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European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations Emergency Support Instrument

What is it?

The Emergency Support Instrument (ESI) enables the EU to support its Member States when a crisis reaches unprecedented scale and impact, with wide-ranging consequences on the lives of citizens.

From April 2020 to January 2022, the Emergency Support Instrument was activated – for the second time after its creation in 2016 – to help EU countries address the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a large-scale loss of life in the European Union and caused untold hardship for citizens.

The EU has never faced a health crisis of a similar scale in its history, nor one spreading at this speed. Addressing this exceptional situation effectively required a coordinated strategy of different measures to save lives and prevent and alleviate human suffering.

Why is this important?

Solidarity is a fundamental EU value, and the Emergency Support Instrument demonstrates it in practice. It allows the EU to rapidly address the human and economic consequences of a crisis and fund actions that make a difference on the ground.

The Emergency Support Instrument is a flexible tool designed to respond to different types of evolving needs. EU countries can use it when they require immediate support in addressing a crisis, for crisis prevention, and during recovery.

This tool aims at enhancing existing EU programmes and instruments, including rescEU and the Joint Procurement Procedure, and to complement ongoing efforts at national level. ESI provides fast and targeted actions to support Member States in extraordinary circumstances.

It also focuses on actions with a clear benefit at the EU level. The Emergency Support Instrument can respond proactively, mobilising resources and deploying them across Member States based on needs.

How are we helping?

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU allocated €2.7 billion to support Member States.

From this funding, the EU allocated €220 million for the “ESI Mobility Package”. This package comprises measures related primarily to transport, which aimed to support the immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Member States.

In particular, the ESI Mobility Package included 3 actions:

- **cargo transport** (e.g., medical items, COVID-19 vaccination-related equipment and therapeutics) to the EU from third countries and within the EU
- **transfer of patients** within the EU and from the EU to third countries (from a Member State to either a Member State or a third country welcoming patients)
- **transport of medical personnel and teams** within the EU and into the EU from third countries, and operational support for mobile medical response capacities

This allowed the EU to finance up to 100% of the eligible costs of these transport operations.

From April 2020 to January 2022, the EU awarded:

- more than €164 million to Member States for cargo operations
- €9 million for the transport of medical teams and transfer of patients

This enabled more than 2,000 operations via air, land or sea to transport medical equipment and approximately 515 health workers and 135 patients.

Previous activations

The Emergency Support Instrument was created and activated for the first time in 2016 in the context of the Syria crisis. It was used to support Greece in managing the influx of refugees and migrants.

Between 2016 and 2019, ESI funded 29 projects in Greece, for a total of **€643.6 million**. A summary of interventions and achievements of this activation can be found in the final evaluation.

Facts & figures

The Emergency Support Instrument helps Member States to address crises inside the EU, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

€2.7 billion allocated in the context of COVID-19.

€220 million mobilised under the Mobility Package, to support cargo operations, transfer of patients and medical teams on the COVID-19 emergency.