

# rescEU assets mobilised to help Greece fight devastating forest fires

Following a request for assistance from Greece on 13 August 2019, rescEU assets have been mobilised to tackle forest fires ravaging several areas of Greece. As an immediate response, the European Union has already helped to mobilise 3 forest fighting planes from rescEU reserve from Italy and Spain to be dispatched swiftly to the affected regions.

[rescEU](#) is the EU's strengthened EU Civil Protection Mechanism, whose [reserve](#) includes firefighting planes and helicopters. Through rescEU, the EU reinforces its collective ability to respond to disasters that affect European countries. This is the first ever deployment of the rescEU assets.

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** said: *"The EU stands in full solidarity with Greece at this difficult time. The planes are already in action, fighting the fires. This immediate response proves the added value of rescEU which makes our response more robust, quick and efficient. Moreover, this is a real example of the common European values on which rescEU is based: solidarity and protection of lives of our European citizens. I am thankful to Italy and Spain for their offers of assistance. We stand ready to provide further assistance."*

Commissioner **Stylianides** is in constant communication with the Greek authorities. Today, the Commissioner is in Athens where he met with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and visited the Crisis Centre of the Greek Civil Protection to be briefed along with the Minister for the Protection of Citizens Michalis Chrysochoidis and oversee the operation of the rescEU assets.

The [European satellite mapping system Copernicus](#) is helping to provide damage assessment maps of the affected areas.

## **Background**

The [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) strengthens cooperation between Member States/Participating States in the field of civil protection, with a view to improving prevention, preparedness and response to disasters. Through the Mechanism, the European Commission plays a key role in coordinating the response to disasters in Europe and beyond.

When the scale of an emergency overwhelms the response capabilities of a country, it can request assistance via the Mechanism. Once activated, the Mechanism coordinates assistance made available by its Member States/Participating States through spontaneous offers. In addition, the EU has created the [European Civil Protection Pool](#) to have a critical number of readily available civil protection capacities allowing for a stronger and coherent collective response. Should the emergency require additional, life-saving assistance, the new [rescEU reserve](#) can be used as a matter of last

resort.

To date, all EU Member States participate in the Mechanism, as well as Iceland, Norway, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Turkey. Since its inception in 2001, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism has responded to more than 300 requests for assistance inside and outside the EU.

**For more information**

[rescEU](#)

[MEMO – Fighting forest fires in Europe – how it works](#)

[Factsheet – Forest fires](#)

[European Civil Protection Mechanism](#)

[European Civil Protection Pool](#)