



# Leaders' Meeting WESTERN BALKANS ROUTE

## THE EU CIVIL PROTECTION MECHANISM

*The EU Civil Protection Mechanism can be activated by a Member State if it feels overwhelmed by a crisis. The Mechanism can mobilise various types of in-kind assistance, including modules (teams and equipment), shelter, medical supplies and other non-food items, as well as expertise. Participating States provide the assistance, and the Commission can co-finance the transport of relief items and experts to the country in question.*

*Over recent years, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism has been activated in various types of emergencies such as Ebola outbreak in West Africa (2014), flooding in Western Balkans (2014), conflict in Eastern Ukraine (2015) and the displacement crisis in Europe (2015).*

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism facilitates the cooperation in emergency response among 33 European states (28 EU Member States, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). Turkey has recently signed the agreement to officially join the Mechanism. These Participating States pool the resources that can be made available to one another and to countries all over the world.

Civil protection assistance relies on the participating states' resources. When civil protection assistance is requested by third countries, it is often combined with humanitarian aid.

Assistance includes relief items, expertise, intervention teams and modules, and specific equipment. Experts are also deployed for needs assessment and coordination with the local authorities and international response organisations, as well for advisory missions on prevention and preparedness.

### **The Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)**

The Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) is the operational heart of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. It provides a full 24/7 capacity to monitor and coordinate response to emergencies. The ERCC collects real-time information on disasters, monitors hazards, prepares plans for the deployment of resources (experts, teams and equipment) from the voluntary pool, works with Member States to map available assets and coordinates EU's disaster response efforts. Most importantly, it has direct links to the civil protection and humanitarian aid authorities in the participating states, ensuring a coherent European response to disasters.



## Facts & Figures

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism:

- Provides for a well-coordinated effective and efficient response as a result of pooling the resources of Member States.
- Saves human and financial resources by avoiding a duplication of efforts and ensuring that the assistance meets the real needs of the affected country.
- Helps to prepare for and avoid disasters by raising awareness, trainings, exchanging experts and conducting simulation exercises.

Between 2001 until September 2015, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism has been activated more than 230 times following requests for assistance.

In 2015 alone:

- In May, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism was activated to provide rapid assistance to Nepal, following two major earthquakes that struck on 25 April and 12 May.
- In July, Greece requested assistance in fighting dozens of forest fires, including in the outskirts of Athens. Forest fighting aircraft from the voluntary pool were dispatched to help Greek firefighters in containing and putting out fires. The European Commission co-financed the transport of assistance to Greece.
- In September, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism was activated to assist Hungary and Serbia in responding to the urgent needs caused by an unprecedented inflow of refugees and migrants.
- In October, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism was activated to assist Slovenia or material support such as blankets, sleeping bags, winter tents, beds and sanitary equipment to help cope with the arrivals of large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in the country.

## EU Financial Support

The European Commission financially supports the transport of assistance offered by the participating states, and facilitates overall transport and logistics coordination. In 2014, the total EU transport co-financing surpassed €10 million.

## A mechanism to address the refugee crisis

Member States were asked last month (23 September) to notify the Commission of the assets which can be held ready to deploy to help refugees. Only eight Member States (Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Sweden, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia) have notified that they have – limited – civil protection assets or experts they would be prepared to deploy still this year, should a request be made. The Commission reiterates the need for Member States to support the mechanism with substantial contributions.