



# **Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)**

Invitation to submit a proposal

**rescEU Transition Aerial Forest Firefighting Capacities -  
Forest fire season 2024**

**(UCPM-2024-rescEU-Transition-IBA)**

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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN  
AID OPERATIONS (ECHO)  
ECHO.A - Emergency Management and rescEU  
**ECHO.A.2 - Capacities and Operational Support**

## Call document

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## 0. Introduction

This is an invitation to submit proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of aerial forest firefighting under the **European Union Civil Protection Mechanism**.

This document sets out the conditions to apply for funding of rescEU transition capacities in the framework of the transitional provisions for rescEU under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

This measure will be implemented through direct grants and will only refer to stand-by activities. All costs that could result from deployment will be covered by another source of funding.

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (Decision No [1313/2013/EU](#) <sup>(1)</sup>)
- Implementing Decision ([EU](#)) [2019/570](#) <sup>(2)</sup>.

The invitation is launched in accordance with the [Multi-Annual Work Programme 2021 – 2026](#) <sup>(3)</sup> and will be managed by **European Commission, Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO)**.

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **UCPM-2024-rescEU-Transition-IBA** — rescEU Transition Aerial Forest Firefighting Capacities

We invite you to read the **call documentation** carefully, and in particular this Call Document, the Model Grant Agreement, the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#) and the [EU Grants AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (*sections 1 and 2*)
  - available budget and timetable (*sections 3 and 4*)
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions, criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (*sections 5, 6 and 7*)

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<sup>(1)</sup> 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), as amended by the [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/836](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 (OJ L 185, 26.5.2021, p. 1–22) and by [Decision \(EU\) 2023/2671](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 November 2023 to extend the rescEU transitional period.

<sup>(2)</sup> Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/570 of 8 April 2019 laying down rules for the implementation of Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards rescEU capacities and amending Commission Implementing Decision 2014/762/EU

<sup>(3)</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2023)6621 final of 6 October 2023 on the financing of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism and adopting a multi-annual work programme for 2021-2026 repealing and replacing Implementing Decision C(2022)9290 final

- evaluation and award procedure (*section 8*)
- award criteria (*section 9*)
- legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (*section 10*)
- how to submit an application (*section 11*)
- the Online Manual outlines:
  - the procedures to register and submit applications online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
  - recommendations for the preparation of the application.
- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc.).

## 1. Background

The Union Civil Protection Mechanism ('the Union Mechanism') governed by Decision No 1313/2013/EU as amended by Decision 2019/420/EU <sup>(4)</sup> (hereafter "Decision No 1313/2013/EU"), strengthens cooperation between the Union and the Member States and facilitates coordination in the field of civil protection in order to improve the Union's response to natural and man-made disasters.

Decision No 1313/2013/EU defines the legal framework of rescEU. rescEU aims to provide assistance in overwhelming situations where overall existing capacities at national level and those committed by Member States to the European Civil Protection Pool are not able to ensure an effective response.

Recent years have shown a sharp increase in the number of extreme forest fires in Europe, with serious economic, environmental and social consequences. In particular, the 2017, 2018 and 2022 forest fire seasons demonstrated the need to be prepared when disasters severely and simultaneously affect several Member States.

The changing nature of the forest fire risk has resulted in response capacity gaps at Union level. These gaps were particularly evident during the 2022 forest firefighting season when capacities made available via the Union Mechanism were insufficient to respond to the needs of countries requesting assistance which led to the observation of some gaps in certain periods of the season in terms of availability of rescEU transition capacities.

For the aforementioned reasons, the Commission defines in Commission Implementing Decision 2019/570/EU <sup>(5)</sup>, aerial forest firefighting capacities using planes and helicopters as the initial rescEU composition in terms of capacities.

According to Article 35 of Decision No 1313/2013/EU, Union financial support may be provided to cover 75% of the costs necessary to ensure rapid access to national

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<sup>(4)</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019D0420>

<sup>(5)</sup> Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/570 of 8 April 2019 laying down rules for the implementation of Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards rescEU capacities and amending Commission Implementing Decision 2014/762/EU

capacities in areas such as forest firefighting. This measure aims to address temporary shortcomings and to ensure a smooth transition towards the full deployment of rescEU.

Please be aware that the national capacities funded through a grant registered in CECIS will be designated as rescEU capacities. By way of derogation from Article 12(6) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU, the decision on the deployment of the capacities will be taken by the Member States that own these capacities (see Article 35 of Decision No 1313/2013/EU).

In order to guarantee an effective and timely response, the Commission will seek to ensure equitable geographical distribution when awarding the grants.

## **2. Objectives and Expected Outcomes**

### Objectives

The objective of the grant, through the funding of stand-by costs, is to ensure rapid access to national aerial forest firefighting means to address temporary shortcomings in case of extraordinary forest fires, and to ensure a timely and effective response to the needs for the upcoming forest fire seasons.

### Expected outcomes

The expected outcome is to make available aerial forest firefighting capacities using planes and helicopters at EU level for response.

The proposed capacity shall be capable of carrying out the following types of interventions: pre-positioning, rapid intervention response (less than 24 hours), and deployment.

The capacity shall meet the necessary quality requirements specified in the Annex of the Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/570.

For aerial firefighting capacities using planes, the aircrafts must have preferably the ability to scoop.

For aerial firefighting capacities using helicopters, only capacities made of one helicopter with a minimum capacity of 3 000 litres will be taken into consideration for funding. Options to enlarge the operational response capacities of the aircraft (floods, medevac, rescue in mountains or at sea, etc.) will be assessed positively.

The response capacities should be strategically and geographically positioned to allow for quick and effective deployment to different risk prone areas, mainly inside Europe.

## **3. Available budget**

The indicative budget available for the co-financing of projects under this invitation is **EUR 40 000 000**.

We reserve the right not to distribute all available funds depending on the applications received and the results of the evaluation.

#### 4. Timetable and deadlines

Steps	Date and time or indicative period
Call opening	8 December 2023
<b>Deadline for submission</b>	<b>17 January 2024 – 17:00 CET (Brussels)</b>
Evaluation (tentative)	February - April 2024
Information on evaluation results (tentative)	April - May 2024
Grant agreement preparation and signature (tentative)	May - June 2024
Starting date of the aircraft stand-by period	Not before 15 <sup>th</sup> of June 2024 for planes, unless regional specificities Not before 1 <sup>st</sup> July 2024 for helicopters

#### 5. Admissibility

Proposals must be submitted before the **call deadline** (see *timetable in section 4*).

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or to correct clerical mistakes, we may contact you during the evaluation process or the grant agreement preparation phase.

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the link in the invitation letter). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (not the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Proposals must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

- Application form Part A contains administrative information about the participant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project  
(Filled in directly online)
- Application form Part B (description of the action) contains the technical description of the project  
(Mandatory word template available in the Electronic Submission Service, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded as PDF in the system)
- **Mandatory annexes** for this invitation (to be uploaded as PDF files):
  - Detailed budget tables  
(Mandatory [excel template](#) available in the Electronic Submission Service System or to be downloaded from the Funding and Tender Portal)

- Aerial forest fire module fact sheet  
(Mandatory word template available in the Electronic Submission Service)
- Activity reports of the previous year from all participants: not applicable to public authorities
- List of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years)
- Letter of support from the competent national civil protection authority: not applicable to national civil protection authorities themselves.

The Description of Action and the annexes must be drafted in one of the EU official languages. However, in order to facilitate assessment by evaluators, applicants are encouraged to submit their application in English.

Please note that the amounts entered into the summarised budget table (filled in directly online) must correspond to the amounts calculated in the detailed budget table. In case of discrepancies, the amounts in the online summarised budget table will prevail.

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants. Moreover you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc.). Before signing the grant agreement, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Applications without full support will be rejected.

Applications must be **readable, accessible** and **printable**.

Proposals are limited to **70 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc.*).

 For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

## 6. Eligibility

### Eligible participants (eligible countries)

Proposals may be submitted by Member States' or Participating States' competent authorities or other entities authorised by the Member State or Participating State to request and receive financial support from the Commission on behalf of that Member State or Participating State for standby costs of national capacities registered for a transitional period of time as "rescEU".

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must be:

- legal entities (public or private bodies)
- established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
  - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs)),




- UCPM Participating States: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Moldova, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye ([list of participating countries](#)).

All participants and affiliated entities must register in the [Participant Register](#) before submitting the proposal. The participants and affiliated entities proposed to be awarded a grant will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (conducted by Research Executive Agency) before the signature of the grant agreement. For this validation, they will be requested to upload in the Participant Register documents showing their legal status and origin.

Other entities may participate in other consortium roles, such as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc. (see *section 13*).

### *Specific cases*

- Natural persons are NOT eligible.
- International organisations <sup>(6)</sup> are NOT eligible.
- EU bodies can NOT be part of the consortium.
- Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons <sup>(7)</sup>.
- Associations and interest groupings - Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality' <sup>(8)</sup>.  Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).
- Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).
- EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) <sup>(9)</sup>. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

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<sup>(6)</sup> For the legal definition, see Article 156 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>(7)</sup> See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>(8)</sup> For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>(9)</sup> Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

### Consortium composition

Applications by single applicants are allowed.

### Eligible capacities/assets

rescEU capacities shall meet the necessary quality requirements specified in the Annex of the Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/570.

Aerial firefighting capacities using planes must have preferably the ability to scoop.

For aerial firefighting capacities using helicopters, only capacities made of one helicopter with a minimum capacity of 3 000 litres will be taken into consideration for funding. Options to enlarge the operational response capacities of the aircraft (floods, medevac, rescue in mountains or at sea, etc.) will be assessed positively.

### Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above.

The activities ensuring rapid access to national aerial forest firefighting means (capacities using planes and helicopters) will be considered as eligible for the grant.

The following types of activities are eligible under this invitation:

- Maintenance;
- Training necessary to maintain the operational skills of the staff during the implementation period of the action;
- Preparatory work on the preparation, negotiation, conclusion and management of contracts to ensure the stand-by availability of the necessary response capacities.

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc.).

### Ineligible activities

The following activities are not considered as eligible for funding under this invitation:

- Activities defined under Article 21(2) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU (adaptation activities including repair activities);
- Activities linked to the certification of the capacities/assets;
- Activities linked to the purchase, development, and/or operation of new response capacities/assets in a disaster situation;
- Activities linked to the deployment of the aerial forest firefighting means (e.g. travel and subsistence costs during deployment).

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

### Geographic location (target countries)

Proposals must relate to activities taking place in the eligible countries (see above).

## Security

Projects involving EU classified information must undergo security scrutiny to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific security rules (detailed in a security aspects letter (SAL) which is annexed to the Grant Agreement).

These rules (governed by Decision [2015/444](#) and its implementing rules and/or national rules) provide for instance that:

- projects involving information classified TRES SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET (or equivalent) can NOT be funded
- classified information must be marked in accordance with the applicable security instructions in the SAL
- information with classification levels CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above (and RESTREINT UE/ EU RESTRICTED, if required by national rules) may be:
  - created or accessed only on premises with facility security clearing (FSC) from the competent national security authority (NSA), in accordance with the national rules
  - handled only in a secured area accredited by the competent NSA
  - accessed and handled only by persons with valid personnel security clearance (PSC) and a need-to-know
- at the end of the grant, the classified information must either be returned or continued to be protected in accordance with the applicable rules
- action tasks involving EU classified information (EUCI) may be subcontracted only with prior written approval from the granting authority and only to entities established in an EU Member State or in a non-EU country with a security of information agreement with the EU (or an administrative arrangement with the Commission)
- disclosure of EUCI to third parties is subject to prior written approval from the granting authority.

Please note that, depending on the type of activity, facility security clearing may have to be provided before grant signature. The granting authority will assess the need for clearing in each case and will establish their delivery date during grant preparation. Please note that in no circumstances can we sign any grant agreement until at least one of the beneficiaries in a consortium has facility security clearing.

Further security recommendations may be added to the Grant Agreement in the form of security deliverables (*e.g. create security advisory group, limit level of detail, use fake scenario, exclude use of classified information, etc.*).

Beneficiaries must ensure that their projects are not subject to national/third-country security requirements that could affect implementation or put into question the award of the grant (*e.g. technology restrictions, national security classification, etc.*). The granting authority must be notified immediately of any potential security issues.

## 7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

### Financial capacity

Applicants must have **stable and sufficient financial resources** to successfully implement the project and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the [Participant Register](#) during grant preparation (e.g. *profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc.*). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for all beneficiaries, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations
- if the individual requested grant amount does not exceed EUR 60 000.

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

If we considers that a beneficiary's financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:

- further information
- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities (*see below, section 10*)
- pre-financing paid in instalments
- (one or more) pre-financing guarantees (*see below, section 10*)

or

- propose no pre-financing
- request that the member of the consortium is replaced or, if needed, reject the entire application.

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

### Operational capacity

Applicants must have the **know-how, qualifications** and **resources** to successfully implement the project and contribute their share (including sufficient experience in EU/trans-national projects of comparable size and nature).

This capacity will be assessed together with the 'Quality' award criterion on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

If the evaluation of the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will show their operational capacity via the following information:

- The description of the applicants provided in Part B Project Technical Description;
- The description of the applicants overall existing fleet, type of capacity, number, crew, etc., and existing competence and organisation to fulfil the objective of the project as described in Part B Project Technical Description;
- The applicants' activity reports of last year;
- The list of previous international deployments of the capacity provided in Part B Project Technical Description;
- A list of EU funded actions/projects over the last 4 years.

Additional supporting documents may be requested, if needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant.

Public bodies are exempted from the operational capacity check.

### Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate <sup>(10)</sup>:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
- guilty of grave professional misconduct <sup>(11)</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);

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<sup>(10)</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

<sup>(11)</sup> Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that <sup>(12)</sup>:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information;
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).


## 8. Evaluation and award procedure

Applications will undergo the **standard submission and evaluation procedure** (one-stage submission + one-step evaluation).

An **evaluation committee** will assess all applications. They will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility and eligibility, *see sections 5 and 6*). Applications found admissible and eligible will be evaluated against the operational capacity and award criteria and then ranked according to their score (*see sections 7 and 9*).

All applicants will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**).

Successful applicants will be invited for grant preparation. The other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

 No commitment for funding — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We still need to make various legal checks before awarding the grant: legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc.

**Grant preparation** will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from your side. It may also include adjustments to the application to address recommendations of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant agreement.

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending are considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access (*see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)*). Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

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<sup>(12)</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

## 9. Award criteria

The award criteria facilitate the evaluation of applications in relation to the set objectives and priorities. They enable the selection of proposals which the Contracting Authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities.

The **award criteria** for this invitation are as follows:

### - Relevance (maximum score: 30 points)

- The relevance of the project and its contribution to the general objective of Decision No 2013/1313/EU, and particularly to the specific objectives / priorities described in section 2 above.
- The suitability of the type of capacities/assets to achieve the objective of the project.

### - Quality, effectiveness (maximum score: 40 points)

- How the proposed response capacity can ensure timely project implementation.
- How the applicant demonstrate that the capacity will be available for deployment over the duration of the project.
- How the level of interoperability is ensured (i.e. type of radio communication, use of existing EU SOP's developed by the Commission and the Member States, etc.).
- Cost efficiency.

### - Impact: Response adaptability and EU added-value (maximum score: 30 points)

- How the applicant justifies that the response capacity proposed is the most suitable for deployment.
- Whether the capacity can be used in various scenarios of extraordinary forest fire, adaptability to a variety of geographic conditions, and ability to benefit other Member States affected by extraordinary disasters.

Maximum score: 100 points

Individual threshold: 50% per criterion

Overall threshold: 65 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds and the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available call budget. Other proposals will be rejected.

The applications will be ranked according to their total score. Should two or more proposals obtain equal total scores, they will be ranked according to their score for criterion "Impact, Response adaptability", then if a tie remains, according to their score for criterion "Quality, effectiveness".

In addition to the above-mentioned award criteria, when awarding the projects, the Commission reserves the right to take into account the geographical repartition of the capacities to ensure an optimal coverage of the EU. In case of competing proposals within the same geographical area, proposals with the same overall score will be ranked according to their score for criterion "Impact, Response adaptability".



## 10. Legal and financial set-up of the grant agreements

If your project passes the evaluation, you will be invited for grant agreement preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EU Project Officer.

This Grant Agreement will set the framework for the grant to be awarded and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

### Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be set in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 1*).

For aerial firefighting capacities using **medium amphibious planes**, activities should primarily take place **between 15 June and 31 October 2024** (stand-by period, eligibility period for the costs). Applications covering the stand-by of capacities using medium amphibious planes primarily during the period **between 15 June 2025 and 31 October 2025** will also be considered for funding. If duly justified based on regional specificities, a different period could be -depending on budgetary availability- accepted but the duration of the eligibility period cannot be longer than 5 months each year <sup>(13)</sup>.

For aerial firefighting capacities using **other types of planes**, activities should primarily take place **between 15 June and 31 October 2024** (stand-by period, eligibility period for the costs). If duly justified based on regional specificities, a different period could be -depending on budgetary availability- accepted but the duration of the eligibility period cannot be longer than 5 months.

For aerial firefighting capacities using **helicopters**, activities should primarily take place **between 1 July and 15 September 2024** (stand-by period, eligibility period for the costs). If duly justified based on regional specificities, a different period could be -depending on budgetary availability- accepted. In any event, the duration of the eligibility period cannot be longer than 3 months.

In case of unexpected meteorological circumstances, the stand-by period may be prolonged (through an amendment to the grant agreement).

Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. Retroactive application can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

### Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

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<sup>(13)</sup> Please note that for projects covering stand-by periods both in 2024 and 2025, the duration of the grant agreement may be of 17 months. This has no impact on the fact that the eligibility period of the expenses will not be longer than 5 months per year.



The following deliverables are mandatory for all projects:

- Proof that the Aerial forest fire module factsheet-airplane validated by the Commission has been registered in CECIS: due date month 1 and/or
- Proof that the Aerial forest fire module factsheet-helicopter validated by the Commission has been registered in CECIS: due date month 1
- Pictures of the aircraft with the EU flag.

Awarded Member States will be required to participate to:

- a table-top exercise organised by the Commission (date to be defined) and
- a workshop on Aerial Forest Firefighting interoperability, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Host Nation Support (HNS).

### Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc.) will be set in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and Article 5*).

Project budget: No minimum or maximum limit. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The grant will be a budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit costs and flat rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and ONLY costs *actually* incurred for the project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement (*see Article 6 and Annexes 2 and 2a*).

The costs will be reimbursed at the **funding rate** fixed in the Grant Agreement (**75%**).

The grant may NOT produce a profit. If there is a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs), it will be deducted from the final grant amount. The types of revenues counted are set out in the Grant Agreement (*Article 22.3*).

Moreover, please be aware that the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement (e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc.).

### Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are set in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and Article 6 and Annex 2*).

#### **Budget categories for this call:**

- A. Personnel costs:
  - A.1 Employees
  - A.2 Natural persons under direct contract
  - A.3 Seconded persons
  - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs

- C. Purchase costs:
  - C.1 Travel and subsistence
  - C.2 Equipment
  - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- E. Indirect costs: not eligible

**Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:**

The eligible direct costs for the action are those necessary to ensure rapid access to national aerial forest firefighting means (stand-by costs for this grant).

In particular, the stand-by cost shall include costs related to maintenance, to staff and training, to warehousing, to insurance and other costs necessary to ensure the effective availability of such capacities.

In case of deployment of the capacities under rescEU, the costs directly linked to deployment, such as the cost of the personnel deployed or travel and subsistence during deployment, cannot be declared under this grant so as to avoid double funding.

Personnel costs:

- Supplementary payments: standard
- SME owner/natural person unit cost: Yes
- Volunteers unit cost: not eligible

The costs of personnel in charge of purely administrative and financial management tasks are not eligible. Backstopping and support staff costs are not eligible.

Travel, accommodation and subsistence unit costs: Yes

Costs of travel and related subsistence allowances are eligible provided that they are linked to stand-by activities or training activities.

Equipment costs: depreciation

Costs of purchasing, developing, and/or operating new response capacities in a disaster situation are not considered eligible under this invitation.

Office supplies and office equipment are not eligible as they are considered administrative costs.

Costs for financial support to third parties are not allowed.

Indirect costs are not eligible (0% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D)).

VAT is not eligible.

In-kind contributions for free are allowed, but must be cost-neutral, i.e. cannot be declared as cost.

Visibility, communication: costs linked to the visibility of the project are eligible (stickers, newsletters, etc.). Costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible but costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible.

### Reporting and payment arrangements

The reporting and payment arrangements are set in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and Articles 21 and 22*).

After grant signature, the Coordinator will normally receive **one pre-financing payment** corresponding to **70% of the maximum grant amount** to start working on the project (exceptionally less or no pre-financing). The pre-financing payment will be made within 30 days from the entry into force of the agreement.

However, for projects covering both 2024 and 2025, the pre-financing payment may be split: a first pre-financing payment of 50% of the maximum grant amount within 30 days from the entry into force of the agreement and an additional pre-financing payment of 20% linked to the progress report and request for payment submitted within 60 days after the 2024 stand-by period.

There will not be any interim payments.

**Payment of the balance:** At the end of the project, the Commission will calculate the final grant amount on the base of the final report submitted by the Coordinator. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the Commission will ask the Coordinator to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the Coordinator.

Please note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs declared.

### Pre-financing guarantees

If a pre-financing guarantee is required, it will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4*). The amount will be set during grant preparation and it will normally be equal or lower than the pre-financing for your grant.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State. If you are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in your country, please contact us (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

Amounts blocked in bank accounts will NOT be accepted as financial guarantees.

Pre-financing guarantees are formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guarantee amount (*by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc.*). It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us in time to make the pre-financing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement.

### Certificates

Depending on the type of action, size of grant amount and type of beneficiaries, you may be requested to submit different certificates. The types, schedules and

thresholds for each certificate are fixed in the grant agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and Article 24*).

A CFS must be provided for each beneficiary and affiliated entity when the requested EU contribution at interim or final payment is EUR 325 000 or more.

#### Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be set in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet point 4.4 and Article 22*).

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*
- unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*

or

- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts.*

In addition, the Commission may require joint and several liability of affiliated entities (with their beneficiary).

#### Provisions concerning the project implementation

Security rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (Article 13 and Annex 5)*

Intellectual property rights (IPR) rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (Article 16 and Annex 5)*

- Rights of use on results: Yes

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (Article 17 and Annex 5)*

- Additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes
- Limited communication and visibility to protect persons involved: Yes
- Visibility in field operations outside the EU: Yes

Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5)*:

- Zero tolerance: Yes
- Transfer of assets at the end of the action: not applicable to this invitation
- EU restrictive measures: Yes

#### Other specificities

Not applicable.

### Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (Chapter 5) provides for the measures that the Commission may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).

 For more information, see [AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

## **11. How to submit an application**

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Submission System. Paper applications are not accepted.

Submission is a 2-step process:

### **a) Create a user account and register your organisation**

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EULogin user account](#).

Once you have an EULogin account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

### **b) Submit the proposal**

Access the Electronic Submission System through the following hyperlink:

<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/submission/manage/screen/submission/create-draft/32539?topic=UCPM-2024-rescEU-Transition-IBA>

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator and beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online;
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Electronic Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file;
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF files.

The **project acronym** should follow the structure:

- For medium amphibious airplanes: rescEU-AFFF-MSP-[country code]
- For light amphibious airplanes rescEU-AFFF-LSP-[country code]
- For non-amphibious light airplanes: rescEU-AFFF-LP-[country code]
- For helicopters: rescEU-AFFF-H-[country code]

The proposal must keep to the **page limits** (*see section 5*); excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Electronic Submission Service otherwise the proposal might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted **before the call deadline** (see section 4). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

## 12. Contact and support

As far as possible, please try to find the answers to your questions reading carefully this Call Document and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- [Online Manual](#)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

We will send you any updates and additional information at the same e-mail address as the invitation to submit an application.

### Contact

For individual questions on the Electronic Submission Service, please contact the [IT Helpdesk](#).

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following e-mail address: [ECHO-RESCEU-TRANSITION@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ECHO-RESCEU-TRANSITION@ec.europa.eu).

Questions on submission must:

- be sent at the latest 7 days before the submission deadline (see section 3).
- indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (see cover page).

## 13. Important



### IMPORTANT

- **Don't** wait until the end — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (e.g. congestion, etc.) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.

Questions received later than 7 days before the call deadline cannot be answered.

- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).

- **Registration** - Before submitting a proposal, all applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must be registered in the [Participant Register](#) and obtain a Participant Identification Code (PIC) (one for each applicant) is mandatory for the Application Form.

- **Consortium roles** — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**. Other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.

- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium. It can also help to protect you in case of disputes.
- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc.). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU

budget (except under EU Synergies calls). Outside such Synergies calls, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared to two different EU actions.

- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected. Proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).
- **Multiple applications** — Applicants may submit more than one application for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).

Organisations may participate in several applications.

BUT: if there are several applications for the *same/very similar* project, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw one of them (or it will be rejected).

- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Applications that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire application will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see *section 12*).
- **Transparency** - In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU grants awarded is published on the [Europa website](#). This includes:
  - beneficiary names
  - beneficiary addresses
  - the purpose for which the grant was awarded
  - the maximum amount awarded.

The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise the rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm the beneficiaries commercial interests.



- **Data protection** — The submission of an application under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with the applicable legal framework. It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating the proposal, subsequent management of the grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication. Details are explained in the [Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement](#).