

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003300/26
to the Commission
Virginie Joron (PFE)
(19 August 2026)**

Subject: Canadair planes: why has Brussels failed to purchase any for 10 years, when it has managed to find EUR 27 million in four months to upgrade sewers in Seychelles?

France saw that its fleet of firefighting aircraft needed upgrading back in 2003 ⁽¹⁾.

In 2017, after the fires in Portugal in 2016, the Commission noted that 'the entire French fleet of forest fire fighting planes ... was out of service' ⁽²⁾. At that juncture, Emmanuel Macron announced that a European force ⁽³⁾ of around 20 Canadair-type water bombers would be in place by 2022. Almost 10 years on, those planes were very much missed this summer.

The EU is providing funding to the tune of EUR 600 million to kick-start the manufacture of 12 new planes in Canada, but they will not be ready for delivery until 2029-2030.

The European Court of Auditors has reported that 'although there have been efforts to purchase rescEU reserves jointly, we found that these efforts had produced results in only one case ⁽⁴⁾'.

By way of comparison, EUR 27 million in EU funding was authorised in four months for sewers in Seychelles (a European Investment Bank loan made in 2011). The French Development Agency provided a loan of EUR 10 million and the Commission provided a EUR 7 million grant ⁽⁵⁾.

1. Why is the funding procedure quicker when it comes to sewers in Seychelles than it is for Canadair planes in Europe?
2. What is the Commission going to do to speed up the delivery of Canadair planes?
3. Why did it not make the development of a European water bomber a priority?

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**Answer given by Ms Lahbib on behalf of the European Commission
(15 October 2026)**

While the primary responsibility for civil protection lies with Member States, the EU has a supporting competence in this area.

The EU started developing the permanent rescEU ⁽¹⁾ fleet in 2019, financing since then the acquisition of 12 new firefighting airplanes and five helicopters.

The Commission awarded grants to Member States following relevant technical discussions with national experts. The procurement, based on the agreed specific technical requirements, was carried out by Member States with a selected constructor that had in the meantime to reopen the production chain for this type of aircraft.

In the meantime, the EU finances every summer a transitional fleet that in 2026 consisted of 22 aircraft and five helicopters. They are part of rescEU or the European Civil Protection Pool of national capacities, and available to assist any country in need.

As regards the production of the current aircrafts, the Commission, together with Member States, monitors closely and follows up on the progress of the production, with first delivery expected in 2028 in accordance with the agreed schedule.

The Commission continues to work with Member States' experts and with the industry to identify and monitor the development of possible new European projects that could boost EU preparedness in the future, including the development of a European firefighting airplane.

¹ Pages 107 and 109: https://portail.documentation.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/exl-php/document-affiche/mte_recherche_avancee/OUVRE_DOC/1878?fic=cgeouv00240281.pdf; <https://www.senat.fr/travaux-parlementaires/commissions/commission-des-lois/archives-1/mercredi-26-novembre-2003.html>

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0078>

³ <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2017/10/06/remerciements-aux-forces-mobilisees-sur-les-feux-de-forets-et-ouragans>

⁴ https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/SR-2026-17/SR-2026-17_EN.pdf

⁵ <https://www.eib.org/en/press/all/2012-009-seychelles-clean-water-supply-secured-with-european-funding>; <https://www.eib.org/en/projects/all/20100210>;
<https://www.nation.sc/archive/237042/year-2012-news-highlights>

⁽¹⁾ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/resceu_en.