European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

European Medical Corps

What is it?
The European Medical Corps enables quick medical assistance and public health expertise from all EU Member States and Participating States to a health emergency inside and outside the EU. The deployment is coordinated by the EU’s Emergency Response Coordination Centre, the operational hub of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The European Medical Corps gathers all medical response capacities committed by Member States to the European Civil Protection Pool. Following a request for European assistance, medical capacities can be drawn from this Pool and from other Member States’ response capacities. The European Medical Corps was set up in response to the acute shortage of trained medical teams during the Ebola crisis in West Africa in 2014. It continues to coordinate an effective European response in health emergencies under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

Why is this important?
Climate change is predicted to exacerbate the effects of health emergencies, such as epidemics. A connected world means diseases may spread quicker across borders. During the outbreak of health emergencies, medical expert teams and equipment need to be deployed in the shortest time possible to support response efforts. Being well prepared to intervene immediately in health emergencies is crucial in saving lives. The EU coordinates medical missions to respond to infectious disease outbreaks and emergencies in cooperation with all EU Member States and Participating States.

To date, 11 States party to the Mechanism have committed emergency medical teams and their equipment to the European Medical Corps: Belgium, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Italy, France, Germany, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, and Sweden. To become part of the European Medical Corps, the EU has set up a certification and registration process to make sure they meet high standards, including internationally recognised ones by the World Health Organization (WHO) when they exist. Teams are trained to work alongside colleagues from other countries and according to international guidelines. In return, they benefit from EU financial support. The EU provides grants for upgrading teams to improve their readiness, quality, and availability. Once part of the Pool, the EU covers 75% of transportation costs, as well as 75% operating costs if deployed inside the EU.
How are we helping?

The European Medical Corps is part of the EU's comprehensive approach to health disasters. Below are the Medical capacities available via the Mechanism to respond to emergencies inside and outside Europe.

- **Emergency medical teams (EMT)** provide direct medical care to people affected by a disaster. These teams are certified to ensure they meet quality standards by the World Health Organization (WHO). So far, Norway, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Estonia, and the Czech Republic have committed such teams. The Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, and Spanish Emergency Medical teams have been classified by the WHO, while an additional 9 other European medical teams are currently in the process of classification. In addition, Germany contributes a specialised infectious disease isolation field hospital from the German Red Cross.

- **Mobile biosafety laboratories** were developed and deployed during the 2014 Ebola crisis. Belgium has since committed its B-Life Lab (Biological Light Fieldable Laboratory for Emergencies) and Germany the European Mobile Laboratory, coordinated by the Bernhard-Nocht-Institute for Tropical Medicine.

- **Medical evacuation capacities** are key for mass casualty disasters requiring the evacuation of EU citizens, and for retrieving humanitarian and medical workers from disaster areas, if needed. Currently, Sweden provides such assets to the European Medical Corps, while Slovakia is in the process of certifying its committed capacity.

Work is also ongoing to facilitate the mobilisation and deployment of **medical experts with specific profiles** under the Mechanism, such as epidemiologists with strong field expertise or burns assessment specialists to help assess the appropriate level of treatment of large numbers of patients.

Recent deployments of the European Medical Corps:

**Samoa – European Emergency Medical support in response to Measles Outbreak**

Upon activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism by the WHO in December 2019, 2 Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) from France and Norway reached Samoa. As part of the European Medical Corps, 20 personnel from the Norwegian EMT were deployed to support the vaccination campaign. In addition, 10 paediatricians and specialised nurses from French Polynesia were also deployed.

**Mozambique – European Emergency Medical support in the aftermath of cyclone Idai**

To address the devastating impact of cyclone Idai on people in Mozambique in March 2019, 4 Emergency Medical Teams from Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Spain were sent to help emergency services in health centres that were serving cyclone-hit areas. An epidemiologist from the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC) supported the coordination of emergency medical teams and other public health activities.