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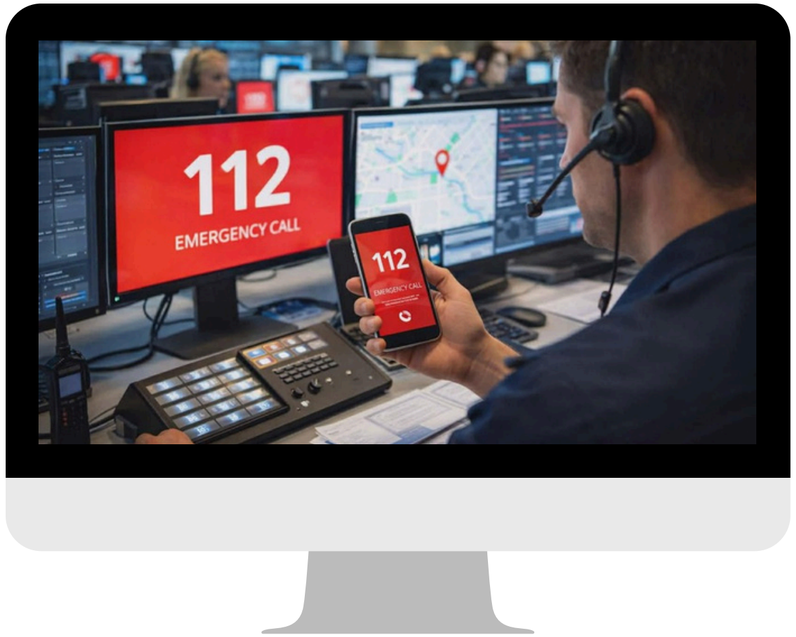
How services in Europe cooperate

Emergency number 112

112 is the common emergency number in all European Union countries and many other European countries.
The 112 number operates 24 hours a day, all year round, is free of charge, can be called from a mobile phone and a landline, and also works when there is no coverage of one network



The emergency number is universal and is the same throughout the EU.

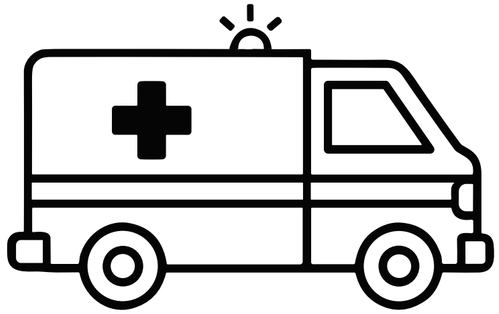
Emergency number operators speak English and other languages are available in many countries.

What happens after the call is made?

Once the call is made, the orderly process of handling the request begins.

The call goes to the Emergency Notification Center, the operator receives the call and starts the interview

1. The operator asks questions such as where you are, what happened, whether anyone is injured, how many people are injured, and whether there is any threat.
2. The system locates your location, even though the reporting person states where he is, the system can locate your exact location and the shortest route to you
3. The operator forwards the report to the necessary services



What services can be called?

Police:

ensures safety

- secures the scene of the incident
- directs traffic
- responds to:
- crimes
- road accidents
- public threats

Fire brigade:

extinguishes fires

- removes the consequences of accidents
- responds to:
- fires
- construction disasters
- chemical hazards

Emergency Medical Service:

provides medical assistance

- transports the injured to the hospital
- responds to:
- Accidents
- sudden illnesses
- loss of consciousness

Special services:

mountain rescue

- water rescue
- search services
- anti-terrorist units

Why do the services work together?

Different services work together because a single incident often requires different skills and equipment that are not available to a single service. Collaboration allows for faster and more effective assistance and mitigation of the consequences of threats.

Each service has a different task:

Police: ensures safety and controls situations Fire Department: removes threats Ambulance: saves lives and health

Operation of rescue services between European countries

- The cooperation of European emergency services is based on the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, which allows for the rapid pooling of resources from various formations.
  Here are specific examples of services that regularly collaborate on major disasters:

- Thanks to cooperation, services operate faster and more effectively. No single service can handle serious situations alone. Many situations have several problems at once, e.g.: fire + injured + threat of crime.
  Collaboration improves the safety of services. Police can secure the area, firefighters can remove threats, and paramedics can safely assist the injured.

Operation of rescue services between European countries

1. **Fire Department (GFFFV and HCP Modules)** This is the most visible form of cooperation. Specialized groups of firefighters from different countries create modules:

GFFFV (Ground Forest Fire Fighting using Vehicles): Poland (PSP), Romania and Bulgaria often send columns of fire trucks to fight fires in Greece or France.

HCP (High Capacity Pumping): Units with high-capacity pumps (e.g. from Germany – THW or the Netherlands) that saved flooded areas during floods in Poland or the Balkans.

2. **THW (Technisches Hilfswerk)** – Germany The German Federal Agency for Technical Relief is a unique technical service in Europe. It works with rescuers from across the EU to deliver heavy equipment, build temporary bridges, and provide drinking water purification systems in disaster zones.

Operation of rescue services between European countries

3. **Search and Rescue Groups (USAR)** Specialized units for searching for people under rubble (e.g. after earthquakes). Example: The Polish HUSAR group, French civil defense units and the Czech USAR unit searched shoulder to shoulder the collapses after the earthquake in Turkey (2023).

4. **rescEU Firefighting Aviation:** A joint fleet of aircraft and helicopters stationed in various countries (Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Sweden). These services act as a "European fire brigade," moving to where the situation is most difficult.

5. **EMT (Emergency Medical Teams)** Emergency medical teams (e.g., from Italy, Belgium, or Norway) that set up field hospitals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Italian and Polish military and civilian doctors formed joint teams to support overwhelmed medical facilities.

International aid in Europe

Forest Fires

During the most difficult fire seasons in Greece, European countries mobilize through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and the rescEU reserve. This is one of the greatest examples of solidarity within the EU.

Here are the key forms of support:

Air support: Countries such as France, Italy, Spain and Croatia regularly send specialized firefighting planes (Canadair) and helicopters to Greece.

Land modules: Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia are sending hundreds of specialized firefighters and firefighting vehicles. Poland has played a key role here for years – our firefighters have assisted on Euboea and around Athens, among other locations.

Pre-positioning: For several years, the EU has been using a "pre-deployment" strategy. Firefighters from various countries are stationed in Greece at the beginning of summer to respond immediately before a fire spreads.

Copernicus Satellites: The EU is providing Greece with free, real-time satellite mapping to precisely track the fire's direction.

International aid in Europe

Floods

European aid for Poland after floods (especially after the devastating flood of September 2024) includes both direct rescue support and huge funds for infrastructure reconstruction.

Financial aid and reconstruction funds

EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF): In December 2025, the European Commission paid €76 million to Poland to cover the costs of rescue operations and the repair of roads, bridges and schools.
Cohesion Fund: The European Union has enabled Poland to use €5 billion (approximately PLN 20 billion) of cohesion funds to rebuild damaged areas. These funds can be spent flexibly, without the need for government co-financing.
Support programmes: EU funds support programmes such as "Reconstruction+", aimed at building new, more climate-resilient flood protection infrastructure.
Gov.pl +4

International aid in Europe

Floods

Operational and hardware support

EU Civil Protection Mechanism:
Poland received technical support from other member states. For example, Sweden provided hundreds of bottles of chloramine for water treatment.
Cross-border cooperation: The German Red Cross worked closely with the Polish Red Cross (PCK), delivering beds, blankets and hygiene products to evacuation points (e.g. in Jelenia Góra).

Support Offers:
Assistance in the form of rescue teams and specialized equipment was offered by, among others, the Czech Republic and Ukraine.
Copernicus System: Poland used free EU satellite mapping, which allowed services to continuously monitor the extent of the flood wave and plan evacuations.
European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations +2

International aid in Europe

Floods

In the face of devastating floods (such as those in 2021 in Germany or in 2023 in Emilia-Romagna), European countries provide assistance mainly through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Here are the most important forms of support:

Specialised equipment: Member States (including France, Italy, the Netherlands) provided high-capacity pumps, lifeboats and helicopters to evacuate people from rooftops to the flooded regions.

Expert support: Water rescue teams and experts in assessing the stability of buildings and infrastructure were dispatched to Germany and Italy.

Humanitarian aid: Neighboring countries sent dehumidifiers for buildings, power generators, food, and medicines to people who lost their belongings.

EU Solidarity Fund: After the disaster was brought under control, Germany and Italy received billions of euros in EU funds to rebuild roads, bridges and energy networks.

Copernicus system: As in the case of fires, satellites provided free maps of the flooded area, which allowed services to better plan rescue operations.

International aid in Europe

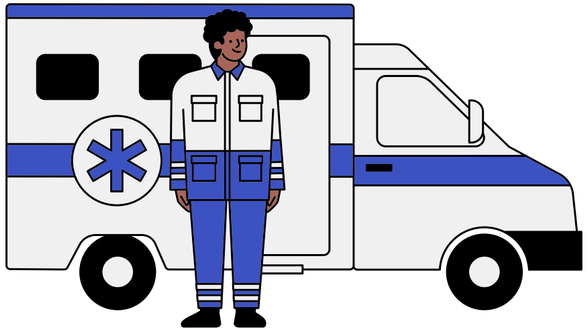
Medical transport and the pandemic

Global dimension and coordination

COVAX Initiative: The EU has become one of the largest donors of vaccines to low-income countries, donating billions of euros and hundreds of millions of doses beyond EU borders.
Repatriation of citizens: The EU Civil Protection Mechanism has funded return flights for thousands of Europeans stranded abroad due to the sudden border closures.

Financial and economic support

NextGenerationEU (Recovery Fund): A historic package worth around €750-800 billion has been launched to support economies in their recovery from the crisis and invest in the green and digital transformation.
SURE programme: The EU has allocated almost €100 billion in cheap loans to member states to help protect jobs and finance short-time work schemes.
Fund flexibility: Countries were given the opportunity to immediately reallocate unused funds from cohesion policy to fight the pandemic and equip healthcare services.



International aid in Europe

Earthquakes

European countries' assistance to Italy in the field of search and rescue missions focuses primarily on maritime rescue in the Mediterranean Sea and operations following natural disasters.
Here are the main areas of this cooperation:

Support in maritime missions (SAR) Operations coordinated by Frontex: EU countries support Italy through missions such as Triton (later replaced by Operation Themis), providing patrol vessels, reconnaissance aircraft and helicopters to patrol borders and rescue migrants.

EU military missions: Operation Sophia (EU NAVFOR Med) was a multinational mission which, in addition to combating human smuggling, saved thousands of lives at sea thanks to the involvement of ships from many Member States.

Joint exercises: The Italian Coast Guard regularly organizes international exercises (e.g. in 2024 with the participation of Greece and Frontex) to test mass rescue procedures.

NGO activities: Organizations from countries such as Germany (e.g. Sea-Watch), France (SOS Méditerranée) and Spain (Open Arms) operate their own search vessels, providing direct assistance in areas where Italian services are overwhelmed.

International aid in Europe

|Earthquakes

European aid to Turkey following the devastating earthquake in February 2023 was one of the largest rescue operations in the history of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.
Here are the key pillars of this assistance:

Search and Rescue (USAR) teams: Over 30 teams from 21 European countries (including the Polish HUSAR group) rushed to help immediately after the quake. Rescuers with dogs and specialized equipment (geophones, cameras) rescued hundreds of people from the rubble.

Medical Support: Countries like France, Italy, and Belgium sent fully equipped field hospitals to take over patients from destroyed local facilities. Poland sent a medical team and rescue equipment.

International aid in Europe

|Earthquakes

Humanitarian aid: Thousands of winter-proof tents, tens of thousands of blankets, sleeping bags and mobile housing units (containers) were donated.

Air Bridge: The EU organised special humanitarian flights, and Copernicus satellites provided free maps of the damage, allowing rescuers to precisely plan their operations in the field.

Financial support: During an international donor conference, EU countries and EU institutions pledged billions of euros for the reconstruction of devastated regions.

The importance of proper reporting

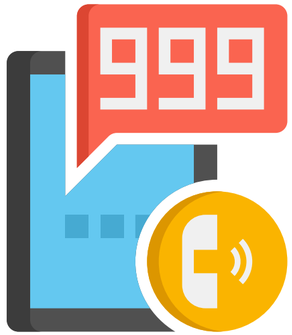
- Reporting is crucial because the operator doesn't see the incident; they only know what they hear. Thanks to this information, they know which services to dispatch, how many units are needed, and how urgent the situation is.

- Correctly reporting an emergency to the 112 emergency number is crucial for an effective rescue operation. Initial information determines how quickly and accurately help will be provided.

Correct submission

Stay calm. Speak slowly and clearly, and try not to panic.

1. Please provide your exact location
2. Describe what happened
3. Provide the number of injured persons
4. Tell me about the dangers
5. Answer the operator's questions
6. Don't hang up first



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