

EU Civil Protection Mechanism

In a nutshell

The European Union's Civil Protection Mechanism supports and coordinates the deployment of participating countries' in-kind assistance (teams, experts and equipment) to countries requesting international assistance in the event of a major natural or man-made disaster. It comprises a European Emergency Response Capacity (EERC), made up of pre-prepared 'modules' pooling civil defence capacity made available on a voluntary basis by its members, and an Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), monitoring disasters and organising the deployment of modules. The EERC responds to requests from both inside the EU and beyond its borders, where assistance can go together with humanitarian aid.

EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) heading and policy area

Heading 3 (Security and Citizenship) and Heading 4 (Global Europe)
Humanitarian aid and civil protection

2014-20 financial envelope (in current prices and as % of total MFF)

Commitments: €368.43 million (0.038%)

2014 budget (in current prices and as % of total EU budget)

Commitments: €47.77 million (0.033%)
Payments: €35.44 million¹ (0.025%)

2015 budget (in current prices and as % of total EU budget)

Commitments: €46.19 million (0.029%)
Payments: €40.39 million (0.029%)

Method of implementation

Direct management (European Commission).



In this briefing:

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EU role in the policy area: legal basis

[Decision No 1313/2013/EU](#) on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM) came into effect at the beginning of 2014, replacing the previous Decision in this policy area, and establishing a European Emergency Response Capacity (EERC)² in place of the previous ad hoc arrangement. EU spending in this area is modest in comparison with national spending: Member States finance and implement civil protection policy and retain primary responsibility for protecting people, the environment, and property on their territory against disasters, as well as for preparing adequately for disasters that can reasonably be anticipated.

Under [Article 196 TFEU](#), the EU's role in this field is to encourage cooperation between Member States to improve the effectiveness of systems for preventing and protecting against natural or man-made disasters; to supplement Member States' efforts and train their personnel; and to promote consistency in international civil protection work. Measures taken to achieve these objectives are agreed through the ordinary legislative procedure.

Objectives and structure of the Mechanism

The aim of the CPM is to increase the effectiveness of the EU's response to natural and man-made disasters. All 28 EU Member States participate in the Mechanism, along with Norway, Iceland, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Serbia has just agreed to take part and Turkey is expected to join in the near future.³

The Mechanism has **two general objectives**: 1) to strengthen cooperation between the EU and its Member States, and to help coordinate civil protection efforts in order to improve the effectiveness of systems for preventing, preparing for and responding to natural and man-made disasters; and 2) to promote solidarity between the Member States and other participating countries through practical cooperation and coordination.

To these ends, an Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) in Brussels monitors emergencies across the globe round the clock, and liaises with contact points in participating countries. Disasters are recorded in a Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS), which serves as a clearing house for civil incident alerts and requests for assistance from participating countries. CPM activities are managed by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (DG ECHO), where the ERCC is based.

The Mechanism also comprises the EERC with its pre-positioned civil protection 'modules' – autonomous, self-sufficient teams made up of civil protection equipment and transport resources voluntarily committed by one or more participating country – and technical assistance and support teams, to undertake specialised tasks such as search and rescue, aerial forest-fire-fighting, management of oil spills at sea and medical assistance. CPM funds can be used to co-finance the transport of assistance to disaster-stricken areas – up to 55% of the total cost in most cases, but up to 100% if this is needed to make the pooling of resources operationally effective. Participating countries that contribute to the voluntary pool of civil protection resources are eligible for Union co-financing of adaptation and certification to ensure compatibility of equipment, at co-financing rates of between 20% and 100%. They also take part in CPM-funded prevention and preparedness training and exercise programmes. Otherwise, participating countries are responsible for funding civil protection assistance, and most of them offer assistance free of charge as a gesture of solidarity.

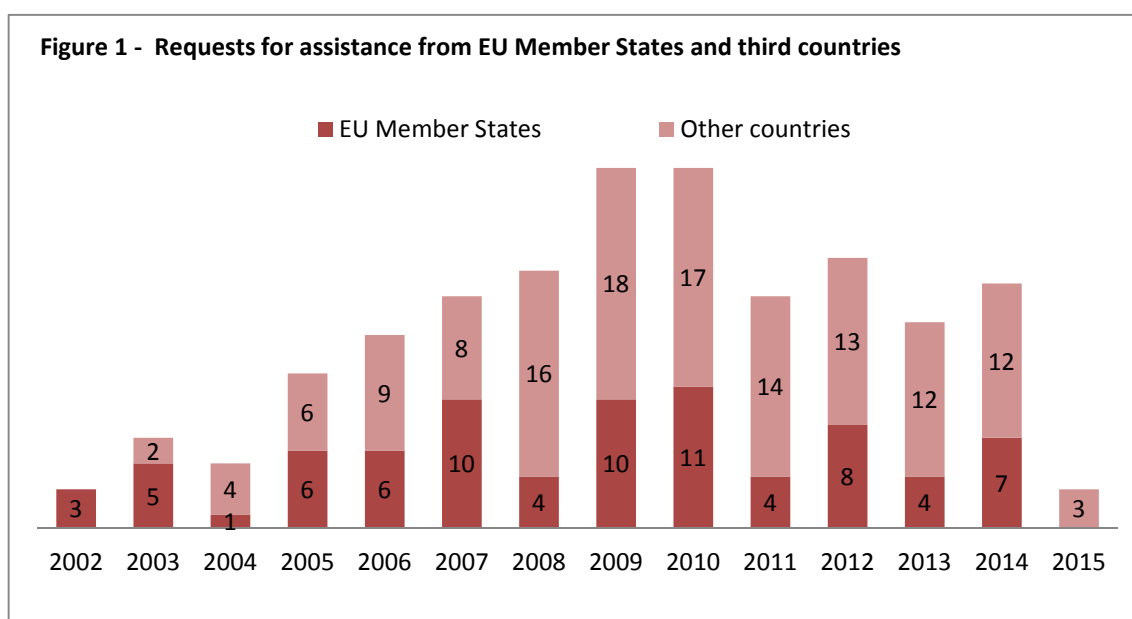
The CPM can be used to respond to disasters both within the EU, where its measures come under Heading 3 (Security and Citizenship) of the EU budget, and beyond, where deployment of CPM civil protection modules and experts complements humanitarian aid under Heading 4 (Global Europe).

Funded measures

The financial envelope for the Union Civil Protection Mechanism for 2014-20 is €368.4 million, of which €223.7 million is to be spent on prevention, preparedness and response actions inside the EU, and €144.6 million is for actions abroad. Of this, 20% is to be spent on prevention actions, 50% on preparedness and 30% on response, with some scope for reallocation of funds between these categories over the course of the MFF. In 2014, more than €10 million was disbursed in CPM funds to co-finance the transport of civil protection assistance provided by participating states.

The CPM comprises a prevention and preparedness programme of risk assessment, peer review (two completed: in the United Kingdom in 2012 and Finland in 2013), training, exercises and expert exchanges. Current prevention initiatives include the 'Baltic everyday accidents, disaster prevention and resilience' project (BaltPrevResilience); BE-AWARE-2, which includes authorities and civil protection agencies in the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, France, Sweden, Ireland and Germany; and Flood CBA (cost-benefit analysis), with the United Kingdom, Greece, Romania, Portugal, Germany and Spain. CPM funds were used to assess environmental hazards in Madagascar in April 2013 and enhance flood preparedness in Nigeria in August 2013. In 2014, €27.1 million was appropriated for disaster prevention and preparedness within the EU, and €5.3 million for disaster prevention and preparedness in third countries.

The CPM has monitored over 300 disasters and been activated more than 215 times since its launch in 2001. In 2014, the CPM was activated 19 times: seven times in response to emergencies within a participating country and 12 times for disasters abroad.



Source: European Commission data.

Most recently, the **CPM was activated in response to a 7.8-magnitude earthquake in Nepal**, with Member States using it to offer search and rescue teams, water purification systems and technical assistance. Another recent request for assistance came from Vanuatu, to which the **EU dispatched two experts under the CPM, to complement emergency relief from its humanitarian aid budget, in the wake of tropical cyclone Pam in March 2015**. In July 2014, the Mechanism was used to help transport medical staff, vehicles, equipment and supplies to parts of West Africa worst hit by the outbreak of Ebola. In 2013, the CPM was deployed in the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in November 2013. Within the EU and its neighbouring countries, it was mobilised to tackle forest fires in Greece, Portugal, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania in 2012 and 2013, and to assist with the reception of Syrian refugees in Bulgaria, Lebanon and Jordan in 2013.

Assessment of the Mechanism

In December 2014, DG ECHO published an ex-post [evaluation](#) of the previous Civil Protection Financial Instrument and Community Civil Protection Mechanism in the 2007-13 period. It found that implementation of the Mechanism had been generally effective in achieving both overarching and specific objectives, and that the Mechanism had added value by enhancing cooperation between participating countries, addressing gaps in national response capacity, and shifting the focus towards prevention. However, it also noted that more could have been done to improve take-up of lessons learned, and to foster operational and cross-sector learning.

The 2011 Commission proposal for a Decision on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism was accompanied by an [impact assessment](#). It stated that EU action under the Mechanism faced three challenges: 1) the increasing number, intensity and complexity of disasters; 2) budgetary constraints in view of the economic downturn in the EU; and 3) restrictions in the existing institutional set-up that hinder effective action at EU level. It pointed to critical gaps in response assets, cumbersome transport procedures, limited preparedness in training and exercises, and poor integration of prevention. The specific objective of the revised Mechanism was a 'shift from a reactive and ad hoc coordination to a pre-planned, prearranged and predictable system'. The Commission plans to carry out an assessment of the revised Mechanism in 2017.

Academic research⁴ argues that the 'solidarity clause' in Article 222 TFEU could justify a more ambitious, EU-led response to catastrophe than that afforded by the CPM's relatively modest budget (0.038% of the MFF). Countries participating in the CPM are under no obligation to commit civil defence forces to any specific catastrophe. However, other authors maintain that a stronger supranational civil protection capacity may encourage individual countries to 'free ride', or under-prepare for catastrophes on their own territory.⁵

Other EU spending and initiatives in the same field

The CPM can be deployed in response to marine pollution emergencies, where it works together with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). The EMSA was set up in 2003, and takes part in oil-spill preparedness and response, vessel monitoring, and long-range identification and tracking of vessels. The EMSA's budget in 2014 was €57.9 million (in payment appropriations).

Another major EU civil defence tool is the EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF), which provides assistance in the event of a major natural disaster that poses a serious threat to living

conditions, the natural environment or the economy in one or more regions of a Member State or EU candidate country. A natural disaster is said to be 'major' if it results in direct damage (in the Member State or candidate country) in excess of €3 billion (2011 prices) or more than 0.6% of the gross national income of the beneficiary State. Assistance from the EUSF takes the form of a grant to partly reimburse costs incurred by national authorities. For the 2014-20 period, the annual ceiling for expenditure of the EUSF is €500 million per year, which may be complemented by unused resources from the previous year.⁶

DG ECHO invests in disaster-risk reduction (DRR) and preparedness as part of its humanitarian aid to countries outside the EU. ECHO allocates about 16% of its humanitarian budget to DRR activities. The Disaster Preparedness ECHO programme (DIPECHO) was launched in 1996, and has thus far invested €325 million in vulnerable communities in Central, South and Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The key goal of the programme is to increase communities' resilience and reduce their vulnerability.

Another EU initiative providing support in this area is Copernicus, which uses satellites, ground stations and airborne and sea-borne sensors to monitor the Earth and collect environmental and security-related data.

Endnotes

¹ The 2014 and 2015 figures for payments include those for programmes that predate the 2014-2020 MFF.

² This replaced the Monitoring and Information Centre in May 2013.

³ In addition to EU Member States, participation in the CPM is open to European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries that are members of the European Economic Area (EEA), and to acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates eligible to participate in Union programmes under bilateral agreements with the EU.

⁴ See Theodore Konstadinides, 'Civil Protection Cooperation in EU Law: Is There Room for Solidarity to Wriggle Past?', *European Law Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2, March 2013, pp. 267–282.

⁵ See Arjen Boin, Magnus Ekengren and Mark Rhinard, *The European Union as Crisis Manager: Patterns and Prospects*, 2013, p. 28.

⁶ The EU Solidarity Fund is not included in the EU's annual budgetary procedure. The Fund is financed through an amending budget setting out commitment and payment appropriations to be entered in the budget of the current year.

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