, Timberland boots, or strong trail running shoes with laces and insoles. These have a good tread, warm the feet, and are robust. They will provide ankle support and are fit for the colder months.



— **Light shoes** - canvas shoes (Vans, Nikes or Converse, light sports trainers, or leather shoes). Most will have a weaker tread and typically fail to warm the feet as much as a Practical Shoe. They will provide ankle support, but are only suitable for the warmer months of the year.



— **Flip flops or sandals** - anything to be worn on the beach, that is open on the top and sides. They do not have any form of support.



— **Abayas** - a long loose dress that is typically worn by Muslim women.



— **Hijabs** - must be relatively opaque and large enough to cover someone's head.



— **Jumpers** - hoodies, v-neck, crewneck, roundneck, fleeces, cardigans. Think of these as a "mid-layer".



— **Long sleeve tops** - long sleeve lumberjack-style shirts, long sleeve thermal tops and long sleeve cotton tops. Think of these as a long sleeve "base-layer".



— **T-shirts** - includes polo shirts and short sleeve thermal tops. Think of these as a short sleeve "base-layer".



— **Undershirts and tank tops** - includes polo shirts and short sleeve thermal tops. Think of these as a short sleeve "base-layer".



— **Dresses and skirts** - please only send items made for teenagers and adults that covers the shoulders, goes down to the ankle, and is not see-through. Generally speaking, younger ages can wear less modest items, younger girls can wear shorter skirts.



— **Trousers** - jeans, work or cargo trousers, 'outdoorsy' trousers (e.g. from Mountain Warehouse, Arc'teryx or Berghaus). Office wear trousers, although very suitable for London, offer little use in Calais, the Aegean Islands, or most other places in the field.



— **Joggers** - includes tracksuits and jeggings. Something warmer and more comfortable than jeans or trousers with an elasticated waistband.



— **Leggings and tights** - includes long johns, thermal leggings for men and women, tights for women, and other trousers that are designed to be worn under ski suits. These are very warm, but require something to be worn over the top, whether for modesty or for practicality.



- **Shorts or short trousers** - includes sports shorts, cargo shorts,  $\frac{3}{4}$  length shorts. Please make sure any shorts for women reach below the knees.



- **Winter jackets** - thick, warm, and hooded waterproof coats. Best to think of these items as an “outer layer”.



- **Summer jackets** - thin jackets, typically more fashionable than practical, most are not waterproof, extremely light waterproof sports jackets.



- **Miscellaneous outer protective gear** - ski onesies, thick waterproof trousers, fireman trousers and jackets, or waterproof ponchos. These are items that do not clearly fall into any of the clothing categories, yet still provide a warm or waterproof layer, and are therefore needed.



- **Bodywarmers and sleeveless jumpers** - gilets/bodywarmers, sleeveless jumpers, or any kind of outerwear vest.



- **Underpants and underwear** - includes pants, Y-fronts. Please only send out new underwear. Please do not send out dirty, stained, or ripped underwear, and definitely no impractical lingerie, such as corsets.



- **Bras** - includes both underwired bras and bralettes (without underwire). Please ensure bras are new, comfortable, and functional.

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### Baby Clothes



- **Tops** - whether long sleeve or short, any sort of “base layer” for a baby.



- **Rompers or bodies** - a top which covers the crotch, typically with poppers or sometimes buttons.



- **Jumpers** - any sort of jumpers, hoodie, fleece, or other “mid layer” for a baby. These need to be long sleeved.



— **Jackets or snow suits** - any sort of outer layer, including snow suits and all forms of jackets. These need to be long sleeved.



— **Trousers** - anything that covers just the legs of a baby.



— **Onesies and pajamas** - anything that covers both the legs and arms.



Shoes



Socks



Hats



Gloves



Bibs



Blankets

## Hygiene Products

All hygiene products need to be brand new and unopened. Individually packaged hygiene products can be accepted (e.g. sample size shampoo bottles or individually wrapped sanitary pads), as long as the packaging is not broken.

To prevent breaks and spills, please pack newspaper or something similar around any shampoo bottles, shower gel, and/or sun cream.



— **Diapers** are in high demand. However, if possible please separate into sizes, as typically only one or two sizes are needed to fill gaps in stock.



— **Masks** are needed across the continent in response to COVID-19. Please separate out reusable, handmade, and cloth masks from single-use commercially bought ones, and then separate out masks according to their ASTM level<sup>2</sup>:

\*ASTM 1 Masks: BFE > 95%, fluid resistance > 80 mmHg.

\*ASTM 2 Masks: BFE > 98%, fluid resistance > 120 mmHg.

\*ASTM 3 Masks: BFE > 98%, fluid resistance > 160 mmHg (e.g. FFP2/FFP3/N95).

- Please ensure all masks are sent with relevant documentation and certification to prevent the use of 'fake' masks.

<sup>2</sup> For conversion to UK and European standards, please refer to:  
<https://nhsprocurement.org.uk/covid-19-a-guide-to-face-masks/>

## Hygiene Sorting



Disposable gloves



Soap



Antibacterial hand gel



Isopropyl alcohol



Deodorant



Toothpaste/  
Toothbrush



Shampoo



Combs/ Hair ties/  
Brushes



Wet wipes/  
Baby wipes



Lotion/  
Moisturiser



Sun cream



Shower gel



Bleach



Disposable razors



Shaving foam



Condoms



Incontinence pads



**Sanitary pads** are useful, tampons, due to cultural norms, are not.



**Makeup** Please only donate it if it has been requested!

## Shelter Sorting



- **Tents** must have all their parts and poles with no rips or holes in the fabric, especially in the waterproof outer layer. We suggest fully erecting it to ensure it has all the necessary parts.



- **Sleeping bags** are needed all over the continent. See pg. 4 of *Section 1: Quality Checking*.



- **Tarps** can provide an impromptu waterproof shelter and are extremely useful during the wettest months of the year. Remember that the main purpose of a tarp is to be waterproof - if it has a hole in it then it cannot be distributed. Tarps also need to cover a minimum area - think a pop-up tent, which is roughly 2 metres by 1.5 metres. Smaller than this, and it is a struggle to find a use for it.



- **Roll mats** offer thermal protection and comfort at night. Please ensure inflatable roll mats can inflate.



- **Blankets** are another useful item. Please wash them and only send out blankets without rips or holes in them. If there is a design, please ensure that it could not be considered offensive. See pg. 4 of *Section 1: Quality Checking*.



- **Exercise mats** are thinner and shorter than a standard foam roll mat. See below, in the Miscellaneous Items Sorting section. Exercise mats are taken by some frontline groups who run community centres, and provide other forms of psychosocial support.



- **Football boots** and other forms of sports clothing are also needed in order to run certain projects. However, please do not include sport-specific clothing unless it has been requested.



- **Towels** are accepted by some groups. See pg. 4 of *Section 1: Quality Checking*.



- **Duvets, pillows, pillowcases, bedsheets, and duvet covers** are only accepted by some organisations, but not all of them. Please separate them out from other bedding.

### Miscellaneous Items Sorting



- **Bags** including suitcases or holdalls.



- **Backpacks** - Do not send out broken bags (missing wheels, broken straps, broken zips), as these are not distributable.

-Please make a distinction between a backpack and suitcases, as transitory populations have little need for suitcases but are in constant need of backpacks.



- **Toys** are always needed. Please check they have all their parts and functions and if it is a soft toy, that it is not stained. Please do not send toys reliant on electricity, whether batteries or mains-powered. They cannot be used by people without electricity, and therefore serve little benefit.



- **Umbrellas** are accepted by some groups, but not all of them. Please only send them out if the frontline group has expressed a need for them.



- **Musical instruments** are crucial in education and for psychosocial support. Please only send them out if the frontline group has expressed a need for them.

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### Water



- **Bottled water** is needed all over the continent, but check with the receiver first to ensure they have the capacity to accommodate it.



- **Drinking vessels** - please don't send glasses out as they are likely to break and can pose a serious danger.



- **Water storage containers** - (10 to 20 litres) are extremely useful.

All of these items above are needed in certain situations, but only for select groups. If you are unsure whether you should send something out, ask the receiving group.



— **Food: canned food, jars, and bottles** with an extended shelf life are accepted by most food distribution groups. If you are sending out meat, ensure it is halal. If you are unsure on how the meat was prepared, please do not send it. If you are sending out sweets, please check to see if there is any pork gelatine in the sweets. If so, do not send it, because many of the beneficiaries will not be able to eat it.

-Please ensure that all food is not expired, or opened, and is new.

Despite our best efforts to create a category for everything, there will inevitably be some items which slip through the cracks. If a certain field organisation has requested a specific item (e.g. a washing machine) from you or your organisation, please check it is fully functioning, and is in an as-new condition.

# 03 Sizing

Sizing is the final stage, and also the last chance for any quality control before it gets put into a box bound for its destination. As you're sizing, look at each item and check to see if you've missed a hole somewhere - maybe in the armpit? Or if there's a sweat stain on the inside of the collar?

Size all adult clothes into S, M, L, and XL.



S, M, L, XL

Size children's clothing into age groups 2 years apart (e.g. 2 to 3 ... up to 14 to 15).



2-3, 4-5, 6-7

Size baby clothes into 0-3 months, 3-6 months, 6-9 months, 9-12 months, 12-18 months, and 18-24 months.



0 - 3  
months



3 - 6  
months



6 - 9  
months



9 - 12  
months



12 - 18  
months



18 - 24  
months

If you do not have the storage facility or the capacity to size clothes then do not worry, it's fine to leave clothes sorted, but not sized. However, the more accurate information you can provide up front is better for the receiving group, as they have a better understanding of what they will be receiving.

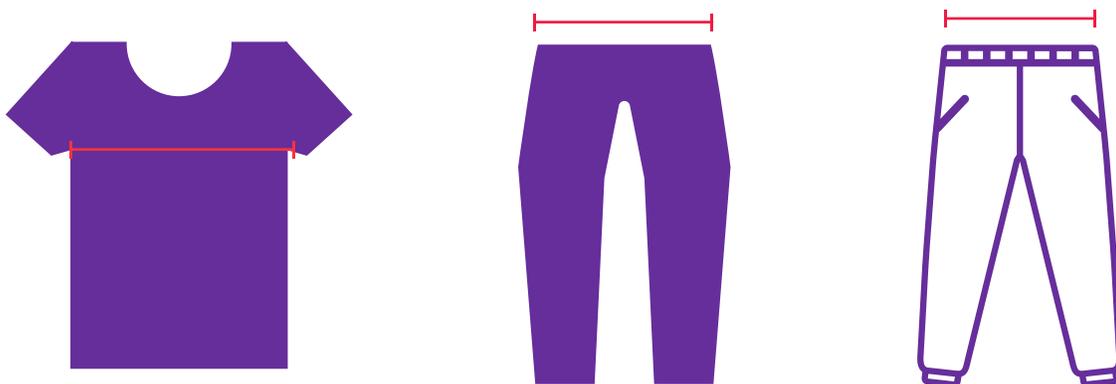
## Sizing instructions

Please follow the EU shoe sizes. If the EU shoe size isn't in the shoe then there are many available online<sup>3</sup>. When it comes to clothes, **do not** follow the manufacturer's label for sizing. We do our own sizing for a few reasons: Each company has a different idea of sizing, (e.g. a Zara top and a Primark top will have different measurements). Note that over time clothes may stretch or shrink.

<sup>3</sup> For conversion from European to UK standards, please refer to:  
<https://www.beggshoes.com/blog/eu-shoe-size-to-uk/>

This guide is accompanied with a handy printable sizing chart. Print the sizing chart on A4 paper and stick it onto the table you are sizing on. The lines of the sizing chart should touch each other when printed out and stuck together.

For any top, jumper, jacket, or vest, make sure the buttons and zips are done up, then hold it flat to the sizing chart. Measure from under the armpits. It's best to go an inch or so below from the armpit seam, as the cut typically 'dives out' slightly when moving to meet the arm sleeve.



For trousers and shorts, make sure the flies are done up. Hold it flat to the sizing chart, and use the waistband.

For joggers, these have an elasticated waistband. Hold it flat to the sizing chart, and give it a little tug at the waistband, as this would normally happen when sitting on a person's hips. If the elastic is stretched, and the waistband won't reform, please do not send it out.

If an item is on the line between two sizes, and you are unsure on where to put it, put it in the smaller size category, as it is better to have an item that is too big rather than too small.

## Sizing Chart Measurements

<b>Mens</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>XL</b>
T-Shirts	43	49	52	55
Jumpers	44	50	53	56
Jackets	45	51	54	57
Trousers	36	43	47	50

<b>Womens</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>XL</b>
T-Shirts	41	45	49	54
Jumpers	42	46	50	55
Jackets	43	47	51	56
Trousers	36	42	46	50

<b>Childrens</b>	<b>2-3</b>	<b>4-5</b>	<b>6-7</b>	<b>8-9</b>	<b>10-11</b>	<b>12-13</b>	<b>14-15</b>
T-Shirts	27	28.5	30.5	33	36	39.5	43.5
Jumpers	29	30.5	32.5	35	38	41.5	45.5
Jackets	31	32.5	34.5	37	40	43.5	47.5
Trousers	24.5	25.5	26.5	27.5	28.5	29.5	31

# 04 **Boxing & Labelling**

## **Boxing**

Try to fill up boxes as much as possible. Shipments of aid can cost thousands of euros which is why it is in everyone's best interest to ensure there is minimal empty space in your shipments.

Half full boxes are also less structurally stable than full boxes, and are therefore more likely to collapse when stacked. Fully filling up boxes helps to avoid having pallets fall over on the journey.

If possible, invest in standardised boxes. Whether this is banana boxes from your nearest supermarket, or if you have commercially bulk-bought boxes, stacking a pallet is a lot easier when all the boxes are the same size.

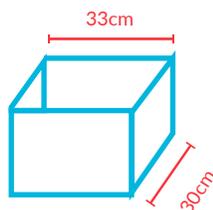
The dimensions of a UK pallet are: 120 X 100 cm.

The dimensions of a European pallet are: 120 X 80 cm.

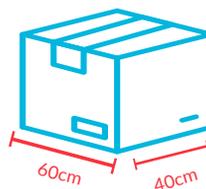
It is most efficient to choose a box size that will stack to these sizes. If boxes protrude over the edges of a pallet, this can result in pallets not fitting neatly together and therefore the last couple of pallets may not fit on the truck.

Waste management is a big issue in many of the regions your donations will be going to. Consider this when sending items such as individually wrapped diapers. The waste from this type of packaging can cause more work for receiving groups in the long run and is bad for the environment. Many regions such as the Aegean Islands do not have the option of recycling.

Please package jars and bottles carefully, with newspaper or something with similar filling to prevent breaks and spillages.



Banana boxes typically measure:  
**33cm x 30cm x 20cm**



Other boxes that are great for stacking measure:  
**60cm x 40 cm x 30 cm**

### Labelling

If your organisation has partnered with Boxtribute, use their label.

If you have not partnered with Boxtribute, please ensure every box is clearly labelled:

- For clothing [Gender | Category | Size].
- For food or perishable items [Food Type | Best Before Date]. If there are differing best before dates, put down the shortest one.
- For other items include the above information where applicable.

We recommend using a thick strip of masking tape and a permanent marker so your boxes can be reused and relabelled once at the receiving groups' warehouses.

# 05 Sorting Checklist

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Before taking your donations to an aid organisation, please make sure that your donations have followed the procedure below. If an item doesn't meet the below criteria, then it unfortunately cannot be accepted.

- Have you checked there is nothing left in any of the pockets?
- Are all donations washed?
- Are all stains removed?
- (If possible) have you sized clothes, and separated tents and diapers into different sizes?
- Does it have all the buttons/zips it needs?
- Are there any rips, tears, or holes?
- Are the donations sorted into the categories attached to this checklist?
- Has everything that could be considered offensive to the end beneficiary been removed?
- Have you documented the number of items included in each box?

Once you've ticked all the boxes, your donations are ready to be taken to your nearest charity that supports displaced and disadvantaged people.