European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

European Union Humanitarian Air Bridge

What is it?
Initially set up in response to the transport constraints created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Union Humanitarian Air Bridge flight operations are intended to help reinforce humanitarian or emergency responses in countries facing fragile contexts. These flights help fill in critical gaps by facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid, emergency assistance and the transport of humanitarian staff when required.

The EU Humanitarian Air Bridge is an ad-hoc initiative operated on a needs-based approach. Its implementation brings together a number of actors: the European Commission and EU Member States in a Team Europe coordination, national authorities of the destination countries, and humanitarian and civil society organisations.

Why is this important?
The COVID-19 pandemic brought about huge logistical challenges for the humanitarian community, including the absence of commercial flights that were held up due to transport restrictions.

Against this background, the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge was set up as part of the EU’s global coronavirus response actions to transport aid to some of the most fragile countries and allow the continuity of humanitarian assistance and the delivery of essential medical supplies, including material needed to support countries’ COVID-19 response.

The initiative also helped with the transport of humanitarian teams on rotation and assisted in passenger repatriation flights organised by EU Member States.

In the current context, the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flights are helping to address constraints faced by humanitarian actors on the ground, such as critical humanitarian situations where supplies outstrip needs by far, there is limited access, or the delivery of humanitarian aid is hampered by logistical or administrative barriers.

FACTS & FIGURES
2020:
The EU Humanitarian Air Bridge facilitated 67 flights to 20 countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas. More than 1,150 tonnes of vital medical and humanitarian equipment, and nearly 1,700 medical and humanitarian staff and other passengers transported.

2021:
A Humanitarian Air Bridge consisting of 3 flights delivered more than 20 tonnes of humanitarian aid to Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado region. Another 3 Humanitarian Air Bridge operations delivered over 177 tonnes of life-saving aid to Haiti.

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How are we helping?

The EU Humanitarian Air Bridge operations started on 8 May 2020, with the first flight to the Central African Republic. Since then, the EU has coordinated and financed the delivery of over 1,150 tonnes of material, consisting of humanitarian and/or medical aid to critical areas in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

In 2020, flights were carried out to Afghanistan, the African Union, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Nigeria, Peru, São Tomé and Principe, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Venezuela, and Yemen.

Building on the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge operations conducted in 2020, flights resumed in June 2021, with 3 flights to Mozambique to deliver much-needed humanitarian aid, specifically to support the Cabo Delgado province immediately after the area saw an upsurge in violence. Later in 2021, another 3 EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flights delivered life-saving cargo to Haiti in response to the increasing humanitarian needs following the devastating earthquake that hit the country on 14 August.

The EU Humanitarian Air Bridge is at the service of humanitarian actors. The decision to deploy these flights is driven by needs on the ground. Flights are coordinated in consultation with Member States in a Team Europe approach and aid partners to identify the most critical gaps, and in cooperation with the receiving countries.

The European Commission finances 100% of the transport costs. The users of the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge operations provide the cargo and supplies transported on board.

The EU Humanitarian Air Bridge complements other humanitarian air services that the EU has in place or that it supports to help the humanitarian community continuing the effective delivery of assistance.