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Answer given by Mr Lenarčič
on behalf of the European Commission
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While primary responsibility for civil protection and for providing national disaster-management systems with sufficient capabilities lies with Member States, the Commission has a supporting competence in this area. Given the growing concern of wildfires in Europe and to better support Member States, the EU has taken steps to improve preparedness and to bolster firefighting capacities. Since 2023, the Union Civil Protection Mechanism¹ (UCPM) has doubled its rescEU transitional fleet of firefighting aircraft during the summer season. In 2024, the transitional fleet is composed of a total of 28 assets, available for deployment if there is a request for assistance. This comes in addition to the capacities available in the European Civil Protection Pool² as well as to the teams pre-positioned in 2024 in four Member States³ for a total of almost 600 firefighters.

For the long term, as part of the rescEU permanent fleet, the Commission has invested significant financial resources for the acquisition of 12 new medium amphibious planes. The planes will be hosted by six Member States and are expected to arrive gradually as of 2027. In addition, UCPM grants are currently supporting five wildfire prevention projects of EUR 2.8 million⁴, which help enhance national capabilities for wildfire resilience.

The deployment procedures, agreed with the Member States, are foreseen in Article 12(6) of Decision no 1313/2013/EU⁵ and relevant implementing rules⁶.

While there are no comparable European alternatives available on the market at the moment, the Commission is in contact with relevant stakeholders to continue enhancing firefighting capacities in a Team Europe approach.

¹ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/eu-civil-protection-mechanism_en

² https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/european-civil-protection-pool_en

³ Greece, France, Portugal and Spain.

⁴ <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/projects/ewed>, <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/projects/wuitips>, <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/projects/fireprime>, <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/projects/b-fireprep>, <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/projects/feasibility-study-forest-fire-protection>

⁵ Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 924–947 as amended by Decision No 2019/420/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 13 March 2019, OJ L77, 20.3.2019, p. 1-14: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2013/1313/oj#document1>

⁶ Commission Implementing Decision 2019/1310 of 31 July 2019 laying down rules on the operation of the European Civil Protection Pool and rescEU, OJ L 204, 2.8.2019, p. 94–99.