



## EU Civil Protection celebrates 20th anniversary delivering assistance to people

Brussels, 22 October 2021

The European Union is marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its EU Civil Protection Mechanism tomorrow which has been activated more than 500 times to coordinate assistance people affected by natural disasters and other crises in Europe and worldwide. This has included millions of supplies of medical material during the COVID-19 pandemic, to dispatching emergency items following earthquakes and floods.

On this occasion, Janez **Lenarčič**, Commissioner for Crisis Management said: "*The EU Civil Protection Mechanism ensures swift and well-coordinated emergency assistance whenever a disaster hits the EU or beyond.. It is a concrete example of EU solidarity in action. I am proud to look back at this success story of 20 years of EU solidarity operations. Over time, with its cornerstone position in the European disaster management system, it has not only enabled us to respond faster and to more disasters simultaneously. With rescEU we have also managed to fundamentally strengthen the level of disaster preparedness of our continent facing ever more intense natural disasters and new and more complex risks.*"

### Looking back at 20 years of EU-coordinated emergency operations

Since its inception in 2001, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism has responded to over 500 requests for assistance inside and outside the EU.

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina floods** in 2014: The largest EU response operation saw the deployment of 30 response units.
- **Mozambique tropical cyclone Idai** in 2019: The largest EU response operation with the deployment of four emergency medical teams in one single operation.
- **The forest fire season in the Mediterranean** in 2021: The largest EU response operation to forest fires including the dispatch of firefighting airplanes, helicopters, drones and firefighting teams on the ground.
- **The largest repatriation of EU citizens for COVID-19** in 2020: The EU funded more than 400 repatriation flights to bring home more than 100,000 Europeans and their family members from 85 different countries worldwide.
- **The years with greatest number of activations was 2020**: The EU Civil Protection Mechanism was activated for 102 times in 2020 alone.

### Background

When the scale of an emergency overwhelms the response capabilities of a country, it can request assistance via the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#). Once activated, the EU's [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) coordinates and finances assistance made available by EU Member States and six additional Participating States (Iceland, Norway, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Turkey) through spontaneous offers. In addition, the EU has created the [European Civil Protection Pool](#) to have a critical number of readily available civil protection capacities allowing for a stronger and coherent collective response. Should the emergency require additional, life-saving assistance, the [rescEU](#) reserve steps in to provide additional capacities to confront disasters in Europe. The EU's [Copernicus](#) emergency satellite mapping service complements operations with detailed information from space.

Coinciding with this anniversary, a new [legislation](#) was passed earlier this year to reinforce EU Civil Protection, giving the EU the needed tools to better meet future challenges such as large-scale emergencies or disasters that affect several countries at the same time. EU civil protection was created 20 years ago on 23 October 2001 with the adoption of Council Decision 2001/792/EC establishing a Community mechanism to facilitate reinforced cooperation in civil protection assistance interventions.

## For more information

[EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#)

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