



© Vladimir Rodas

FACTS & FIGURES

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism was **activated more than 300 times since 2001** to respond to emergencies. The Mechanism pools response **capacities from all EU Member States and 6 Participating States**. The Mechanism can be **deployed inside the EU and around the world**. Joint disaster **prevention and preparedness** actions. In March 2019 there was an upgrade of the existing Mechanism to encourage a stronger collective European response. Development of a reserve capacity (known as the '**rescEU reserve**') to **complement national capacities**, and stepping up disaster prevention and preparedness.

Last updated 14/10/2019

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

EU Civil Protection Mechanism

What is it?

The overall objective of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism is to strengthen cooperation between the EU Member States and 6 Participating States in the field of civil protection, with a view to improving prevention, preparedness and response to disasters. When the scale of an emergency overwhelms the response capabilities of a country, it can request assistance via the Mechanism. Through the Mechanism, the European Commission plays a key role in coordinating the response to disasters in Europe and beyond and contributes to at least 75% of the transport and/or operational costs of deployments.

Why is this important?

Disasters know no borders and can hit one or several countries simultaneously without warning. Having a well-coordinated joint response means that when national authorities are overwhelmed, they have one point of contact, rather than 34 to deal with. A joint approach further helps to pool expertise and capacities of first responders, avoids duplication of relief efforts and ensures that assistance meets the needs of those affected.

By pooling together the civil protection capacities and capabilities, it allows for a stronger and more coherent collective response. To date, all EU Member States participate, as well as 6 Participating States (Iceland, Norway, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey). Since its inception in 2001, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism has responded to over 300 requests for assistance inside and outside the EU.

The Mechanism also helps to coordinate disaster preparedness and prevention activities of national authorities and contributes to the exchange of best practices. This facilitates the continuous development of higher common standards enabling teams to better understand the others' approach and work interchangeably when a disaster strikes.

How are we helping?

Following a request for assistance through the Mechanism, the [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) (ERCC) mobilises assistance or expertise. The ERCC monitors events around the globe 24/7 and ensures rapid deployment of emergency support through a direct link with national civil protection authorities. Specialised teams and equipment, such as forest firefighting planes, search and rescue, and medical teams can be mobilised at short notice for deployments inside and outside Europe.

Satellite maps produced by the [Copernicus Emergency Management Service](#) also support civil protection operations. Copernicus provides timely and precise geospatial information that is useful to delineate affected areas and plan disaster relief operations. Following the September 2018 earthquake and tsunami in Sulawesi, Indonesia, 18 separate maps helped the Indonesian authorities to assess inaccessible areas devastated by the tsunami.

In developing countries, civil protection assistance typically goes hand in hand with EU humanitarian aid. Experts in both fields work closely together to ensure the most coherent analysis and response, particularly in response to complex emergencies. The Mechanism also intervenes in marine pollution emergencies: the [ERCC](#) can quickly mobilise oil recovery capacity and expertise from the Participating States and [European Maritime Safety Agency](#) (EMSA).

EU Civil Protection in action

Any country in the world can call on the EU Civil Protection Mechanism for help and it has intervened in some of the most devastating disasters and complex emergencies. Examples include the [Ebola](#) outbreak in West Africa (2014) and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2018), the conflict in [Ukraine](#) (2014), the [earthquake in Nepal](#) (2015), the refugee and migration crisis in Europe (2015) and forest fires in the Mediterranean region (2017) and Sweden (2018).

European Civil Protection Pool

Participating States commit national resources for emergency response to the [European Civil Protection Pool](#). This pool allows for better planning and coordination of response activities at European and national levels which means a faster and reliable EU response to disasters.

Prevention and preparedness

Prevention and preparedness activities mitigate the effects of disasters. A [training](#) programme for civil protection experts from EU Member States and Participating States ensures compatibility and complementarity between intervention teams, while large-scale [exercises](#) such as MODEX 2019 train capacities for specific disasters each year.

The European Commission supports and complements prevention and preparedness efforts of Participating States by focusing on areas where a joint European approach is more effective than separate national actions. These include risk assessments to identify the disaster risks across the EU, encouraging research to promote disaster resilience and reinforcing early warning tools.

Strengthening European civil protection

In March 2019, the EU strengthened all components of its disaster risk management to better protect citizens from disasters. The upgraded EU Civil Protection Mechanism established a new European reserve of capacities (the 'rescEU reserve') that initially includes firefighting planes and helicopters. Through the strengthened Mechanism, the EU is setting the basis to be better prepared and respond to other emergencies in the future, such as medical emergencies, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear emergencies.

To ensure that Europe is prepared for forest fire season, the new legislation foresees a transition phase during which Member States can get funding in exchange for putting their firefighting means at the disposal of the EU.