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EUROSAI WGAFADC Annual Online Seminar - From Early Warning to Resilience: Are Governments Prepared for Disasters and Crises?

ECA Special Report 17/2026 on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism

13 October 2026

What are the UCPM and rescEU?

Union Civil Protection Mechanism

Coordinates disaster response and civil protection

37

participating countries

€3.7bn

2021–2027 budget

Prevention • Preparedness • Response



rescEU

EU strategic reserve of disaster-response capabilities and stockpiles

€2.9bn

allocated to rescEU

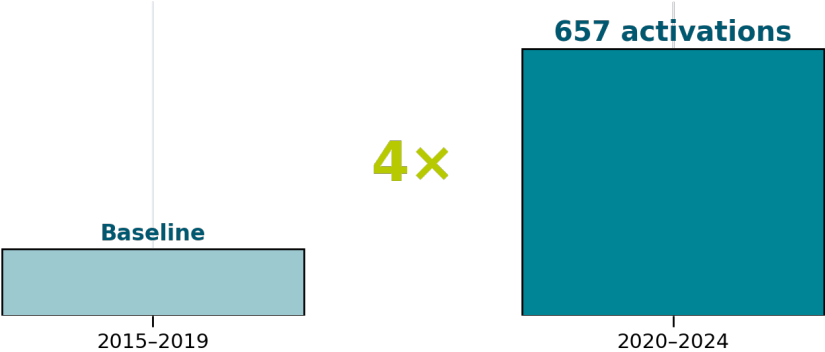
Last-resort layer

when national and pooled capacities are insufficient

Firefighting • medical and CBRN • shelters • transport • energy

A rapidly growing role and a diversified reserve

UCPM activations rose sharply



A more complex risk landscape drove much more frequent use of the mechanism.

657 activations in 2020-2024

Types of rescEU capabilities



Aerial

Planes and helicopters for firefighting and medical evacuation



CBRN

Detection, decontamination and strategic medical stockpiles



Medical

Emergency medical teams and medical air evacuation



Other

Shelters, energy stockpiles, donations hubs and transport

Hosted across 23 participating countries at the end of 2025

What did we look at?

We examined whether the European Commission planned, built and deployed the rescEU reserve effectively.

1	Needs and calls	Were EU-level needs and capability gaps assessed, and were calls aligned with them?
2	Projects	Were funded capacities acquired, made available and maintained effectively?
3	Deployment	Were capacities deployed effectively as a last resort, and were non-deployment decisions justified?

Coverage: 2022–2024 • 6 calls + 1 direct award • 8 projects • 9 response actions • visits in 4 member states

What did we find?

rescEU made a valuable contribution, but planning weaknesses hampered implementation and sustainability.

1	Needs and planning	Capacities mostly reflected identified needs, but information gaps, time pressure and weak links between funding and needs affected some calls.
2	Common reserve	Cooperation, common purchasing and complementarity were not always exploited.
3	Sustainability	Assets were generally procured as required, but delays were widespread and long-term maintenance was not planned early enough.
4	Deployment	Deployments were effective, but reimbursement was sometimes cumbersome.

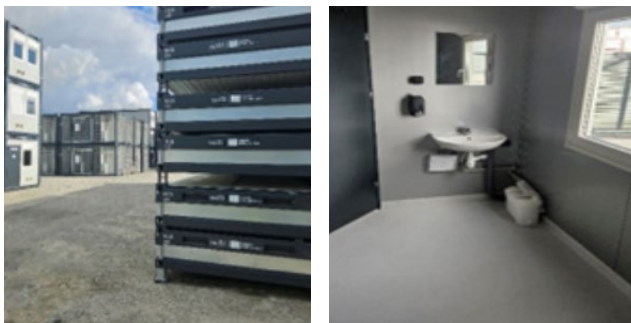
What does rescEU deliver in practice?

CBRN stockpiles



Medical supplies, protective and decontamination equipment

Container towns



Housing, hygiene, medical services, water and generators

Firefighting module



Two medium-sized amphibious planes and crews

A reserve designed for very different emergency scenarios

What did we recommend?

Four recommendations to strengthen the next generation of rescEU

1	Needs-based funding	Allocate funding only where EU-level gaps are sufficiently evidenced	2028
2	Cooperation	Encourage common applications and joint procurement	2028
3	Sustainability	Plan whole-life maintenance, security of supply and stockpile efficiency	2028
4	Simplification	Use simpler reimbursement, including multi-action grants	2027

A needs-based, cooperative and sustainable European reserve



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Trust through audit