



European  
Commission

# Civil protection *at a glance*

European Union  
Civil Protection and  
Humanitarian Aid

Civil Protection  
and Humanitarian  
Aid

# RESPONDING TO DISASTERS, GLOBALLY

## Our mission: prevent, prepare and respond

The severity and frequency of natural hazards and human-induced disasters are on the rise. To help people caught up in crises, the European Union supports a rapid and coordinated disaster response as well as disaster prevention and preparedness activities, both in Europe and globally. The EU Civil Protection Mechanism thus helps provide a coordinated response to better protect people, their environment, property and cultural heritage in the event of major disasters.

## Working together

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism brings together 37 members: all EU Member States plus Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Norway, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine. These countries cooperate at national, regional and local levels to ensure better protection for everyone. They assess risks, train their civil protection personnel together, pool and share resources, and jointly respond to the needs of the populations affected by disasters across the world.



## A coordinated response

The Mechanism coordinates the pooling of civil protection assistance based on the resources of EU Member States and Participating States. This can include search and rescue actions, firefighting, medical teams, shelter, water purification units and other relief items, as required. The Mechanism can, for example, be activated to fight forest fires, to assist communities hit by flooding and storms, to rescue survivors of earthquakes, to help in the aftermath of industrial disasters or to provide personal protective equipment during medical emergencies, including pandemics.

## ERCC: the control centre

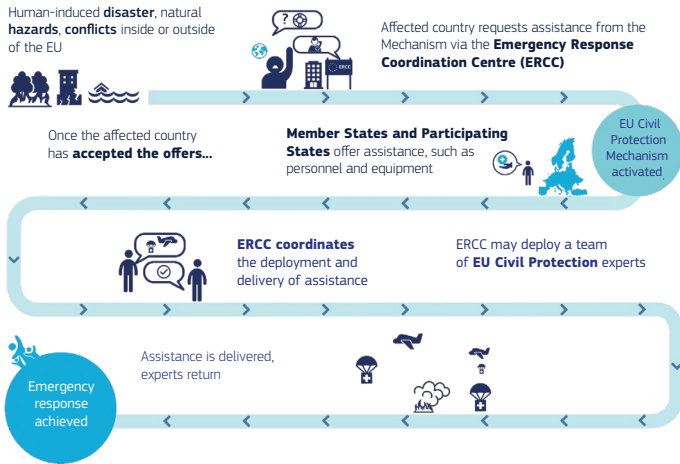
The operational heart of the Mechanism is the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) in Brussels. The ERCC operates 24/7 monitoring the evolution of disasters, matching offers of assistance to the needs of the disaster-affected people and coordinating the transport and delivery of aid. It also acts as a communication hub between the country in need, those countries offering assistance and deployed field experts.

## RescEU: more protection

RescEU is a new European reserve of capacities, designed to ensure a faster and more comprehensive response to disasters and to keep people safe. This upgrade to the Mechanism includes a fleet of firefighting planes and helicopters, medical evacuation planes, as well as stockpiles to respond to medical emergencies or chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear incidents.



## EU Civil Protection Mechanism



Since its establishment in 2001, the Mechanism has responded to more than 700 disasters worldwide. Most recently, the Mechanism has coordinated lifesaving support for the war in Ukraine, earthquakes in Haiti, floods in Belgium, forest fires in southern Europe and the global COVID-19 pandemic.

## Prevention and preparedness

Investing in risk prevention and preparedness before disaster strikes is much more effective than facing the costs of relief, recovery and reconstruction afterwards. That's why the EU complements national efforts by focusing on areas where common European action is more effective than separate national approaches. Under the EU Civil Protection Knowledge Network, numerous prevention and preparedness activities are being co-financed by the EU. This training helps to improve the skills and knowledge of experts, while EU-supported field exercises simulate crises and realistically test the compatibility of teams from different countries.

**Awareness-raising** is key to preventing and minimising their impact of disasters and is achieved through cooperation projects within EU Member States.

EU support for the development of **innovative technologies and early warning tools** further strengthens European civil protection.

The EU responds to disasters worldwide by deploying its two main tools designed for this purpose: humanitarian aid and civil protection. Its unrivalled international network of field-based experts and humanitarian partner organisations enables the European Commission's Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations to channel emergency assistance and relief to victims of natural disasters and conflicts globally. In complex emergencies requiring the mobilisation of both tools, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre acts as a global hub for effective and rapid action.

## Syria and Türkiye: EU emergency relief in action

In the aftermath of one of the strongest earthquakes in the region, people in Syria and Türkiye are in need of emergency assistance to support them as they have lost homes and livelihoods.

In response, more than 1,650 rescuers and 110 search dogs were deployed via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to support the search and rescue operations in Türkiye. The EU Member States also sent 5 medical teams to Türkiye.

In Syria, 15 European countries offered in-kind assistance via the Mechanism after the devastating quakes. Winterised tents, beds, blankets, heaters, hygiene parcels, generators, food, medical supplies, and more have been delivered to support the Syrian people.



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## For further information:

Website:

<https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu>



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