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## European Commission

Last updated 11/01/2021

## European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

# rescEU

## What is it?

In 2019, the EU reinforced and strengthened components of its disaster risk management by upgrading the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The latest element introduced - rescEU - has the objective of enhancing both the protection of citizens from disasters and the management of emerging risks. In addition, rescEU establishes a new European reserve of resources (the 'rescEU reserve') which includes a fleet of firefighting planes and helicopters, medical evacuation planes, as well as a stockpile of medical equipment and field hospitals that can respond to health emergencies, and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear incidents.

## Why is this important?

The European Union plays a key role in coordinating the response to disasters in Europe and beyond. Disasters have affected every region of Europe in recent years, causing hundreds of casualties and billions in damage to infrastructure and the environment. Epidemics, flash floods, storms, forest fires, earthquakes, and man-made disasters are continuously putting countries' response capabilities under pressure. Additionally, security concerns have become more complex and climate change is expected to worsen the impact of disasters in the future.

Extreme weather conditions and emerging threats, such as the coronavirus, have overwhelmed the ability of Member States to help each other, especially when several countries face the same type of disaster simultaneously. In such cases, when Member States are unable to assist each other due to the high risks faced by each country, the EU provides an extra layer of protection. Through the rescEU reserve, the EU ensures a faster and more comprehensive response.

The new legislative framework also leads to a stronger European Civil Protection Pool, as well as a better-strategised approach to training through a European Civil Protection Knowledge Network.

In addition, it offers Member States significant incentives to enhance their national capacities through additional financing to adapt, operate and repair their resources.

*Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid*

# How are we helping?

When the scale of an emergency overwhelms the possibilities of a country to respond on its own, it can request assistance via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Once activated, the EU channels through the Emergency Response Coordination Centre the offers of assistance made available by its Member States and Participating States. To guarantee an effective response to disasters at all times, the rescEU reserve was established in 2019 as an additional layer of protection.

## A stronger EU response to the coronavirus

As an additional safety net, the European Commission created a strategic rescEU medical reserve and distribution mechanism under the umbrella of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The reserve enables the swift delivery of medical equipment such as ventilators and personal protective equipment.The stockpile, currently hosted by 9 EU Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, and The Netherlands), allows the EU to react to health crises more quickly. More than 1 million  of protective masks, along with ventilators and other equipment coming from the strategic rescEU distribution centres were distributed to countries who need them most. More medical and personal protective equipment is constantly being acquired to replenish the rescEU reserve.

## EU preparedness for the forest fire season

For the 2020 forest fire season, the European Commission co-financed the stand-by availability of a rescEU firefighting fleet to address potential shortcomings in responding to forest fires. Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Sweden put together 13 firefighting planes and six helicopters at the disposal of other EU Member States in case of an emergency in exchange for financial contribution of the stand-by costs of these capacities.

## Supporting prevention and preparedness activities

The EU increased financial support also for capacities registered in the European Civil Protection Pool. The financial support can be used for adaptation and repair of capacities, as well as to cover the operational costs (inside the EU) and transport costs (outside the EU) when deployed under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The European Civil Protection Pool increases the predictability of the European response to disasters, ensuring that as many capacities as possible are operational before a disaster strikes.

Training, research and innovation, as well as close cooperation between national civil protection authorities, universities and researchers are essential elements for thorough prevention and preparedness activities across Europe. Via the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network, the EU is developing a new platform for sharing knowledge, best practices and lessons learned by civil protection experts and emergency management personnel. Through the Knowledge Network, the EU intends to strengthen its European Disaster Risk Management.

Finally, the upgraded EU Civil Protection Mechanism also streamlines and simplifies administrative procedures in the long run in order to reduce the time needed to reach people in need of assistance.