

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003091/25
to the Commission
Loucas Fourlas (PPE)
(25 July 2025)**

Subject: Failure of the EU's rescEU mechanism to respond promptly to natural disasters in Cyprus — the need for a permanent and reinforced firefighting facility on the island

The devastating fires in the mountainous region of Limassol have once again shown that the EU's rescEU mechanism is unable to respond to emergencies caused by natural disasters in remote areas such as Cyprus in a timely and effective manner.

Although a European crisis mechanism is in place, Cyprus' geographical isolation effectively makes the country a second-tier partner in terms of EU support in cases of natural disasters.

The absence of permanent, reinforced aerial and terrestrial firefighting equipment in Cyprus results in unacceptable delays, with tragic consequences for human lives, the natural environment and the economy.

The lack of preventive and operational readiness constitutes institutional negligence on the part of the EU, as Cyprus — a Member State also acting as an external border of the EU — is left insufficiently protected in the face of growing climate threats.

In view of the above, the Commission is asked:

1. Does it recognise that Cyprus' distance from continental Europe means that the rescEU mechanism as it stands is actually inadequate for providing immediate intervention in emergency situations?
2. Does it intend to establish a permanent and staffed rescEU base in Cyprus, with aerial and terrestrial firefighting equipment, in order to ensure immediate and effective intervention in Cyprus and in the wider Eastern Mediterranean?

Submitted: 25.7.2025

**Answer given by Ms Lahbib on behalf of the European Commission
(12 November 2025)**

The Commission has a supporting competence in civil protection, including in forest firefighting, while the main responsibility for prevention, preparedness and response lies with the Member States.

The EU is financing the acquisition of aerial resources via the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) ⁽¹⁾ to be part of the EU strategic reserve, rescEU ⁽²⁾. rescEU assists where overall national capacities and those pre-committed by Member States to the European Civil Protection Pool ⁽³⁾ are not sufficient for an effective response. Other EU funds are available to strengthen national capacities.

A needs analysis based on scenarios, initiated in 2019 by the Commission and experts in the Member States and participating states in the UCPM, identified the geographical areas where rescEU aircrafts would provide the most benefit to Europe ⁽⁴⁾.

The ongoing development of rescEU will continue to ensure a balanced geographical coverage with assets able to intervene in Cyprus, if needed.

The EU is co-financing the stand-by costs of national aerial firefighting capacities, which are made available for EU operations. Two aerial firefighting planes are stationed in Cyprus on stand-by for operations following an activation of the UCPM ⁽⁵⁾.

On 23 July 2025, Cyprus requested assistance through the UCPM. The Emergency Response Coordination Centre responded by sending two medium firefighting planes from Spain and offering two light planes from Sweden. Cyprus declined the offers as the situation improved.

The Spanish planes returned home before arriving in Cyprus. A Greek firefighting team was deployed from 25 to 27 July 2025 and returned on 28 July 2025.

⁽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/resceu_en.

⁽³⁾ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/european-civil-protection-pool_en.

⁽⁴⁾ The conclusions and recommendations were subsequently presented to, and endorsed by, the Civil Protection Committee and shared with the Directors General for Civil Protection in Member States and participating states.

⁽⁵⁾ For their availability, the EU is supporting the national Cypriot response by financing 75% of the stand-by costs from 15 June to 31 October 2025.

In the State of the Union address, the President of the Commission proposed to create a new European firefighting hub in Cyprus, which can support the regional neighbours.
