



European
Commission

European Civil Protection
and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Humanitarian Air Services

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

ECHO Flight is the European Commission's humanitarian air service

Its fleet consists of **6 aircraft**: 3 in DRC-Uganda, 1 in Kenya & 2 in Mali

In 2017, ECHO Flight transported **26 100 passengers** and around **195 tonnes of cargo**

ECHO Flight 2017 budget: around **€16 million**

UNHAS is the UN Humanitarian Air Service

European Commission support to UNHAS & Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) in 2017: **€19 million**

European Commission support for Humanitarian Air Services in 2017: around **€35 million**

ECHO Flight 2018 budget: around **€15 million**

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* All the latest ECHO Factsheets:
bit.ly/echo-fs



Humanitarian staff boarding an ECHO Flight to Kinshasa, DR Congo. ©EU/ECHO

Key messages

Humanitarian air services provide a lifeline for millions of people who are caught up in humanitarian emergencies. When a crisis hits, guaranteeing fast and safe access to the field is vital to save lives.

In contexts where there are no reliable roads, ports or other infrastructure, access to crises by land or water becomes difficult, if not impossible. Humanitarian air services are often the only way to get access to remote places and reach people in need.

In addition to transporting humanitarian supplies and workers, humanitarian air services also carry out medical and security evacuations.

The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) operates its own humanitarian air service - ECHO Flight - with hubs in Kenya, Uganda, DR Congo and Mali. The service is free of charge for ECHO's partners and humanitarian organization

The European Commission also funds other humanitarian air services to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian aid delivery. It organises ad-hoc airlifts during major emergencies and co-finances the transport of relief material via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Following the mass influx of South Sudanese refugees into northern Uganda, ECHO Flight has started offering ad-hoc flights to its partners working in the refugee camps in the West Nile area.



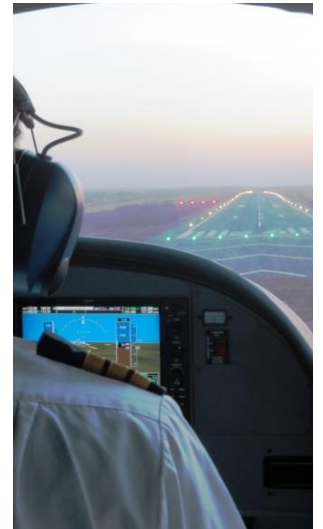
Humanitarian situation and needs



Natural disasters and man-made crises have left millions of people around the world in need of humanitarian assistance. Yet humanitarian operations are often plagued by a lack of logistical supplies and infrastructure investment. Humanitarian agencies generally rely on routine or charter flights to reach their destination, but local airlines are not always reliable, nor do they always fly to areas where humanitarian assistance is needed. Humanitarian air services enable life-saving supplies to reach cut-off populations and aid workers to access remote locations. As such, they constitute a lifeline for millions of vulnerable people around the world.

Rough weather conditions can make access to those in need particularly challenging. During rainy seasons, for instance, already deficient transport infrastructure can become completely unusable. Bridges are swept away by flood waters and roads become impassable.

In many areas where humanitarian organisations operate insecurity poses an additional threat to poor road infrastructure, making transportation over land a dangerous undertaking. In such cases, efficiently managed, reliable and safe air services become the best way to reach populations. Trained and qualified staff is on hand to evacuate aid workers for medical reasons or due to security threats following disasters, epidemics or conflict.



The European Union's Humanitarian Response

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the European Commission operates a humanitarian air service known as ECHO Flight, which is available for its humanitarian partners and aid organisations in [Kenya](#), the [Democratic Republic of Congo \(DRC\)](#), [Mali](#) and since recently also [Uganda](#). With an estimated operating cost of over €16 million in 2017, ECHO flight transported 26 100 passengers and some 195 tonnes of cargo. In addition to running its own fleet to and from insecure zones, the Commission supports other not-for-profit humanitarian air services. In 2017, it contributed €19 million to the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) in [Sudan](#), [South Sudan](#), [Chad](#), Mauritania, [Niger](#), [Nigeria](#), [Mali](#), [Yemen](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Cameroon](#) and the [Central African Republic](#), and €730 000 to the Afghanistan operations of Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF). In 2017, the combined contributions to ECHO flight and UNHAS reached €35 million. For 2018, the ECHO flight budget amounts to around €15 million.

The Commission also finances ad-hoc flights to support humanitarian operations during large-scale emergencies. In the past it also contracted cargo aircraft to deliver life-saving aid to conflict-ridden Central African Republic, Ukraine and to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone during the Ebola crisis. Medical and security evacuations have been carried out from CAR and South Sudan during the height of the violence and from the Ebola-affected countries.

Through the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#), the Commission co-funds the transfer of the EU Member States' aid to crisis areas. In recent years, relief items and medical supplies have been delivered via the Civil Protection Mechanism to people in need in, among others, Chile, Dominica, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, and Uganda.



*All the latest ECHO Factsheets:
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