Before disaster strikes: strengthening Europe's preparedness for emergencies

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On the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, the European Union launches ***"We Act as One: Preparing today, ready for tomorrow."***, a new civil protection campaign highlighting the importance of disaster preparedness and European solidarity in protecting people, communities and nature when emergencies occur.

As climate-related disasters grow in scale and complexity, preparedness is more important than ever. Across Europe, wildfires have already burned more than 669 000 hectares in 2026, exceeding the area recorded by the same point in 2025, the worst wildfire year on record. Floods also have devastating consequences for people and infrastructure, while causing an estimated €8.6 billion in economic losses to the EU every year.

Against this backdrop, '*We Act as One'* brings attention to the work taking place long before an emergency makes the headlines: from risk monitoring and early warning to joint training, all helping to enable a fast and coordinated response.

Preparedness in action: how Europe prepares to 'Act as One'

At the heart of the campaign are the civil protection professionals who train and prepare together across borders. By following their work, '*We Act as One'* brings preparedness into the spotlight and shows how the EU helps countries strengthen their readiness before crises occur and coordinates European support during the response.

Through EU preparedness exercises (MODEX), teams from different countries take part in full-scale simulations of emergency scenarios. These exercises allow responders to test procedures, share expertise, build trust in one another and improve coordination across borders so they can respond quickly and effectively when lives are at stake.

"*With this campaign, we want to put the spotlight on the work behind EU civil protection preparedness and make it more tangible for citizens. Through the stories of responders training and preparing together, we show in concrete terms how the EU helps countries get ready for emergencies and why cross-border European cooperation matters,*" said Zacharias Giakoumis, Head of the Communication Unit at the EU's Department for European Civil Protection.

With a particular focus on floods, the campaign also encourages people to see preparedness as a shared responsibility and to better understand why preparing before an emergency matters just as much as responding to it.

Led by the EU's Civil Protection department, '*We Act as One*' will run until December 2026 across seven EU Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Romania. Through digital and social media content, video portraits of civil protection responders and media partnerships, it aims to make European civil protection more visible to audiences across Europe and foster a better understanding of how the EU helps countries prepare for and respond to emergencies. The initiative is also part of the Commission's wider Protect What Matters campaign.

Strengthening Europe's preparedness and resilience

Beyond natural hazards such as floods and wildfires, Europe today needs to prepare for a much wider

range of risks, including health crises, power outages, cyberattacks and geopolitical threats. Against this increasingly complex risk landscape, the EU is stepping up efforts to strengthen preparedness and resilience across Europe.

Under the EU budget for 2021–2027, €3.6 billion has been allocated to the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, helping countries strengthen their capacities and cooperate more effectively before, during and after disasters. These efforts also contribute to the EU's broader Preparedness Union Strategy, adopted in March 2025, which aims to strengthen the EU's ability to anticipate, prevent and respond to a wide range of threats and crises. The Strategy supports national preparedness efforts by improving coordination and efficiency, while fostering a culture of resilience through the involvement of public authorities, emergency services, businesses and citizens.

About European Civil Protection

When a country needs additional support during an emergency, it can request assistance through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The Mechanism coordinates assistance from EU and participating countries, allowing teams and equipment to be mobilised quickly and deployed where they are needed. Since its establishment in 2001, the Mechanism has been activated more than 880 times. As part of the mechanism, rescEU provides an additional layer of protection through complementary resources such as firefighting aircraft, medical equipment and other emergency response assets.

Civil protection authorities are also supported by monitoring and early warning tools from the Copernicus Emergency Management Service, which help the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) monitor risks 24/7, coordinate European assistance and support emergency operations with satellite mapping.

Together, these capacities demonstrate the added value of European solidarity, turning cooperation into coordinated action and ensuring that countries can count on each other when it matters most.

Campaign content is available at: **ec.europa.eu/stories/we-act-as-one**

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