



## EU CIVIL PROTECTION

### ECHO FACTSHEET

#### Facts & Figures

Coordinated, effective and efficient response to disasters.

Pooling of response capacities from 34 participating states.

Deployments inside the EU and around the world.

Joint disaster prevention and preparedness actions.

From 2001 to 2017, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism has been activated more than 250 times.

In November 2017, the Commission has proposed to change current EU law to further improve disaster prevention, preparedness and response capacities. (rescEU)



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#### Key messages

- Whenever the scale of an emergency overwhelms the response capabilities of a country, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism enables coordinated assistance from its participating states. These include all EU Member States, as well as Iceland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia and Turkey.
- The Mechanism is there to protect EU citizens and extend solidarity outside Europe's borders to people who are affected by disasters and need help.
- Any country in the world, the UN and its agencies, and international organisations can request assistance through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.
- On 23 November 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 to be used to support the collective response to disasters such as floods, forest fires, earthquakes and epidemics. In parallel, the EU will provide additional incentives for Member States to pool their national capacities by financing the adaptation, repair, transport and operation costs. This reinforcement of capacities will allow the EU to better respond to disasters, especially when several disasters take place simultaneously.
- These increased disaster response capacities will be complemented by better prevention and preparedness systems, ensuring stronger national prevention strategies, and closer cooperation and links with other EU policies dealing with disaster prevention.

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## The Commission proposal to strengthen EU disaster management

To further improve the management of disasters, on 23 November 2017, the European Commission proposed a new system to strengthen the EU's civil protection response mechanism. It is structured on two complementary pillars:

### Increasing disaster response capacities: rescEU

The Commission wants to increase the collective response capacities available in order to effectively respond to disasters, especially when they hit Member States simultaneously. This will be sought by:

- The creation of an EU civil protection response reserve of assets, managed by the EU to assist Member States in responding to disasters when the respective national capacities are overwhelmed. rescEU will initially be comprised of assets such as firefighting aircrafts, high pressure water pumps, urban search and rescue and field hospitals to respond to the most devastating disasters in recent years in Europe.
- Assisting Member States to boost their national capacities and available shared capacities by offering higher financial incentives for doing so. Concretely, the Commission proposes to cover the bulk of the costs that derive from the adaptation, repair, transport and operation of national contributions to the existing common pool. Inside the upgraded European Civil Protection Pool, these assets would be available for an EU crisis response at any given point of time.

### Better preventing and preparing for disasters

In order to decrease the risks and impacts of potential disasters the Commission wants to work more closely with Member States, in reviewing national prevention strategies and guiding them in their implementation. In addition, the Commission wants to strengthen cooperation and coherence with existing EU policies dealing with prevention and preparedness, while also developing a European Civil Protection Knowledge Network, a European web of specialised training and exercise centres, in which best practice would be disseminated and joint EU exercises would be undertaken.

### The Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)

The ERCC is the operational heart of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. It operates around-the-clock to monitor and coordinate response to disasters. The ERCC collects real-time and early warning information on disasters, monitors hazards, prepares plans for the deployment of resources (experts, teams and equipment) from the common pool, works with participating states to map available assets and coordinates EU's disaster response efforts. Potentially harmful events in Europe, such as fires, storms, floods or industrial accidents are constantly analysed. The centre is directly linked with the civil protection and humanitarian aid authorities in the participating states, to ensure a coherent and common European response to disasters.

### EU civil protection operations in action

Since its establishment in 2001, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism has monitored over 400 disasters and has received over 250 requests for assistance. During the intense 2017 forest fire season, the Mechanism was activated 17 times to assist southern European countries. Albania, Portugal, France, Italy, Montenegro and Portugal received assistance through the mechanism in the form of firefighting airplanes, firefighters and vehicles.

The mechanism can also be activated in marine pollution emergencies. For example, Greece requested assistance following the sinking of an oil tanker which polluted the area of Piraeus in 2017. Beyond European borders, the mechanism was activated in 2017 in response to devastating events such as the floods in Peru, the earthquake in Mexico and the tropical cyclones Irma and Maria in the Caribbean. In 2015, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia requested assistance through the mechanism to respond to the influx of migrants and refugees. Other operations within Europe in recent years include the conflict in Ukraine in 2015 and the floods in the Balkans in 2014.

Civil protection operations can be supported by satellite maps produced by the Copernicus Emergency Management Service. This service provides timely and very precise geospatial information that is used to plan disaster relief operations. Maps were notably produced following the earthquakes in Italy in 2016 and hurricane Harvey in Texas in 2017.

