

# CAMPAIGN TO THE ‘rescEU’ AGAINST FOREST FIRES!

An extra layer of civil protection in Europe against forest fires has been rolled out in a new campaign by the Directorate-General for the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). And further reserves will be added over time to respond to different kinds of disasters, including medical emergencies, biological, radiological, chemical and nuclear incidents.

**T**he European Union has now geared up its level of protection to save lives in the future, by introducing the ‘rescEU’ reserve as an additional layer to its Civil Protection Mechanism.

Based on a system of voluntary contributions from participating countries, European emergency fleets are now available for immediate deployment during crisis situations.

With an initial reserve fleet of nine firefighting planes and six helicopters on hand, this rescEU ‘safety net’ can be deployed following a request from the EU Member States and other countries to provide a faster response to deploy lifesaving assistance.

The campaign aims to further strengthen the EU’s ability to prevent, prepare and respond to disasters, thereby ensuring that no country is left alone when facing difficult moments. More capacities and assets will be added to create a reserve that will respond to different kinds of disasters, including medical emergencies, biological, radiological, chemical and nuclear incidents.

The DG ECHO also rolled out an online and digital campaign as part of the launch, and since then it has invited civil protection entities in Europe to engage with the campaign.

## RESPONSE TO GREEK FOREST FIRES

So, with ‘rescEU’ having just been established in March 2019, its reserve capabilities and capacities were called upon a few months later when on 13 August 2019 Greece was confronted with an emergency situation.

A total of 56 forest fires broke out around the country within a 24-hour period. The country requested help from the EU to stop the forest fires ravaging the region. The EU Civil Protection Mechanism responded immediately with the first ever activation of rescEU. Three planes from the rescEU reserve – two Italian and one Spanish – were dispatched to the island of Evia, to help Greece contain the fires.

“Such extreme weather conditions have stretched the ability of European countries to help each other, especially when several of them face the same disaster simultaneously. In recent years, some countries hit by wildfires did not receive assistance, as no other country had, at the time, the capacity to offer firefighters or firefighting planes. This situation should never happen again,” noted Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner

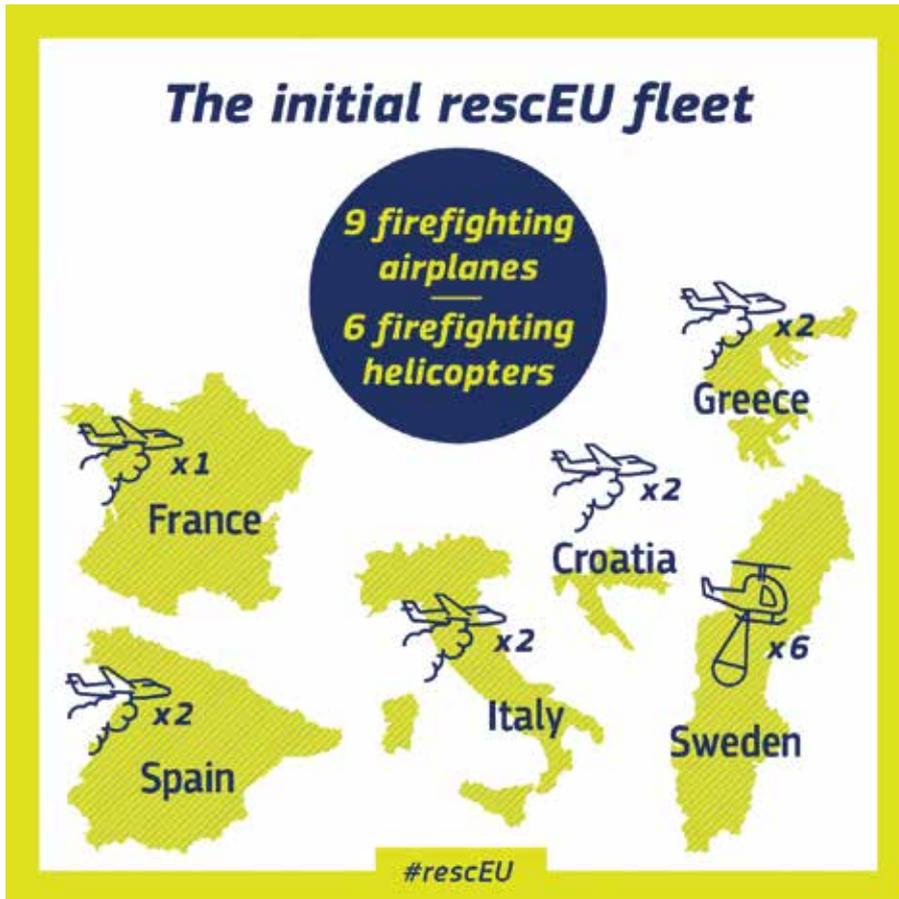
for Crisis Management.

“I will continue to work with the EU Member States to use the full potential of the new rescEU pool and to make sure we have the right assets to address all kinds of emergencies. This is indispensable if Europe is to continue to play a key role in coping with increasingly severe disasters and helping people in need, at home or abroad,” he added.

## STEPPING UP COLLABORATION

Ireland and the other 27 EU Member States are part of this





**The rescEU ‘safety net’ can be deployed following a request from EU Member States and other countries to provide a faster response to deploy lifesaving assistance.**

EU Civil Protection Mechanism, in addition to Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey. They can help with resources and experts. All countries in the world can ask for assistance through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

In 2015 Ireland provided assistance in response to one emergency, by providing basic material assistance to help accommodate the migrants, when in the midst of one of Europe’s major refugee crises, Serbia asked for help through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

One of the worst years on record for forest fires in Europe was 2017. The flames killed 127 people and burned more than 1.2 million hectares of land in the EU. The damage was estimated to be worth around €10 billion, according to the European Forest Fire Information System. That year the national capacities and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism were tested, highlighting the need to step up collaboration.

In 2018, more than 100 people died across Europe in natural or man-made disasters. Forest fires alone affected 22 EU Member States. The Mediterranean region and countries in which forest fires used to

be limited, such as Sweden, Germany, Ireland, Finland, and Latvia, have experienced a rise in forest fires over the last few years.

This risk is expected to increase across all European territories in the future due to climate change, which is causing extreme weather conditions and long dry spells. As a result, the European Commission has put forward a proposal to reinforce and upgrade its Civil Protection Mechanism.

**STRONGER CIVIL PROTECTION**

The first fleet of firefighting planes and helicopters was established in May 2019 ahead of the forest fire season, to help the EU ensure a faster and more comprehensive response to crises.

To date six countries – Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Sweden – have put their equipment, including firefighting airplanes and helicopters, at the disposal of the rescEU fleet.

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism has been upgraded to reinforce and strengthen all components of the disaster risk management of the EU. In addition to the creation of rescEU, the new legislation boosts national capacities and supports prevention and preparedness activities



across participating countries.

The EU also increased financial support through the European Civil Protection Pool. Established in 2013, this Pool increases the consistency of the European response to disasters, ensuring that as many capacities as possible are operational before disaster strikes.

The financial support can be used for adaptation and repair of capacities, as well as covering the operational costs (inside the EU) and transport costs (outside the EU) of all responses, when deployed under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. And through the new European Civil Protection Knowledge Network (a platform for civil protection experts and emergency management personnel to share knowledge and best practices), the EU plans to strengthen its European Disaster Risk Management.

**RESPONDING TO DIFFERENT DISASTERS**

The initial transition period for 'rescEU' will last until 2025. More capacities and assets will be added to create a reserve that will respond to different kinds of disasters, including medical emergencies, biological, radiological, chemical and nuclear

incidents.

The European Commission initiative will further strengthen the EU's ability to prevent, prepare and respond to disasters. In a Union based on solidarity, it will ensure that no country is left alone when facing difficult moments.

For more information visit [www.europa.eu/echo](http://www.europa.eu/echo)

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**OPEN DAYS**

- 16th of January at 6pm – 9pm
- 1st of April at 2pm – 4pm

**INTERVIEW DATES:**

- 27th of January
- 13th of March
- 29th of April
- 27th of May

**APPLY ONLINE**

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