



European  
Commission



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## European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

# European Medical Corps

### What is it?

The European Medical Corps enables quick medical assistance and public health expertise from all EU Member States and Participating States to a health emergency inside and outside the EU.

The deployment is coordinated by the EU's Emergency Response Coordination Centre, the operational hub of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

The European Medical Corps gathers all medical response capacities committed by Member States to the European Civil Protection Pool. Following a request for European assistance, medical capacities can be drawn from this Pool and other Member States' response capacities.

### Why is this important?

The European Medical Corps was set up in response to the acute shortage of trained medical teams during the Ebola crisis in West Africa in 2014. It continues coordinating an effective European response in health emergencies under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

Since 2020, the EU has also strengthened its medical preparedness under rescEU, including the rescEU reserve of medical items and medical evacuation capabilities, to reinforce the European Medical Corps.

Health emergencies, including COVID-19, have had a large impact throughout the last few years, and climate change is predicted to exacerbate these effects. A connected world means diseases may spread quicker across borders.

During health emergencies, medical expert teams and equipment need to be deployed in the shortest time possible to support response efforts. Being prepared to intervene immediately in health emergencies is crucial in saving lives. The EU coordinates medical missions to respond to infectious disease outbreaks and emergencies in cooperation with all EU Member States and participating states.

To date, 12 states have offered medical teams, already certified or currently undergoing a certification process to European Medical Corps: Belgium, Estonia, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Türkiye.

To become part of the European Medical Corps, the EU has set up a certification and registration process to make sure they meet high standards, including internationally recognised ones by the World Health Organization (WHO) when they exist. Teams are trained to work alongside colleagues from other countries according to international guidelines.

In return, they can benefit from EU financial support. The EU provides grants for upgrading teams to improve readiness, quality, and availability for EU Civil Protection Mechanism deployments.

Once part of the Pool, the EU covers 75% of transportation and operation costs if deployed under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

## How are we helping?

The European Medical Corps is part of the EU's comprehensive approach to health disasters. Below are the medical capacities available via the Mechanism to respond to emergencies inside and outside Europe.

- **Emergency medical teams (EMT)** provide direct medical care to people affected by a disaster. These teams are certified to ensure they meet quality standards by the World Health Organization (WHO). So far, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Turkish, French, Polish and Spanish Emergency Medical teams have been classified by the WHO and are part of the European Medical Corps, while an additional 6 other EMTs from Belgium, Greece, Estonia, Romania, Spain and Türkiye are still in the process of classification.
- **Mobile biosafety laboratories** were developed and deployed during the 2014 Ebola crisis. Germany has committed the European Mobile Laboratory, coordinated by the Bernhard-Nocht-Institute for Tropical Medicine.
- **Medical evacuation capacities** are key for mass casualty disasters requiring the evacuation of EU citizens and for retrieving humanitarian and medical workers from disaster areas, if needed. Currently, Romania offers a capacity, yet to be certified, while Norway provides such assets via rescEU.

Work is also ongoing to facilitate the mobilisation and deployment of medical experts with specific profiles under the Mechanism, such as field public health experts linked to the European Centre for Disease Prevention Control (ECDC) or burns assessment specialists to help assess the appropriate level of treatment of large numbers of Burns patients.

### Recent deployments of the European Medical Corps

#### Madagascar – Medical support following tropical cyclone Batsirai (February and March 2022)

A medical team from Poland was deployed to contribute to the health crisis after tropical cyclone Batsirai devastated large parts of the island.

#### Haiti – Medical support following the earthquake (August and September 2021)

A medical team from Norway supported those affected by the earthquake and ensuing hurricane.

#### Sierra Leone – Medical treatment of burn victims following an explosion (November 2021)

A specialised medical team from Italy treated patients with burns in Sierra Leone following the explosion of a tanker.

#### Coronavirus – Italy, Azerbaijan and Armenia (April and June 2020)

Deployments to respond to a surge in COVID-19 cases took place in Italy (April 2020) and Azerbaijan and Armenia (June 2020).

#### Samoa – European Emergency Medical support in response to Measles Outbreak (December 2019)

Upon activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism by the WHO in December 2019, 2 Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) from France and Norway reached Samoa in response to a measles outbreak.

#### Mozambique – European Emergency Medical support in the aftermath of cyclone Idai (March 2019)

To address the devastating impact of cyclone Idai on people in Mozambique in March 2019, 4 Emergency Medical Teams from Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Spain were sent to help emergency services in health centres that were serving cyclone-hit areas.

## Facts & figures

The European Medical Corps mobilises teams of medical and public health experts to prepare for, and respond to, health emergencies inside and outside the EU.

Through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, 12 countries provide 17 teams (medical teams, mobile laboratories, medical evacuation planes).

Recent deployments took place in response to COVID-19, explosions, earthquakes, and tropical cyclones.