

EU: a world leader in helping those affected by crises



Within the European Union: helping citizens and Member States at home

EU Civil Protection Mechanism

When national capacities to respond to natural disasters are surpassed, European countries often show solidarity by sending assistance in the form of equipment, experts and assets such as planes or vehicles, during the emergency response phase.

This is done through the EU's [Civil Protection Mechanism](#), which has been put into action a record 8 times this summer to help countries affected by forest fires such as Italy, France, Portugal, Albania and Montenegro.

- The [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) (ERCC) is the emergency response hub of the European Commission. It **works 24/7, 365** days a year. It coordinates pan-European assistance through the Civil Protection Mechanism and ensures that all participating states in the mechanism are quickly informed of needs from an affected country during a crisis. The decision to activate the Civil Protection Mechanism is not made by the Commission, but has to be made by the national authorities of the affected country.
- The EU Civil Protection Mechanism facilitates and co-finances the transport of assistance to the affected area.
- The EU Civil Protection Mechanism facilitates the cooperation in disaster response among 34 European states (28 EU Member States, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway Serbia and Turkey). These Participating States pool the resources that can be made available to disaster-stricken countries all over the world.
- Since its launch in 2001, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism has monitored over 400 disasters and has received almost 300 requests for assistance. It intervened in some of the most devastating disasters the world has faced, including the floods in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014), the Ebola outbreak in West Africa (2014), the conflict in Ukraine (2014), the earthquake in Nepal (2015), the conflict in Iraq (2016) and hurricane "Matthew" in Haiti (2016).

EU funding for reconstruction after natural disasters

Through funding, the EU lends a helping hand to its citizens and Member States when they are affected by natural disasters.

- The [EU Solidarity Fund](#) was established to express European solidarity to disaster-stricken regions in Member States and countries involved in accession negotiations with the Union. The Fund was created following the severe floods in Central Europe in the summer of 2002. Since then, it has been used for [76 disasters](#) including floods, forest fires, earthquakes, storms and drought. 24 countries have been supported so far for an amount of over €5 billion.
- The Fund supplements Member States' public expenditure to finance essential emergency operations such as: restoration to working order of essential infrastructure (energy, water, transport, telecoms, health and education); temporary accommodation and cost of the emergency services to meet the immediate needs of the population; securing of prevention infrastructures such as dam and dykes; measures to protect the cultural heritage; cleaning up operations.
- The largest amount under the EU Solidarity Fund – €1.2 billion – was [recently proposed](#) for Italy, following the earthquakes that struck the country in 2016 and 2017.
- In addition, Member States can now (since July 2017) activate a [special EU support](#), in the form of an increased EU co-financing rate of 95% to finance reconstruction works linked to natural disasters with the [European Regional Development Fund](#) (ERDF). This special EU support can be activated from day 1 of a disaster, and for disasters that have occurred since the beginning of the current programming period, i.e. 1 January 2014. It can therefore supplement EU Solidarity Fund support and provide a quick and efficient EU assistance to regions in distress.

Finally, the Commission stands ready to modify Regional Policy programmes, upon request of the national authorities and within the flexibility of the existing rules, in order to respond to new priorities on the ground. For example, [the Portuguese Centro region's programme has been modified](#) and funding was redirected to restore vital infrastructure and regenerate economic activity in the region following the forest fires of June 2017.

Emergency support within the EU for the refugee crisis

Since 2016, the European Commission can fund humanitarian aid for people in need within the EU territory through the [Emergency Support Instrument](#). Until 2018, up to €700 million of EU-funding will be made available via partner organisations, such as UN agencies, the Red Cross and non-governmental organisations. At this stage, the EU has provided this emergency support to thousands of refugees in Greece, helping provide shelter, food, water as well as protection of child refugees.

The Commission's humanitarian support complements other EU funding instruments which have already been providing significant financial resources for assistance in Greece such as the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) the Internal Security Fund (ISF), the European Fund for the Most

Deprived (FEAD) and the EU Health Programme. It is also complementary to the voluntary offers for material assistance by states participating in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

EU solidarity in action: the European Solidarity Corps

Within Europe, the newly created [European Solidarity Corps](#) provides opportunities for young Europeans between 18 and 30 to provide help to people who need it most, either as a volunteer, or in the framework of a traineeship or a job. Just 11 months after President Juncker announced the new initiative for this first time in his State of the Union speech 2016, more than 34,000 young people have joined the European Solidarity Corps. In March 2017, matching with organisations began; since then, about 15,000 participants have been contacted and 700 placements were accepted, most of which already started. Just this week, the first group of [European Solidarity Corps volunteers arrived in Norcia, Italy](#), to help with the ongoing efforts to repair damage and rebuild social services for the local community affected by the severe earthquakes that hit the region a year ago. In total, 230 European Solidarity Corps members will support Italian communities hit by the earthquakes in the next years. The aim is to have 100,000 young people taking part in the European Solidarity Corps by the end of 2020.

Outside of the EU: a global leader in humanitarian and development assistance

Emergency humanitarian assistance

Together with funding provided by EU Member States, the European Union is the world's largest donor of humanitarian aid. Aid is provided to those most in need in places such as Syria and neighbouring countries hosting large amounts of refugees. It also goes to those forcibly displaced within Africa and other areas of the world. All humanitarian aid is impartial and independent, and is provided to non-governmental and international organisations, the United Nations and the Red Cross societies.

- Overall, humanitarian assistance from the EU budget in 2016 helped more than **120 million people** caught up in natural disasters or conflict in over **80 countries across the world**.
- For 2016, the European Commission adopted its highest ever humanitarian aid budget in at **€2.1 billion**, due to unprecedented needs around the world.
- A large part of EU humanitarian aid goes to refugees and displaced people with the European Commission providing more than €1,9 billion of its annual humanitarian aid budget in 2016 to projects helping refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) in 56 countries. This funding covers projects that help the forcibly displaced access shelter, protection, food and other basic services such as health, nutrition, water, sanitation and education. Given these unprecedented humanitarian crises in 2016, the European Commission targeted humanitarian aid to those most in need and most vulnerable, and by strengthening its policy response. At the first-ever [World Humanitarian Summit](#) in May 2016, the EU welcomed the launch of the "Grand Bargain", to redirect at least US\$1 billion dollars over the next five years to the frontline of

humanitarian action where it is needed most.

European solidarity is overwhelmingly supported by EU citizens: almost nine out of ten Europeans think that EU-funded humanitarian aid is important, according to the most recent [Eurobarometer survey](#).

EU solidarity in action: EU Aid Volunteers

[EU Aid Volunteers](#) brings together volunteers and organisations from different countries, providing practical support to humanitarian aid projects and contributing to strengthening the local capacity and resilience of disaster-affected communities around the world. The programme offers opportunities for European citizens to become EU Aid Volunteers in humanitarian projects worldwide, showing solidarity with those who most need it; it provides professional support by trained and well-prepared volunteers to communities affected by disaster, capacity building for local staff and volunteers of organisations in countries hit by disasters, and technical assistance for organisations based in Europe to strengthen their capacity to participate in the EU Aid Volunteers initiative. The volunteering projects can last between 1-18 months. In total, 4000 EU Aid volunteers will be deployed to the field during the 6 year initiative.

Long term development aid

The EU is also the world's largest aid donor. Official Development Assistance provided by the EU and its Member States reached €75.5 billion in 2016, an 11% increase compared to 2015 levels.

EU aid goes to the world's poorest regions and works with partner countries to address extreme poverty and enhance resilience. We carry out programmes to empower women and young people, improve food and nutrition security, increase health care, create jobs, and increase renewable energies. As a result, more girls and boys are in school now than ever before, fewer children and mothers are dying from preventable causes.

The European Union was instrumental in creating coalitions of high ambition in a number of major international agreements, which will set the global framework for our external actions until 2030. These included the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, a ground-breaking approach to financing sustainable development, the comprehensive and universally-applicable UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the forward-looking Sendai Framework for strengthening disaster risk reduction capacities and the first-ever legally-binding global commitment to tackle climate change.