

The Union Civil Protection Mechanism's rescEU reserve

A valuable contribution to European civil protection, despite planning weaknesses that have hampered implementation and sustainability



Contents

Paragraph

01-13 | **Main messages**

01-07 | Why this area is important

08-13 | What we found and recommend

14-74 | **A closer look at our observations**

14-37 | Calls for proposals were mostly in line with needs, but limited time for using NextGenerationEU funds hampered their planning

18-22 | Calls for proposals were prepared based on gap analyses, but in some cases information on member states' needs was not available

23-28 | The need to absorb NextGenerationEU funds within a limited time hampered the planning of some calls

29-34 | The Commission and member states did not always exploit synergies to build a common EU strategic reserve

35-37 | The Commission has not addressed sustainability beyond the end of NextGenerationEU-funded projects at planning stage

38-58 | RescEU capacities were in most cases appropriately acquired and maintained, with delays affecting their availability

41-48 | Assets for rescEU projects were generally procured in line with the requirements set out in calls and grant agreements

49-52 | Most projects suffered from delays affecting the availability of some capacities

53-58 | The maintenance of stockpiles was only provided for until the end of the availability of NextGenerationEU funds

59-74 | The deployment of rescEU capacities has been effective, but the associated reimbursement procedures are sometimes cumbersome

63-69 | The deployment of rescEU capacities has been effective, and has swiftly adapted to new emergencies

70-71 | The administrative burden sometimes caused delays in claiming reimbursement

72-74 | Reasons given for not providing a rescEU response were justified

Annexes

Annex I – About the audit

Annex II – Our samples

Abbreviations

Replies of the Commission

Timeline

Audit team

01

Main messages

Why this area is important

- 01** The [Union Civil Protection Mechanism \(UCPM\)](#) is a system for coordinating disaster response and civil protection among the EU member states and ten additional non-EU participating states, supported by the Commission. In an area where member states hold primary responsibility, the role of the UCPM is based on three pillars: prevention, preparedness and response. Within the UCPM, rescEU is the EU's strategic reserve for disaster response capabilities. This reserve comprises planes and helicopters for firefighting and medical evacuation, and several essential stockpiles, including field hospitals, energy and shelter items, medical supplies, and equipment to respond to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear emergencies. The rescEU reserve was conceived as an additional layer of protection to allow the EU to respond to disasters as a last resort where existing capacities at national level or those pre-committed by member states are not able to ensure an effective response.
- 02** In recent years, Europe has faced significant challenges arising from an increasingly complex risk and threat landscape. These challenges encompass security concerns, such as Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, public health issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and natural disasters. Against this background, there has been a notable rise in activations of the UCPM. Between 2020 and 2024, the UCPM was activated 657 times, a four-fold increase on the previous five years. The [2025 European Preparedness Union Strategy](#) and the [EU stockpiling strategy](#) are recent developments that reflect the increasing importance of civil protection and emergency preparedness at EU level.
- 03** The UCPM budget under the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework is €3.7 billion. This encompasses the multiannual financial framework allocation of €1.6 billion and an

additional temporary NextGenerationEU allocation of €2 billion, provided to address the recovery needs of the EU and its member states arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. These amounts were complemented by contributions to the UCPM by participating non-EU states. These contributions amount to €114 million for the 2021-2027 period. Three quarters (€2.9 billion) of the UCPM's 2021-2027 funding was allocated to rescEU.

04 The Commission has put forward a [legislative proposal](#) for a regulation on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism and EU support for health emergency preparedness and response which will replace the current [2021 Regulation](#). At €10.7 billion, the proposed budget under the new 2028-2034 multiannual financial framework is much higher than the current one. The ECA has published an [opinion](#) on this proposal.

05 In this audit, we examined the Commission's planning and implementation of projects aimed at developing and stockpiling rescEU reserves, as well as their deployment. We assessed whether:

- the Commission had assessed needs and gaps at EU level, and whether it had drawn up the calls for proposals in line with established needs;
- rescEU-funded projects had been implemented effectively, including their maintenance once available;
- the rescEU reserve had been used to address requests for disaster assistance effectively, and whether it had been used as a last resort, as originally intended. We also examined whether decisions not to respond to requests for activation had been justified.

06 The audit covered rescEU calls for proposals, financed projects and response actions from 2022 to 2024, managed by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. We also audited the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority, in relation to two calls and three sampled projects in the area of medical and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear countermeasures.

07 We conducted this audit because of the importance of civil protection – and, more recently, preparedness at large – in the context of increasing risks (paragraph [02](#)). The report provides policymakers and the public with an independent assessment of how the UCPM's rescEU reserve contributes to EU civil protection. It identifies shortcomings and makes recommendations for improvement that can contribute to the ongoing legislative process concerning a new UCPM instrument for the 2028-2034 period. More background information and details on the audit scope and approach can be found in [Annex I](#).

What we found and recommend

- 08** Overall, we conclude that the UCPM's rescEU reserve provided a valuable contribution to European civil protection, through the acquisition and leasing of different rescEU capacities, and through the deployment of those capacities when a crisis so required. However, weaknesses in planning of the calls for proposals hampered project implementation and sustainability. In some instances, the procedures associated with claiming reimbursement for deployment actions were cumbersome.
- 09** We found that the Commission provided rescEU capacities mostly in line with established needs, and that the sampled calls for proposals were prepared based on gap analyses at EU level carried out before rescEU was implemented. However, there were cases in which information on member states' needs for capacities was not available to the Commission: such information sometimes fell within the domain of national security, making it confidential. The amount of funding allocated to calls for proposals was not always directly linked to an assessment of needs. Furthermore, the limited timeframe for using NextGenerationEU funds hampered the planning of some of the calls for proposals (see paragraphs [14-28](#)).



Recommendation 1

Improve the allocation of funding based on needs

When planning for new rescEU capacities, the Commission should allocate funding only to those capacities for which it has sufficient information from the member states to address gaps at EU level.

Target implementation date: end of 2028

- 10** The Commission and the member states did not always exploit synergies in building a common EU strategic reserve. Calls for proposals, for example, have the characteristics of a competitive procedure, which by its very nature encouraged applicants to compete with each other for funding. There were no particular provisions indicating the possibility to opt for common purchases among member states in call documents. Although there have been efforts to purchase rescEU reserves jointly, we found that these efforts had produced results in only one case, through a framework agreement. See paragraphs [29-34](#).



Recommendation 2

Foster synergies in the process for funding actions supporting the rescEU reserve

With a view to achieving better prices, quicker delivery deadlines, and improvements in the interoperability of certain equipment, the Commission should:

- (a) design calls for proposals that encourage cooperation among member states, such as through common applications, where relevant;
- (b) develop the rescEU capacities through joint procurement between the Commission and the member states, where possible.

Target implementation date: end of 2028

- 11** We conclude that rescEU's capacities were, in most cases, appropriately procured and maintained during project duration, in line with the call requirements. Nevertheless, the delays in procuring some capacities affected their timely availability. For NextGenerationEU-funded grants, sustainability beyond the project end date had not been anticipated by the Commission in the calls for proposals. In all projects, maintenance of stockpiles had been taken into account only until the end of the availability of NextGenerationEU funds, leaving subsequent maintenance unaddressed at that stage. Only in 2025 did the Commission engage with member states to assess the maintenance needs after the projects' end date, and to secure the implementation of NextGenerationEU projects beyond September 2026 until December 2028.
- 12** We also found that the Commission had included in two calls for proposals the aspect of securing supplies for some capacities as a guiding principle, and that their acquisition was open to European and non-European suppliers. Lastly, we noted that the Commission had started exploring approaches to improving the management of stockpiling arrangements from the perspectives of both cost management and readiness for deployment; however, these approaches had not yet been put into practice. See paragraphs [35-58](#).



Recommendation 3

Improve the sustainability of rescEU projects

The Commission should, in cooperation with member states:

- (a) plan for the maintenance of rescEU stockpiles during their entire operational life;
- (b) assess ways to reinforce the security of supply by promoting procurement from European producers;
- (c) improve efficiency in managing current and future stockpiling arrangements.

Target implementation date: end of 2028

- 13** We found that rescEU had been effective in responding to requests for assistance, and that it had proven its capacity to be swiftly adapted to new emergencies beyond traditional civil protection. However, we also concluded that the requirement to claim reimbursement for individual response grants separately was cumbersome for national authorities. Lastly, we considered that the reasons given for decisions not to undertake rescEU response actions were justified. See paragraphs [59-74](#).



Recommendation 4

Streamline reimbursement of costs for response actions

In order to ease the administrative burden related to reimbursing the costs of response actions, the Commission should simplify administrative procedures, such as through the use of multi-action grants.

Target implementation date: end of 2027

A closer look at our observations

Calls for proposals were mostly in line with needs, but limited time for using NextGenerationEU funds hampered their planning

- 14** In 2019, EU legislation¹ included the rescEU reserve within the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). The reserve, which was first conceived as a result of the wildfires that affected large areas of Europe in 2017, was established as a strategic reserve of European disaster response capabilities and stockpiles, fully funded by the EU through grants. In line with its original purpose, rescEU initially focused on establishing a reserve of firefighting planes and helicopters. However, its remit was subsequently expanded to include other sorts of emergencies, notably in response to the crises provoked by COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. As a result, the rescEU reserve progressively evolved to include other capacities. These include field hospitals, transport assets, energy and shelter items, medical supplies, and equipment to respond to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) emergencies (*Annex I*).
- 15** For the 2021-2027 period, around €844 million from the UCPM's multiannual financial framework (MFF) budget was devoted to rescEU capacities. The funding available for the rescEU reserve increased considerably in 2022 and 2023 with the allocation of €2 039 million of NextGenerationEU (NGEU) funds. RescEU capacities have been mostly procured through calls for proposals issued by the Commission's Directorate-General for

¹ Decision (EU) 2019/420, which updated Decision (EU) 1313/2013.

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) to both EU member states and non-EU states² participating in the UCPM.

- 16** As part of our audit work, we sampled 6 calls for proposals out of the 15 that were issued between 2022 and 2024, representing almost €1.8 billion of a total of €2.2 billion for that period ([Annex II, Table](#)). The calls covered the acquisition, development and maintenance of rescEU capacities in the area of aerial forest firefighting (AFFF), medical and CBRN capacities, emergency aerial transportation and logistics, and mobile shelters for populations affected by a disaster.
- 17** We assessed whether the set-up of rescEU had been informed by a needs assessment. We also examined whether the six calls for proposals in our sample had been properly prepared: whether they were underpinned by a timely and comprehensive gap analysis, taking into account the type of capacities needed, quantity and quality requirements, geographical distribution and estimated costs. Lastly, we examined whether the successful application fulfilled the different requirements as defined by the Commission.

Calls for proposals were prepared based on gap analyses, but in some cases information on member states' needs was not available

- 18** To inform the creation of rescEU, the Commission carried out an [evaluation study of definitions, gaps and costs of response capacities](#) for the UCPM. The final report, published in 2019, provided a comprehensive overview of gaps, providing the following information:
- (a) review and redefinition of the existing response capacities;
 - (b) cost analysis;
 - (c) risk-based capacity gap analysis; and
 - (d) revised capacity goals.

² Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

- 19** We found that this study had a strong impact on the legislative framework³, bringing CBRN, temporary shelter and transport and logistics capacities into rescEU's remit and laying down associated quality requirements.
- 20** Specific needs in each thematic area (such as CBRN and temporary shelters) were subject to discussions with expert task teams organised by the Commission, including representatives from all EU member states and non-EU participating states. All of our sampled calls for proposals addressed the needs identified in the capacity gap analysis of the 2019 study, the results of the expert task-team discussions, or both. The two AFFF calls for proposals were an example of a prior in-depth analysis of the needs for this type of capacity (**Box 1**).

Box 1

A gap analysis underpinned calls for proposals for aerial forest firefighting capacities

The Commission based the 2022 call for proposal for AFFF capacities on work of the rescEU AFFF task team that had been carried out between 2019 and 2020. This task team comprised Commission representatives and qualified national experts in the management of national AFFF fleets from EU member states and non-EU participating states.

At those task-team meetings, the Commission and national experts agreed to a geographical distribution of rescEU capacities, with the aim of adapting these capacities to regional needs.

For Southern Europe, the Commission and national experts agreed on the need to procure six AFFF modules (comprising two medium-sized amphibious planes each) and recommended that five of these should be located in Greece, Spain, France, Croatia and Italy. The sixth could be located either in Portugal or in Cyprus.

At subsequent meetings, the Commission and national experts agreed on the technical specifications for the planes and assessed the expected cost of each capacity.

- 21** In the particular case of CBRN, the 2019 gap analysis highlighted that it would be better for CBRN response capacities to be developed at EU level owing to their costly nature. However, it did not provide the full extent of capacity gaps, since some of that information had been classified on account of its relevance to national security. The Commission

³ The study triggered the amendments to Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/570 on rescEU capacities by Implementing Decisions (EU) 2021/88, 2022/288 and 2022/461.

therefore did not have a clear view of existing capacities within the member states. The Commission had to base its analysis on risks identified through expert task-team discussions, as well as a health-threat analysis prepared by the Commission's Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA). Such sources were the main bases for designing the 2022 CBRN and the 2023 medical CBRN calls respectively.

- 22** The 2019 gap analysis was further limited by being based on national risk assessments, which did not provide a consistent level of information. According to the final report (paragraph 18), there was no full access to the detailed scenario assumptions underpinning these assessments, or to the preventive and mitigating actions envisaged.

The need to absorb NextGenerationEU funds within a limited time hampered the planning of some calls

- 23** During the 2022-2024 period, rescEU capacities were either funded from the MFF budget or with NGEU funds. MFF funds have until the end of 2027 to be committed⁴, while NGEU funds (Box in Annex I) need to have been committed by the end of 2023 and paid out by the end of 2026⁵, and projects implemented by September 2026 according to the grant agreements.
- 24** In our sample, the two calls for the purchase or temporary leasing of AFFF capacities were both funded from the UCPM's MFF budget. In contrast, the CBRN, shelters, and transport and logistics calls were funded by NGEU. The CBRN calls were funded from HERA's contribution to the UCPM through a co-delegation agreement, which provided €580.5 million in 2022 and €685.5 million in 2023 in commitment appropriations to DG ECHO for the development of stockpiles of medical supplies for responding to CBRN emergencies.
- 25** While all sampled calls for proposals addressed the risks or gaps identified in the 2019 gap assessment or in the expert task-team discussions, we found that in two cases there was insufficient time available to thoroughly prepare them. For example, at the time of the 2022 CBRN call for proposals, an internal Commission document highlighted the "time pressure to commit NGEU [funds]". It pointed out that the NGEU Regulation contained a requirement to "legally commit 60 % of the NGEU funds", which would amount to nearly €1.2 billion by the end of 2022, and would require "a speedy agreement and advancement". This corroborates our conclusion that the 2022 call was aimed at absorbing

⁴ Article 114(2) of the [Financial Regulation](#).

⁵ Article 3(4) and (9) of [Council Regulation 2020/2094](#).

NGEU funds which had suddenly become available. In fact, respondents to the 2022 CBRN call had submitted project proposals with a budgeted value much lower than the financial envelope of the call; in response, and in the context of Russia's war on Ukraine, the Commission, after consultation with member and participating non-EU states, suggested that the applicants significantly increase their project budgets. One applicant thus increased its project budget by €86 million, and a second one by €63 million – 55 % and 113 % respectively – in order to procure more equipment in view of the evolving risks linked to Russia's war on Ukraine.

- 26** In 2022, the Commission launched a call for proposal in the area of transport and logistics. Only two member states submitted applications, one of which was withdrawn. For the other one, several rounds of questions and answers were needed to clarify the needs identified in the call. Furthermore, the changes introduced to the original proposal led to a fivefold increase on the original budget, from €27 million to almost €136 million, since the first version of the proposal included one plane fewer – two planes instead of the final proposal of three – and did not include the cost of hours of flying time.
- 27** The only selected proposal did not fully meet all of the call's requirements (*Box 2*). Although the member state in question had sufficient experience in projects of comparable size, it did not have previous experience in projects involving the provision of rapid-response air transport services in emergencies, which was a new type of capacity. However, the applicant considered it an opportunity to complement its work on stockpiling with transport and logistics. At the evaluation stage of the proposal, the Commission identified the risk of the applicant's capacity to manage the project being impaired by a lack of staff, but did not question the timeline, which ended up being overambitious, as the project experienced severe delays (*Box 5*).

Box 2

Requirements of the call for proposals for transport and logistics

The call for proposals for transport and logistics required applicants to make available two multipurpose planes, and one medical evacuation plane in cases where these multipurpose planes did not satisfy medical-evacuation criteria (such as the ability to transport at least four intensive care units or 24 stretchers), in accordance with [Implementing Decision 2019/570](#).

The call also imposed other conditions on applicants, requiring them to:

- operate day and night;
- operate, where necessary, in challenging circumstances, such as close to a war zone;
- provide logistical support functions such as loading and unloading material;
- transport and handle special goods according to international standards.

The selected applicant did not fully satisfy these additional requirements. While the planes offered could operate day and night, they had limitations in operating in challenging circumstances (owing to the type of engine of the proposed planes), in loading and unloading material (as they would need logistical support on the ground) and in transporting some modules, such as forest firefighting vehicles.

28 We examined a call for proposals on the provision of shelters, which we considered well prepared despite the time constraints on absorbing NGEU funds. We found that the call document did not specifically require member states to propose a particular type of shelter to avoid unintentionally discriminating against applicants. The Commission had established a minimum set of features to be complemented by specific solutions proposed by member states, allowing them to bring in their own national experience as well as innovation from industry. We found that this approach produced positive results. This is because the Commission was able to select different projects for funding, including projects under which two types of shelters were supplied: shelters meant for short- or medium-term use, which are easy to transport and install, and more complex shelters that provide a better medium-term solution.

The Commission and member states did not always exploit synergies to build a common EU strategic reserve

- 29** All rescEU capacities are hosted in member states and non-EU participating states that are willing to respond to the Commission's calls for proposals. The Commission and the member states are required to ensure⁶ an appropriate geographical distribution of rescEU capacities. In our assessment of the sampled calls for proposals, we noted that the geographical distribution of rescEU capacities across the EU and in the non-EU participating states depended on whether member and participating states were willing to participate in those projects.
- 30** The 2019 final report on the [evaluation study of definitions, gaps and costs of response capacities for the UCPM](#) considers matters relevant to joint procurement and storage of capacities to be taken into account in the acquisition phase. However, none of the sampled calls for proposals made reference to such considerations. There were no particular provisions indicating the possibility to opt for common purchases among member states in the call documents (e.g. rewarding applications from consortia).
- 31** A project beneficiary from one of the sampled projects acknowledged that the Commission had provided information at expert task team meetings on the possibility of opting for common purchases. Nevertheless, the system of calls for proposals by its very nature encouraged applicants to compete with each other to obtain funding. Another project beneficiary had attempted to contact other member states when drawing up its project proposal but had not received any response.
- 32** For one project under the sampled calls for proposals, HERA had facilitated the procurement of an item through a framework agreement for fourteen EU member states and non-EU participating states. This opportunity was considered positive by the project beneficiary, given that it had also had to procure large quantities of other items in a short period of time and without the benefit of a framework agreement.
- 33** In another instance, the Commission had tried to facilitate a joint procurement procedure between six member states that had been awarded funding to procure AFFF capacities. However, according to its understanding in 2021, the Commission considered it legally impossible for it to directly procure equipment on behalf of the member states if it would not be itself the owner of at least part of what would be purchased. Following the revision

⁶ Article 12(1) of [Decision 1313/2013](#).

of the [Financial Regulation](#)⁷ in November 2024, direct procurement by the Commission on behalf of member states became possible in such cases.

- 34** In our view, the Commission was the best-placed body to ensure complementarity with other European capacities in assessing applicants' project proposals. Complementarity with existing EU stockpiles was one subcriterion for evaluating the relevance of the projects under the sampled calls for proposals concerning CBRN capacity. However, for the 2022 call for proposals, the Commission evaluated this subcriterion only from the viewpoint of interoperability, which is just one aspect of complementarity. This was improved for the 2023 call for proposals in the same area, where complementarity was included as a subcriterion and assessed by the Commission in its evaluation report.

The Commission has not addressed sustainability beyond the end of NextGenerationEU-funded projects at planning stage

- 35** Four of the six sampled calls for proposals had been prepared with the standard implementation timeframe for NGEU funds, limiting medium-term planning for the assets procured under the different grants. Project applicants were required to report on what would happen to the acquired assets, including maintenance, until the end of the project in September 2026. One applicant signalled concern about the sustainability of the capacities already at the project-proposal phase in 2022, but the matter was not dealt with at that stage. The two AFFF calls were not bound by this limitation as they had been funded under the UCPM MFF budget.
- 36** Regarding the two calls in the area of CBRN capacity, project applicants had made plans for maintenance services for the stockpile until the end of the project. Only one of the project proposals financed by NGEU contained provisions stipulating what would be done with the assets after the end of the project. In that case, the project beneficiary also planned for the possibility of procuring maintenance services beyond the project end date by including a clause in the procurement contract allowing the contract to be extended for one year beyond the project end date ([Box 3](#)).

Box 3

Planning for sustainability beyond the project end date

Under the grant agreement between the Commission and the member state concerned, one project beneficiary had to make plans for the future of acquired assets

⁷ Article 168.

at the end of the project, particularly for items that had a significantly longer lifespan than the project's duration of 3 years and 9 months, as well as the recycling of some items within the stockpile.

In the contract for one sampled CBRN procurement procedure, the member state beneficiary made arrangements with the supplier for maintenance on a timeframe beyond the project's duration, since the lifespan of some items in the stockpile would extend well beyond the project's end date. However, by December 2025, maintenance beyond September 2026 had not been contracted, as there was no information by the Commission on whether the grant duration could be prolonged beyond September 2026. Nonetheless, having included it in its procurement contract, the project beneficiary could make contracts for maintenance beyond September 2026, should the project duration be prolonged.

- 37** By the end of 2025, the Commission had not made any information available to the national authorities as to sustainability planning between the end of 2026 and the start of the next MFF in 2028. In December 2025, the Commission informed the member states that an exception had been granted to extend the project implementation period to 31 December 2028 at the latest. However, as at March 2026 the issue of the necessary financing for the maintenance of the rescEU stockpiles until the next MFF has not yet been resolved.

RescEU capacities were in most cases appropriately acquired and maintained, with delays affecting their availability

- 38** We selected a sample of 7 projects from a total of 75 financed by one of the six sampled calls for proposals launched between 2022 and 2024 (paragraph 16). These projects represented 36 % of the total funding provided (i.e. €800 million out of €2.2 billion). To this sample we added one directly awarded project.
- 39** The projects in our sample involved acquiring or leasing firefighting capacities (projects 1 and 7), stockpiling and maintaining CBRN and medical items (projects 2, 3 and 6), providing aerial transportation for people and equipment (project 4), purchasing mobile shelters for populations affected by a disaster (project 5), and purchasing emergency energy supplies (project 8). **Box 4** gives a few examples of the different types of sampled rescEU projects. The full list of projects is presented in **Annex II**.

Box 4

Examples of sampled rescEU projects

Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear stockpiles (projects 2, 3 and 6)

RescEU was used to fund projects aimed at increasing the EU's capacity to respond to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents.

Under these projects, stockpiles were built up based on different reference emergency scenarios. Planning took into account the nature and scale of possible incidents and the response actions envisaged in such cases.

The stockpiles include medical supplies, protective and decontamination equipment and other items which could be needed for first responders or the wider population.



Source: Rescue Borealis exercise, 2025, Ministry of Interior, Finland.

RescEU shelter capacities: Container towns (project 5)

RescEU was also used to fund a project aimed at providing shelters for rapid deployment to the scene of an emergency, such as a major earthquake. The shelters form container towns, with space for housing, hygiene and sanitation, basic medical services, water tanks and energy generators, each for 256 people. The capacity is flexible: container modules provide a targeted response to the needs of the affected countries in each case.



Source: ECA.

RescEU transition – AFFF module available for response during fire season (project 7)

Each year, the Commission organises calls for proposals to finance the leasing of planes to be put at rescEU's disposal during the forest fire season (15 June to 31 October). The project in our sample consisted of one AFFF module (comprising two medium-sized amphibious planes and their crews) put at rescEU's disposal by Italy. These aircraft can be used in other countries whose resources are insufficient to manage large-scale forest fires.



Source: ECA.

- 40** We assessed whether member states acquired or leased rescEU capacities effectively, as well as the availability of those capacities in different countries. We also examined how the capacities were maintained and managed once available.

Assets for rescEU projects were generally procured in line with the requirements set out in calls and grant agreements

- 41** Overall, the eight projects we sampled had either procured all capacities or were on track to procure the capacities listed in the grant agreement in line with the call requirements and the grant agreement. We found that the selected procurement contracts within the projects were in accordance with the price, qualities and quantities set out in the grant agreements, and in accordance with the market research carried out before launching the procurement procedure, except for one project. This project was also subject to a European [Anti-Fraud Office \(OLAF\) investigation](#).
- 42** In February 2025, OLAF recommended the financial recovery of over €91 million of €114 million that had been intended for the purchase of power generators for areas affected by power shortages as a result of Russia's war on Ukraine. According to OLAF, the procurement process violated the principles of transparency, competition, equal treatment, and sound financial management. The investigation revealed overpricing, a lack

of competition, and undue advantages given to certain contractors. Consequently, the Commission ordered an independent audit of the internal control systems and the use of grant agreement funds concerning the remaining grants from rescEU in the member state authority. The Commission plans to follow up this case in 2026 with a view to applying financial corrections.

- 43** Although there had been delays (paragraphs [50-52](#)), by November 2025, most of the assets of our sampled projects had been made available, as confirmed by our on-the-spot checks, and ready for deployment after their registration in the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS). CECIS is the web-based alert and notification application enabling a real-time exchange of information between the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) and the 37 UCPM national focal points, a 24/7 civil protection authority or ministry designated by each country to coordinate with the ERCC. In the case of the project investigated by OLAF, the assets stored in warehouses are no longer available for deployment due to ongoing national investigations.
- 44** Capacities were registered in CECIS either progressively as items were delivered and stocked in warehouses or, in some cases, when a whole module for deployment had been set up in the warehouses. The Commission introduced CECIS 2.0 in 2025; the upgraded system includes improvements to mitigate the risk of errors caused by the manual registration of assets.
- 45** Although civil protection is a national competence, beneficiaries strongly support and welcome the aspect of solidarity and knowledge-sharing in preparing and responding to emergencies⁸. Grant agreements require the rescEU logo to be displayed to draw attention to EU solidarity in action; during our audit visits, we found that it was indeed visible on most of the items we checked ([Picture 1](#)). There were two exceptions. In one case, the logo was not attached to packaged items stored in a warehouse, but labelling was planned to be done when preparing for deployment, in accordance with the standard operating procedures of the warehouse. In another case, AFFF planes were not marked with the rescEU logo.

⁸ [Special Eurobarometer, 511b, Report on EU Civil Protection](#), Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network, 2021.

Picture 1 | RescEU temporary shelter: EU logo on a blanket



Source: ECA.

- 46** We noted that EU-funded civil protection is departing from its traditional role of providing support during national disasters and peacetime emergencies, moving instead towards a more integrated role in national defence, security, and public health. This trend is reflected in the growth of rescEU's capacities since 2019, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. In our sample of audited projects, while the need to secure supply was included in some calls for proposals as a guiding principle, the acquisition of different types of rescEU capacities was open to European and non-European suppliers. Some member states have expressed a desire, from the perspective of security of supply and strategic autonomy, to explore whether the EU could use its bargaining power to prioritise the acquisition of European-made assets.
- 47** For example, in the AFFF project to buy two medium amphibious planes, the member state launched a market-research exercise which resulted in proposals to procure upgraded versions of older models, or prototype planes that had not yet been certified. Owing to the lack of current suppliers, this member state and five others collectively agreed to initiate discussions with a non-EU manufacturer that had discontinued its production of medium-sized amphibious aircraft that they had acquired in the past. They asked the Commission to facilitate such negotiations for two reasons: first, because a minimum order quantity of 20 planes had to be reached in order to restart production, and second, to secure competitive pricing and robust guarantees for the procurement of the aircraft.
- 48** The negotiation process at EU level lasted over two years. Subsequently, the specific contract between the member state and the supplier was signed in 2024, with the aircraft scheduled for delivery in 2029 and 2030 – beyond the current MFF period. The protracted

negotiations with the supplier led, in retrospect, to concerns on the part of the member state about whether the funds required to relaunch the production of a non-EU firefighting plane could instead have been used to support the development of such an aircraft by a European manufacturer.

Most projects suffered from delays affecting the availability of some capacities

- 49** Seven of the eight sampled projects were ongoing at the time of the audit. Six projects were required to be implemented by August or September 2026, and one by 2030.
- 50** Two projects had been implemented according to schedule. The six remaining projects had experienced delays in the implementation of some milestones concerning the procurement of rescEU capacities. We found that the timeliness of project implementation was often affected by lengthy procurement procedures, such as the preparation of complex technical specifications, and the availability of products on the market. [Box 5](#) gives an example of a project with a significant delay.

Box 5

Major delays in securing the contract for rescEU aerial transport

One project involved leasing two large planes for the transport of passengers and cargo, as well as a medical evacuation plane and a medical team.

As this was the first transport and logistics project funded by rescEU, and owing to its complex nature, there were difficulties in defining the technical specifications. There were also issues in securing national financing for the VAT portion of the project. These factors contributed to a delay of 27 months: a milestone regarding the tendering for the two multipurpose planes that had been planned for month 5 was achieved in month 32.

- 51** The shelter project and the three projects related to CBRN and medical items were largely successful in procuring items on time. There were delays, mainly explained by items, such as certain vaccines, being out of stock. Certain other items, such as innovative high-tech protective suites with independent ventilation, could not be acquired on the market within the available budget.
- 52** NGEU-funded projects have a fixed time frame. As a result of the fixed end date that this implies, the period of time between the moment all rescEU capacities for each funded project were fully available and the project end date was correspondingly short. This time

span was reduced further for delayed projects. All but one of our sampled NGEU-funded grants were not fully stocked until the beginning of 2026, while the projects' end date is September 2026.

The maintenance of stockpiles was only provided for until the end of the availability of NextGenerationEU funds

- 53** NGEU projects must be finalised by September 2026, with the Commission making all final payments by December 2026. This influenced the planning of all the projects of our sample that received NGEU funding with regard to the maintenance of the stockpiles after being acquired, which was envisaged in all these projects only until September 2026, except for one case, which did not include any budget for maintenance from the outset. At the time of our audit, the Commission was still working on a solution for financing the maintenance of these projects from 1 October 2026 until 31 December 2027, the end of the current MFF. In December 2025, the Commission informed the beneficiaries that an exception had been granted for the prolongation of the projects (paragraph 37).
- 54** One project pertaining to the call launched in 2022, which involved the acquisition of CBRN-related stockpiles, experienced significant underspending during its implementation. The Commission agreed with the member state concerned that the difference between planned and actual spending could be spent on procuring additional items aimed at assisting with CBRN incidents. However, we consider that spending the funds on additional capacities closer to the project end date exacerbates the issue of the sustainability of the stockpiles funded under NGEU after September 2026, which has also been highlighted by other project beneficiaries (*Box 6*).

Box 6

Maintenance of NGEU-funded stocks can be costly

The maintenance of rescEU stockpiles to ensure they remain available for deployment is the next most important step after acquisition. This requires proper planning. In this way, the continuity of funding has a direct impact on the stockpiled items' operational life. A lack of continuity jeopardises the funds invested in the development of rescEU capacities and the EU's readiness for crises.

For example, according to the project beneficiary, the CBRN and medical stockpiles in one project would require €10 million to cover the bare minimum of storage costs, or up to €68 million for full maintenance including the replenishment of perishable items.

- 55** Large stockpiles in warehouses require constant monitoring to ensure they remain ready for use. This is important for products with an expiry date, such as certain medical products, as well as for equipment whose batteries need to be periodically charged and those whose calibration needs to be periodically checked, such as spectrometers.
- 56** Maintenance at the warehouses – including the expiry and rotation of certain items – was not always systematised or automated. In one instance, we found that the member state was using a simple spreadsheet to keep track of maintenance works and updates. In another case, no proof of any documentation of monitoring of maintenance works was provided to us.
- 57** During our on-the-spot visits, we found that all the beneficiaries were ready to fulfil the 12-hour deadline for the deployment of rescEU capacities. Standard operating procedures for storage, maintenance and deployment, which were an important project deliverable to ensure the readiness of the stockpiles, were either in place or being developed in line with the grant agreements.
- 58** We also noted that several options were being explored by the Commission and project beneficiaries to improve the management of current or future stockpiling arrangements, from the perspectives both of cost management and readiness for deployment (**Box 7**).

Box 7

Exploring approaches to improve the efficiency of stockpiles

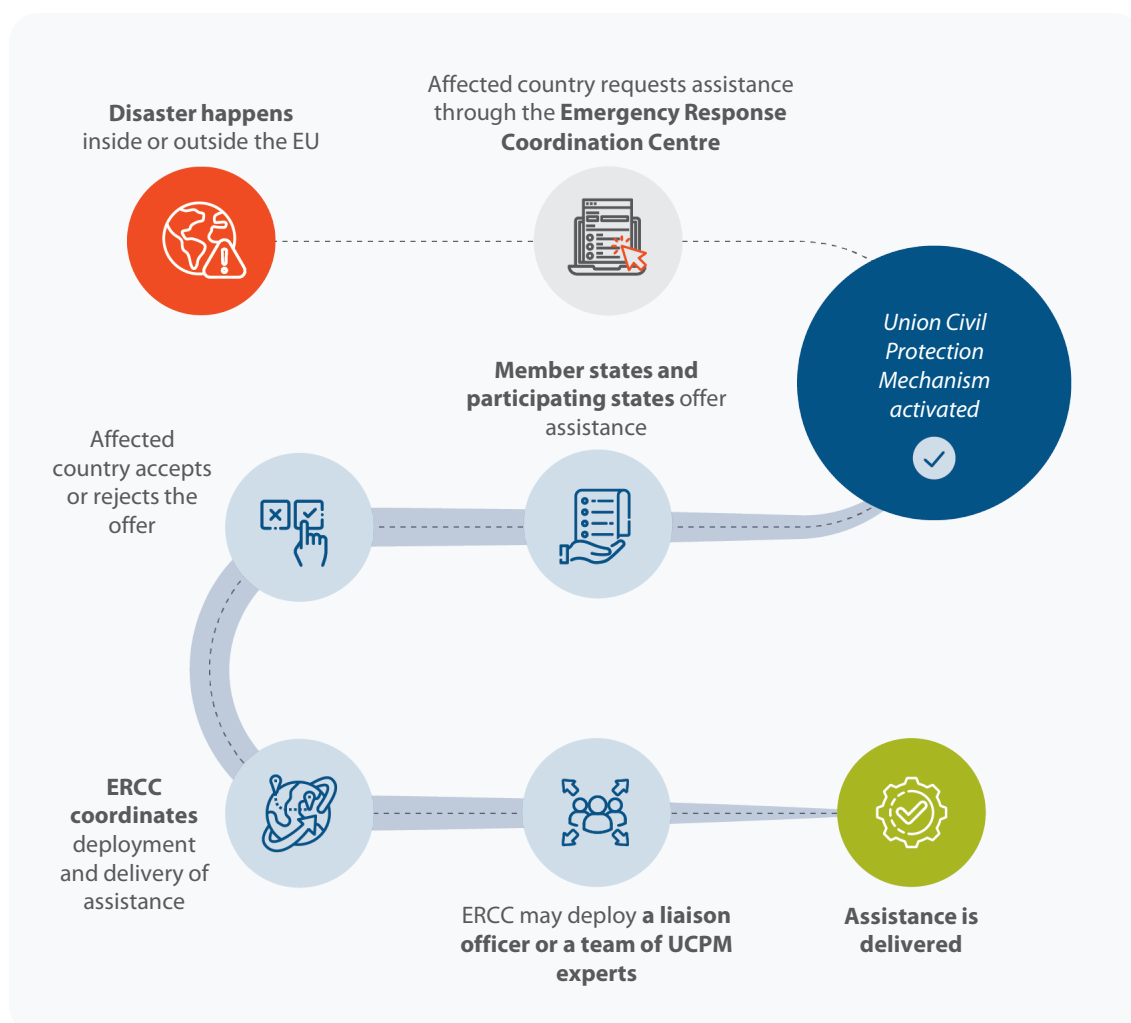
Return of high-value rescEU equipment – Building on experience gained previously in the framework of the UCPM, one member state was developing a standardised scheme for the return of high-value items after deployment. Under the scheme, procedures for returning high-value items to storage after use would largely be automated. Arrangements for return would depend on the state of the equipment and the duration of the deployment. This practice would allow more use to be gained from high-value rescEU equipment throughout its lifetime.

Virtual stockpiling – The Commission and the same member state were exploring whether some items could be purchased and stored at the manufacturer's site, rather than purchased and warehoused by the member states themselves. However, a cost-benefit exercise has not yet been carried out.

The deployment of rescEU capacities has been effective, but the associated reimbursement procedures are sometimes cumbersome

- 59** The deployment of rescEU capacities operates under the UCPM scheme. The UCPM can be activated when a disaster happens inside or outside the EU. The affected country requests assistance through the ERCC, which coordinates the UCPM response and the delivery of assistance. The ERCC is in constant contact with the 37 focal points in the EU member states and non-EU participating states. As soon as it receives a request for assistance, it disseminates this information to the focal points through the common CECIS IT system. The focal points – civil protection authorities nominated by the EU member state or non-EU participating state – analyse capacities available at national level and share this information with other EU member states and non-EU participating states.
- 60** The assistance provided under rescEU takes the form of providing the capacities requested, sometimes accompanied by UCPM experts. The Commission supports the provision of aid by reimbursing transport and operational costs incurred by the EU member state or non-EU participating state which has offered assistance (*Figure 1*). In terms of coordination outside the EU, the ERCC coordinates with international partners – in particular, the United Nations [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) – to avoid duplication and maximise added value. DG ECHO's network on the ground allows the ERCC to increase the complementarity of civil protection and humanitarian aid in non-EU countries.

Figure 1 | Activation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism



Source: ECA, based on *EU Civil Protection Mechanism - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations*.

- 61** We examined the response actions (also referred to as “deployments”) in which rescEU capacities had been used in order to assess whether they had been used as a last resort in overwhelming situations faced by EU member states or non-EU participating states, and provided in a timely manner. We also examined the administrative process for claiming reimbursement. Furthermore, we assessed the reasons given when decisions had been taken not to respond to requests for assistance.
- 62** Our sample covered nine response actions representing 23 % of the budgeted value of all response actions where rescEU capacities had been deployed in the 2022-2024 period. Six of the nine actions concerned the provision of AFFF capacities in response to forest fires, of which five took place in the EU and one in a participating state. The other three consisted of the provision of electricity generators made necessary by Russia’s war on Ukraine, in all three cases in participating states. See also *Annex II, Figure*.

The deployment of rescEU capacities has been effective, and has swiftly adapted to new emergencies

- 63** Our assessment of the deployments showed that they responded both to traditional civil protection scenarios, such as fighting forest fires, and to scenarios which fell outside the scope of traditional civil protection, such as the provision of electricity generators. The UCPM mechanism swiftly adapted to these.
- 64** For the six sampled AFFF response actions, rescEU capacities had been used effectively to address requests for assistance. They were used as a last resort as initially intended. The ERCC asked the sending member states to deploy rescEU capacities, in the form of aircraft and crew, after the availability of European Civil Protection Pool (ECP) capacities had been assessed. Furthermore, all six response actions related to overwhelming situations. In one case, the overwhelming situation was due to a lack of firefighting planes in the receiving country.
- 65** The deadlines for deployment⁹ were complied with in all cases. This meant that all deployments took place within three hours in the case of rapid intervention response, and within 24 hours for all other deployments. See [Box 8](#) for an example of a deployment of rescEU firefighting capacities.

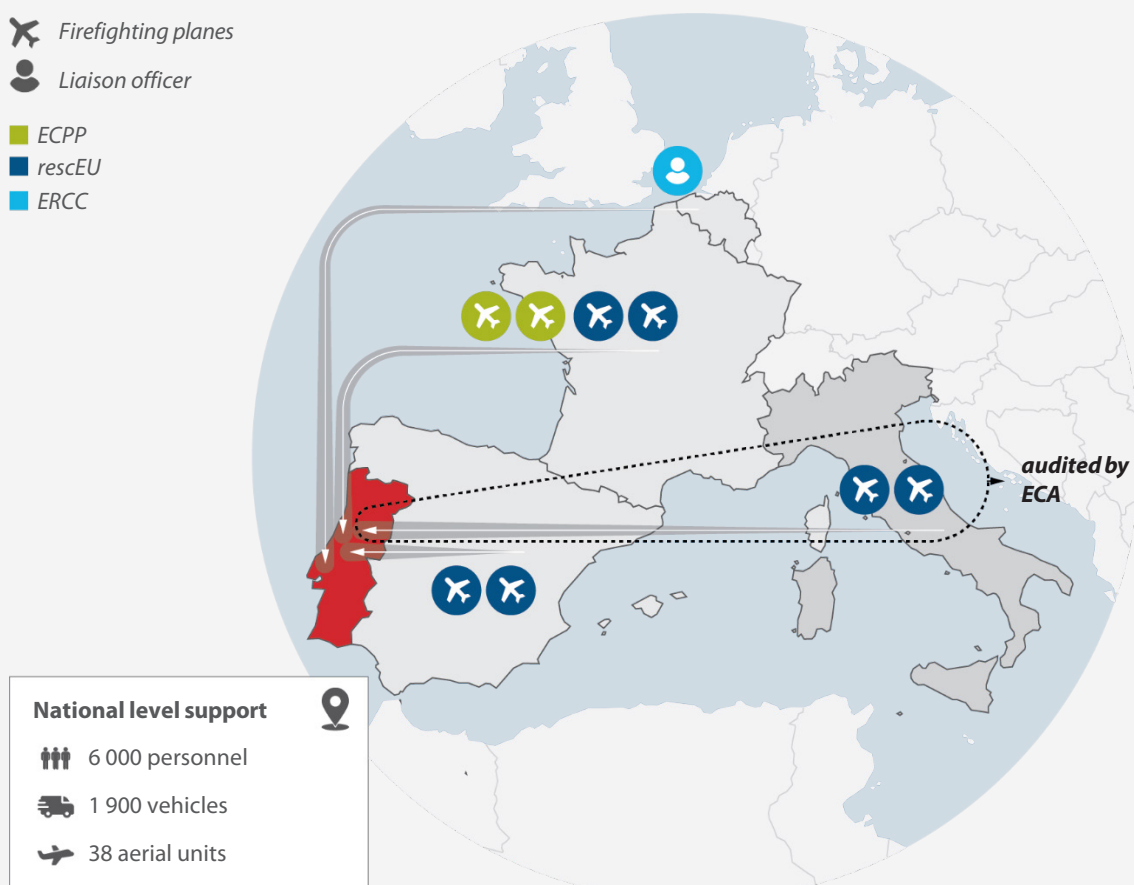
⁹ UCPM Implementing Decision 2019/570.

Box 8

Deployment of rescEU forest firefighting capacities

On 15 September 2024, northern and central Portugal were severely affected by several wildfires, spreading to approximately 85 000 hectares in around two days and to a total of 124 000 hectares within around seven days. This prompted the national authorities to declare maximum levels of alert, with evacuations, road closures, and significant damage reported.

Following a request from the Portuguese authorities on 16 September 2024, the ERCC initiated the coordination of the UCPM response to complement national efforts encompassing, at their peak, more than 6 000 personnel, 1 900 vehicles and 38 aerial units. The UCPM mobilised 8 medium firefighting aircraft from the ECPP and rescEU, comprising 4 aircraft from France (2 ECPP and 2 rescEU), 2 aircraft from Spain (rescEU), and 2 aircraft from Italy (rescEU). The ERCC also sent one liaison officer to Portugal to support national response efforts.



Source: ECA. Map: Eurostat.

- 66** For the three sampled response actions concerning the provision of electricity generators, no such energy category existed under the ECPP. Therefore, the need for such capacities had to be addressed by the rescEU reserve after ad hoc national offers (spontaneous offers

of equipment provided by member states) had been considered. The Commission assessed that the needs were far higher than could be covered by these ad hoc offers of assistance made by EU member states and non-EU participating states, and thus decided to deploy rescEU capacities.

- 67** The legislation¹⁰ requires energy capacities to be deployed within a period of twelve hours. This deadline was not respected for our three sampled actions, as the Commission received the acceptance of the offer by the affected country but not all necessary logistical details to support delivery.
- 68** In all three cases, the cost estimates for the response actions were overbudgeted. We noted that this did not have an impact on the possibility of funding other response actions, as there was sufficient budget available at the end of each year for any eventuality.
- 69** In one of the three cases sampled, the request for 100 generators needed to be split into two deployment actions, because of a clerical mistake in manually registering the capacities in CECIS which did not correspond to what was stocked in the project beneficiaries' warehouses. The first deployment consisted of 97 generators. The second deployment, with the remaining three generators, could only be sent after their registration in CECIS had been corrected, which caused a two-week delay compared to the previous deployment.

The administrative burden sometimes caused delays in claiming reimbursement

- 70** The UCPM provides for financial assistance for transport and operational costs associated with rescEU response actions. For actions in non-EU countries and deployments of rescEU capacities for low-probability disasters with a high impact, including medical evacuation planes and CBRN-related deployments, the UCPM covers 100 % of these costs. For AFFF deployments within EU member states and non-EU participating states, the UCPM covers 75 % of operational costs and 100 % of transport costs. In all cases, the country hosting the rescEU capacity initially advances the whole cost of the deployment, and is subsequently reimbursed by the Commission.
- 71** We found that multiple operational and contractual documents, such as an initial operational form, a deployment form, daily situation reports, a grant agreement form and a financial statement, need to be filled in before the action takes place, during the action itself, and afterwards. The two civil-protection authorities we met during the on-the-spot

¹⁰ Annex of the [UCPM Implementing Decision 2019/570](#).

visits told us that the administrative burden sometimes led to delays in claiming reimbursement. The use of multi-action grants would allow the grouping of several response actions under one single grant, thereby significantly reducing the number of contractual documents (such as the grant agreement and financial statement) for each EU member state or non-EU participating state.

Reasons given for not providing a rescEU response were justified

- 72** Of the 225 requests for assistance received during the 2022-2024 period, 18 were turned down. Of these requests, 4 originated from EU member states, one from a non-EU participating state and 13 from non-EU countries.
- 73** Under the current [UCPM legislation¹¹](#), rescEU capacities are designed to be used in EU member states and non-EU participating states, unless a disaster in another non-EU country significantly affects one or more EU member states or their citizens. None of the 13 requests originating from other non-EU countries met this criterion.
- 74** We found that the reasons given for not mobilising rescEU were reasonable. They included resources – especially AFFF planes – having been deployed in other emergencies or requests for assistance being made for items that were not yet available within the rescEU stockpile, such as the mpox vaccine and immunoglobulin. In one instance where rescEU and ECPP resources could not be deployed, a member state responded bilaterally. The one request from a non-EU participating state that was not positively responded to concerned a request to repatriate citizens from Ukraine. This was outside the scope of the UCPM in 2022.

This report was adopted by Chamber III, headed by Mr George-Marius Hyzler, Member of the Court of Auditors, in Luxembourg at its meeting of 19 May 2026.

For the Court of Auditors

Tony Murphy
President

¹¹ Article 12(10) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU, as amended.

Annexes

Annex I – About the audit

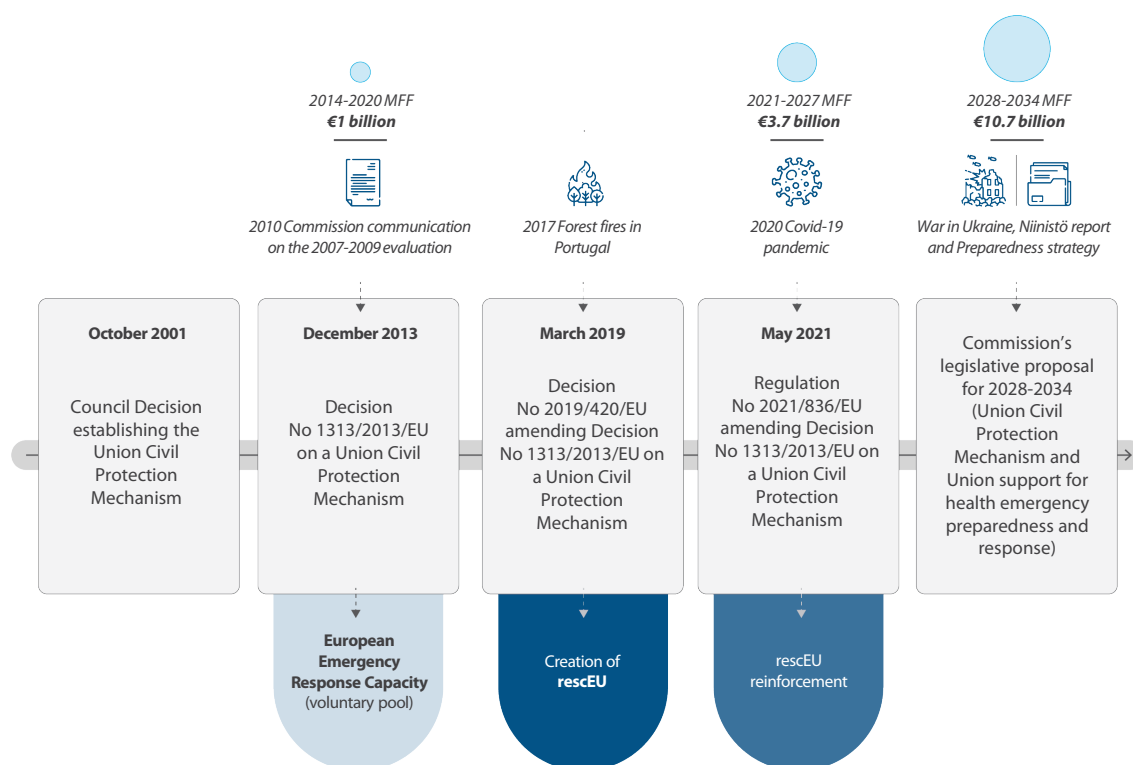
The Union Civil Protection Mechanism's rescEU reserve

- 01** The rescEU reserve operates under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), a Commission-led system for coordinating disaster response and civil protection between the EU member states and ten additional non-EU participating states¹. In an area where member states hold primary responsibility, the role of the UCPM is based on three pillars.
- (a) Prevention: any action aimed at reducing risks or mitigating adverse consequences of a disaster for people, the environment and property, including cultural heritage.
 - (b) Preparedness: a state of readiness and capability of human and material resources, structures, communities and organisations, enabling them to ensure an effective rapid response to a disaster, obtained as a result of action taken in advance.
 - (c) Response: any action taken upon request for assistance under the UCPM in the event of an imminent disaster, or during or after a disaster, to address its immediate adverse consequences.
- 02** The UCPM was established by a [Council Decision in 2001](#). The current legal framework was laid down by [Decision 1313/2013/EU](#), with the aim of contributing to the application of Articles 196 and 222 of the TFEU (on civil protection and on solidarity between EU member states, respectively). This Decision has been amended several times, the most significant updates having taken place in 2019 and 2021.
- 03** The 2019 update concerned the creation of the rescEU reserve, the EU reserve for disaster response capabilities (which is the focus of our audit); it was triggered by the forest fires which affected in Europe in 2017. In turn, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered the

¹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

2021 update, which particularly strengthened the EU's role by allowing the Commission to directly procure resources for responding to disasters. See [Figure 1](#).

Figure 1 | Evolution of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's legal basis, including its rescEU component



Source: ECA, based on information provided by the Commission.

04 In the 2021-2027 period, the UCPM's budget is €3.7 billion. This encompasses the multiannual financial framework (MFF) allocation of €1.6 billion and an additional NextGenerationEU (NGEU) allocation of €2 billion as a temporary reinforcement addressing the recovery needs of the EU and its member states arising from the COVID-19 pandemic ([Box](#)). These amounts were complemented by a contribution of €114 million from the non-EU participating states. Three quarters of the 2021-2027 funding (€2.9 billion) was allocated to rescEU.

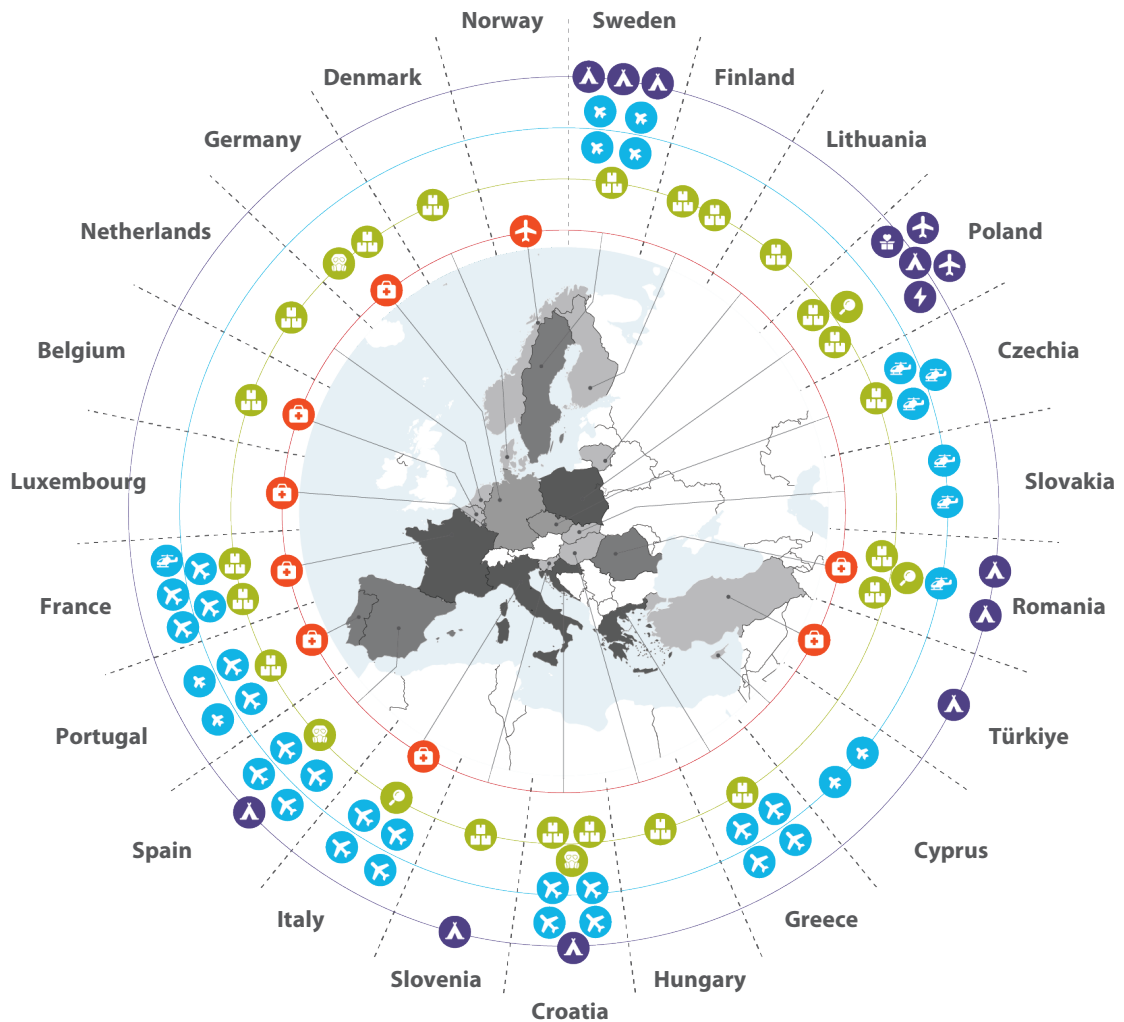
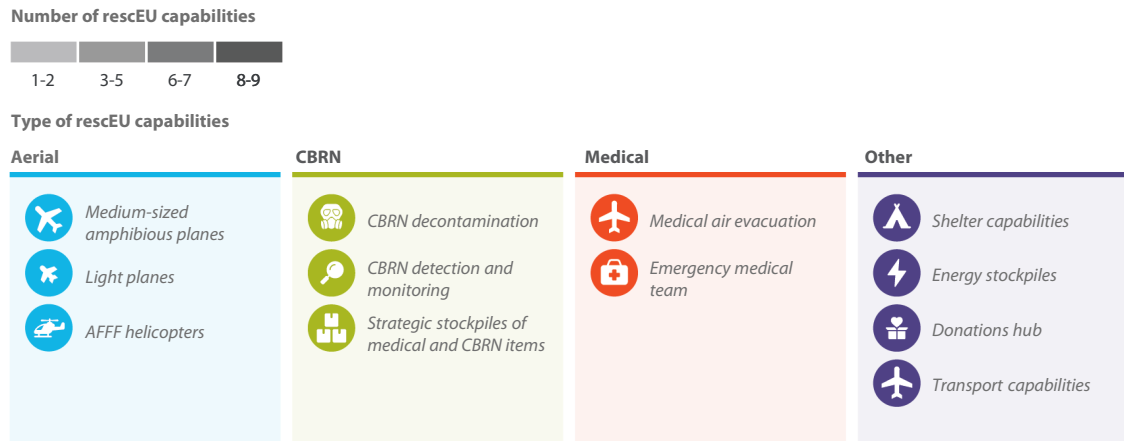
Box

NextGenerationEU

In December 2020, as an exceptional response to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council adopted the [European Union Recovery Instrument](#) (also known as the NGEU instrument), under which funds totalling more than €800 billion (in current prices) were to be made available through common borrowing. It was established within a very short timeframe as a one-off temporary instrument additional to the €1.211 billion coming from the 2021-2027 MFF. Spending takes the form of grants and loans to member states through the Recovery and Resilience Facility (corresponding to around 90 % of its budget) and six other EU spending programmes, one of them rescEU, to which up to €2.0 billion has been allocated.

- 05** The importance of ensuring that the necessary civilian capabilities are fit for purpose to prevent, recover from and respond to disasters was highlighted in [Sauli Niinistö's report](#) on strengthening EU civil and military preparedness and readiness, which was [endorsed by the Council](#) in December 2024. In turn, this report informed the [European Preparedness Union Strategy](#), issued by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in March 2025, and the [EU stockpiling strategy](#), published by the Commission in July 2025. Also in July 2025, the Commission issued its [proposal for a regulation on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism and Union support for health emergency preparedness and response](#), which will replace Decision 1313/2013/EU. At €10.7 billion, the UCPM budget proposed for the 2028-2034 MFF is much higher than the current one.
- 06** In 2019, rescEU was created as a strategic reserve of European disaster response capabilities and stockpiles, fully funded by the EU. At the end of 2025, rescEU capacities were hosted across 23 EU member states and non-EU participating states ([Figure 2](#)).

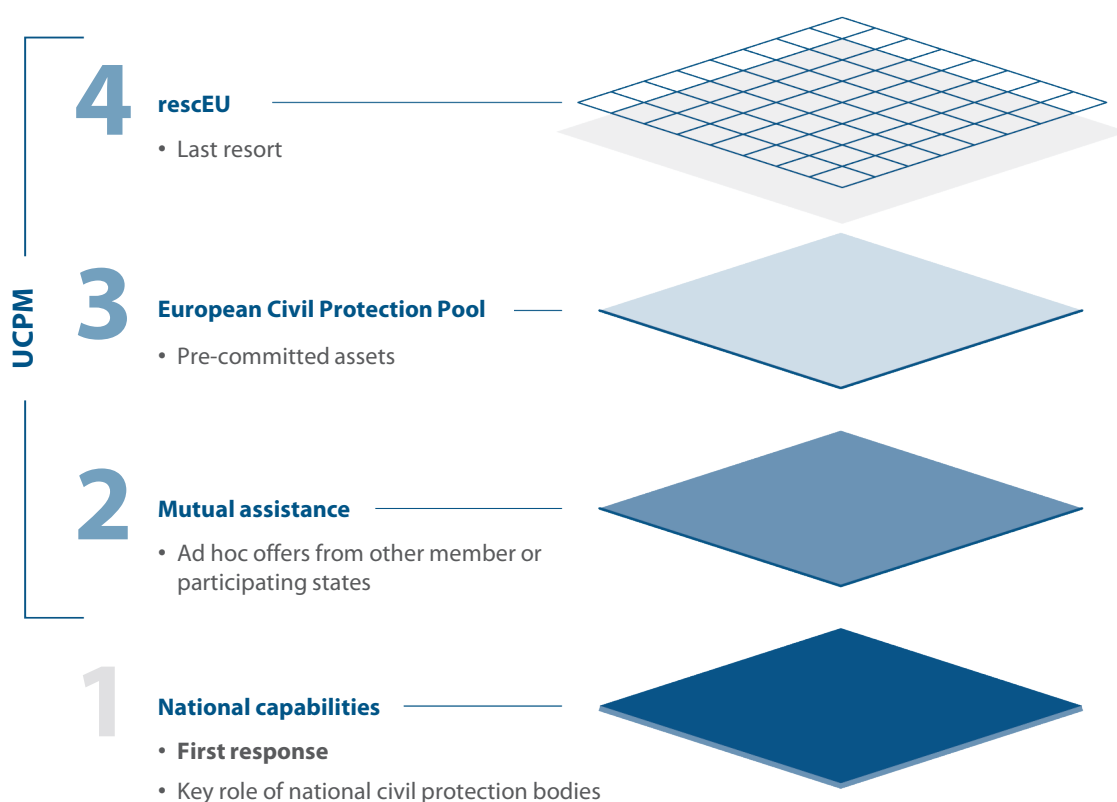
Figure 2 | RescEU capacities



Source: ECA, based on information provided by the European Commission. Map: Eurostat.

07 The rescEU reserve was conceived as a last resort² to allow the EU to respond to disasters where existing capacities at national level or those pre-committed by member states to the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP) are not able to ensure an effective response. Unlike the ECPP's capacities, the deployment of the rescEU reserve is obligatory when no other capacities are available (**Figure 3**)³. The reserve includes a fleet of firefighting planes and helicopters, a medical evacuation plane and a stockpile of medical items and field hospitals to respond to health emergencies. The rescEU reserve also includes stockpiles to respond to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risks, as well as shelters, transport assets and energy supply items.

Figure 3 | UCPM response architecture



Source: ECA, based on information provided by the Commission.

Roles and responsibilities

08 Civil protection being a national prerogative, the EU member states (and non-EU participating states) bear primary responsibility. The Commission provides support in the

² Recital 22 of [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/836](#) amending Decision 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

³ Article 12 of [Decision 1313/2013 \(modified\)](#).

three areas of civil protection: prevention, preparedness and response. The main Directorate-General responsible is the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). In the 2021-2027 period, the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) is also involved in building up medical and CBRN rescEU reserves, to better prepare for and respond to possible serious public health threats. To this end, HERA provided NGEU funds to DG ECHO through a co-delegation agreement.

- 09** In DG ECHO, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre is the core of the UCPM. The centre operates 24/7 all year round, and provides real-time monitoring and an immediate response to disasters around the world. It acts as a coordination hub between all EU member states, the ten additional non-EU participating states, the affected country – which can be any country in the world – and civil protection and humanitarian aid experts.
- 10** RescEU capacities are mostly funded through calls for proposals launched by the Commission, but the Commission may provide grants directly to EU member states and non-EU participating states without an open call for proposals⁴. Competent authorities and other authorised bodies from member states and non-EU participating states are eligible beneficiaries of financial support from the Commission (also referred to as “project beneficiaries”), and are subsequently responsible for procuring and maintaining rescEU capacities.

Audit scope and approach

- 11** Our audit focused on the 2022-2024 period, which had the highest budgeted expenditure for rescEU capacities, including NGEU, during the 2021-2027 MFF period. The value of contracted rescEU grants funded by calls for proposals launched during that period represent around 70 % of the total UCPM budget (including NGEU) for the entire 2021-2027 period (€3.7 billion).
- 12** Civil protection, and more recently preparedness at large, is high on the EU’s political agenda, triggered by climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine.
- 13** The ECA carried out an [audit on the UCPM’s](#) coordination of responses to disasters outside of the EU in 2016, and followed up on the implementation of its recommendations in the [Annual report on performance for 2019](#).

⁴ Article 12.3c of [Decision 1313/2013](#).

- 14** In this audit, we focus on the planning and implementation of the rescEU reserves set up in 2019. More specifically, we assessed whether:
- (a) the Commission had assessed needs and gaps at EU level, and whether it had provided rescEU capacities in line with established needs;
 - (b) rescEU-funded projects had been implemented effectively, including maintenance;
 - (c) the rescEU reserve had been used to address requests for disaster assistance effectively, and whether it was used as a last resort, as originally intended;
 - (d) reasons given for not responding positively to requests for activation were justified.
- 15** The audit covered rescEU calls for proposals, financed projects and response actions from 2022 to 2024, managed by DG ECHO. We also audited HERA, in relation to the two CBRN calls and three sampled projects in that area, as these were financed via a co-delegation agreement between HERA and DG ECHO (see paragraph 08). Based on the data available on 31 December 2024, 31 % of projects under rescEU calls were either fully or partially operational. We focused on calls covering the different rescEU capacities: aerial firefighting assets, CBRN and medical stockpiles, emergency transportation, mobile shelters, and emergency energy supplies.
- 16** The criteria applied in the selection of member states, calls and projects were materiality, type of capacity, geographical location, and extent of project implementation. We sampled response actions only in those member states included in the sample of calls for proposals and projects, on the basis of materiality and type of capacity ([Annex II](#)). For rescEU calls, CBRN capacities accounted for the greatest share of expenditure, while firefighting activations made up the highest number of rescEU response actions in our audit population.
- 17** Both EU member states and non-EU participating states within the UCPM can take part in rescEU calls for proposals. In terms of geographical scope, the audit covered grants awarded to EU member states. Our sample of response actions covered activations both inside and outside the EU ([Annex II, Figure](#)).
- 18** We carried out the audit work between April and December 2025 by means of desk reviews, on-the-spot audit visits to four member states (France, Italy, Poland and Finland) and interviews with beneficiaries, authorities and stakeholders. Our [audit methodology](#) complies with the international standards on auditing issued by the [International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions](#).

Annex II – Our samples

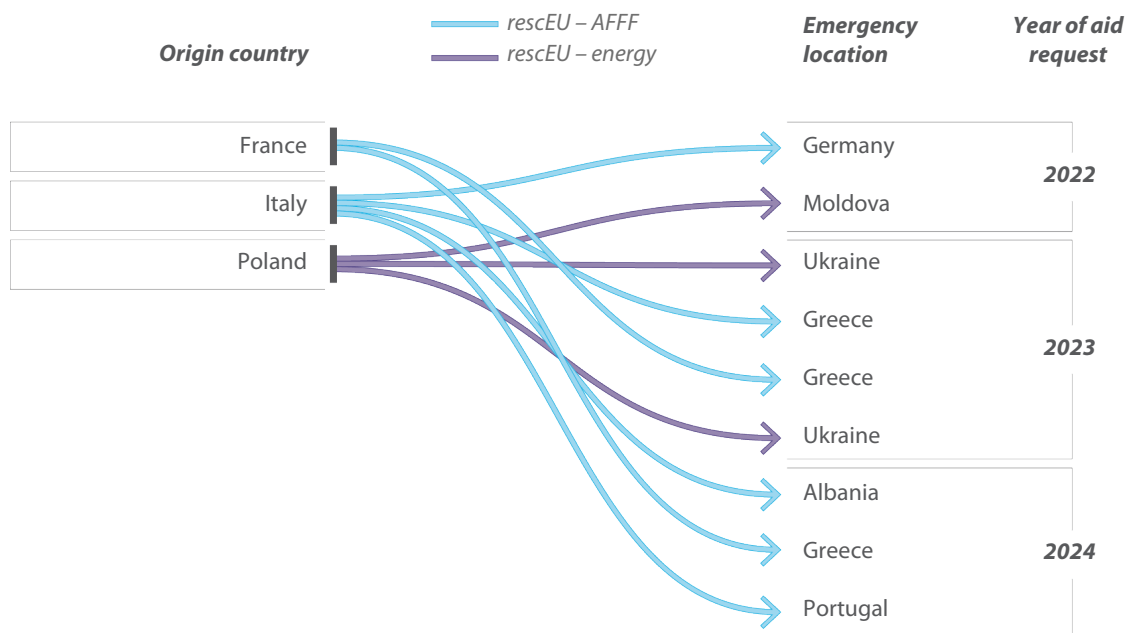
Table | Sample of 6 rescEU calls for proposals and 1 direct award, and 8 related projects

✔ Finalised
➔ Ongoing

Call number	Project number	Type of project	Funding source	Project status	Budget (in euros)
1	1	Aerial firefighting assets	MFF	➔	100 000 000
2	2	CBRN and medical stockpiles	NGEU	➔	242 236 085
	3	CBRN and medical stockpiles	NGEU	➔	100 615 766
3	4	Emergency transportation	NGEU	➔	135 848 000
4	5	Mobile shelters	NGEU	➔	35 515 202
5	6	CBRN and medical stockpiles	NGEU	➔	187 583 204
6	7	Aerial firefighting assets	MFF	✔	4 753 770
Direct award	8	Emergency energy supplies	NGEU	➔	114 965 450

Source: ECA, based on data provided by the European Commission.

Figure | Sample of 9 rescEU response actions



Source: ECA, based on data provided by the European Commission.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition/Explanation
AFFF	Aerial forest firefighting
CBRN	Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear
CECIS	Common Emergency Communication and Information System
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ECPP	European Civil Protection Pool
ERCC	Emergency Response Coordination Centre
HERA	Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority
MFF	Multiannual financial framework
NGEU	NextGenerationEU
OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
UCPM	Union Civil Protection Mechanism

Replies of the Commission

<https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications/SR-2026-17>

Timeline

<https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications/SR-2026-17>

Audit team

The ECA's special reports set out the results of its audits of EU policies and programmes, or of management-related topics from specific budgetary areas. The ECA selects and designs these audit tasks to be of maximum impact by considering the risks to performance or compliance, the level of income or spending involved, forthcoming developments and political and public interest.

This performance audit was carried out by Audit Chamber III – External action, security and justice, headed initially by ECA Member Bettina Jakobsen followed by George-Marius Hyzler. The audit was led by ECA Member George-Marius Hyzler, supported by Romuald Kayibanda, Head of Private Office and Annette Farrugia, Private Office Attaché; Margit Spindelegger, Principal Manager; Naiara Zabala Eguiraun, Head of Task; Tomasz Kapera and Michele Scardone, Auditors. Richard Moore provided linguistic support. Dunja Weibel provided graphical support and Joanna Piotrowicz provided administrative support.

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European Court of Auditors, [special report 17/2026](#) “The Union Civil Protection Mechanism’s rescEU reserve – A valuable contribution to European civil protection, despite planning weaknesses that have hampered implementation and sustainability”, Publications Office of the European Union, 2026.

We examined the Commission's planning and implementation of projects aimed at developing and stockpiling rescEU reserves, as well as their deployment. Such rescEU reserves represent three quarters (€2.9 billion) of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's 2021-2027 funding.

We conclude that the rescEU reserves provided a valuable contribution to European civil protection through the acquisition and leasing of different rescEU capacities and through the deployment of those capacities when a crisis so required. However, we found that weaknesses in planning the calls for proposals hampered project implementation and sustainability. In some instances, the procedures associated with claiming reimbursement for response actions were cumbersome. We put forward recommendations to address these areas.

ECA special report pursuant to Article 287(4), second subparagraph, TFEU.



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Publications Office
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EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS
12, rue Alcide De Gasperi
1615 Luxembourg
LUXEMBOURG

Tel. +352 4398-1

Enquiries: eca.europa.eu/en/contact
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