



European Emergency Response Capacity

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

The European Emergency Response Capacity (Voluntary Pool) was created in 2014 for a faster, better coordinated and more effective EU response to natural and man-made disasters.

22 European countries contribute to the Voluntary Pool:

Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

Since its establishment, the Voluntary Pool was used to respond to man-made and natural disasters inside and outside the EU, such as forest fires, earthquakes, disease outbreaks, and tropical storms.

Civil Protection and
Humanitarian Aid Operations

B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

Tel.: (+32 2) 295 44 00

Fax: (+32 2) 295 45 72

email:

echo-info@ec.europa.eu

Website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/echo>



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Key messages

- Time is of the essence when it comes to saving lives and reducing damage to a minimum. The [European Emergency Response Capacity](#) (EERC or Voluntary Pool) was created in 2014 for a faster, better coordinated and more effective EU response to natural and man-made disasters. In times of increasing disaster risks, the Voluntary Pool allows for better organised, swifter and more coherent EU operations.
- The Voluntary Pool comprises of emergency response assets available for immediate deployment. Currently 95 different assets are pre-committed by countries participating in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. These include, among others, urban search and rescue teams, emergency medical teams and forest fire fighting capacities. In an ongoing certification process these assets are checked and tested in EU-funded exercises.
- The [European Medical Corps](#) (EMC) is a new component of the Voluntary Pool set up to address the shortfall in medical staff during the Ebola outbreak in 2014. Through the EMC, medical and public health experts and teams can be mobilised for preparedness or response operations inside and outside the EU.
- In 2017, the European Commission proposed to create a new system for a stronger collective European response to disasters. This foresees the creation of [rescEU](#), a reserve of new civil protection capabilities managed by the EU for the collective response to disasters such as floods, forest fires, earthquakes and epidemics. This will allow the EU to better respond to disasters, especially when several disasters take place simultaneously.

Voluntary Pool

The Voluntary Pool was established in October 2014 to address natural and man-made disasters through a coordinated and effective European response. Participating countries to the EU Civil Protection Mechanism offer a range of specialised emergency response capacities even before disasters. This approach allows the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) to shift from a rather reactive and ad-hoc coordination system to a more predictable, pre-planned, coherent, and quality-checked European response to disasters. In addition, the Voluntary Pool helps to identify and fill critical gaps in disaster response capacity in a cost-effective way.

Since 2014, 22 Participating States offered 95 specialised response [capacities to the Voluntary Pool](#), ranging from urban search and rescue teams to water purification equipment, high-capacity pumping units and medical teams. Assets can be deployed only on demand, i.e. following a request for assistance through the European Commission's [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#).

To ensure a high quality of civil protection capacities in the Voluntary Pool the European Commission set up a quality assurance process, including a certification process. As part of this process teams are required to provide relevant documentation of their abilities, participate in selected exercises and work together with peers from other countries.

Those countries participating in the Voluntary Pool can benefit from EU financial support to upgrade their offered national response assets, to pay for certification and training costs and to cover up to 85% of the costs related to the transport of teams and assets to disaster areas.

As a direct response to the lack of medical staff during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014, the Commission established the European Medical Corps as a new component of the Voluntary Pool. Through the European Medical Corps, medical assistance and public health expertise can be mobilised to prepare for or respond to health emergencies, such as epidemics, inside and outside the EU.

Examples of EERC deployments

Forest fires season 2017 – Mediterranean

In 2017, the Mediterranean experienced a severe forest fire season which resulted in the loss of human life and property. The EU Civil Protection Mechanism was activated 17 times for forest fire emergencies in Europe. Assistance could be sent 10 times from one of the Participating States to Portugal, Italy, Montenegro, France, and Albania. Assets in the Voluntary Pool included two Italian amphibious firefighting Canadair planes, two Spanish firefighting Airtractors-planes and three French firefighting planes, two Canadairs, and one Beechcraft 200.

Hurricane Matthew in 2016 – Haiti

Shortly after Hurricane Matthew made landfall, Haiti activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism asking for international assistance. In response, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre coordinated support to Haiti in form of two water purification units, registered in the Voluntary Pool on behalf of France. The units were deployed at the heart of the crisis zone in Haiti and operated by 60 rescue workers from the French Civil Protection Military Corps. They purified more than 1.2 million litres of drinking water in order to halt the spread of diseases such as cholera. The French teams worked together with UNICEF, Haitian authorities and various NGOs.



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