

EU HUMANITARIAN AIR BRIDGE

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Is it necessary that a given EU HAB operation is activated by a Member State?

Yes. THE EU HAB is the expression of Team Europa spirit and a close collaboration between the EC and MS is strongly encouraged. The EU HAB also requires the collaboration of the MS from where the operation is taking off. While DG ECHO will advise, guide and assist users on the mechanics of the EU HAB, it is essential that the hosting MS facilitate administrative permits for the operation to be successful. Likewise, the role of MS and EU Delegations will be critical in coordinating with receiving countries. EU HAB operations are likely to have a high political profile given the critical aid EU is bringing into nearly isolated countries. A close cooperation between EU and MS is also strongly encouraged in this regard.

Is an EU HAB operation restricted to the transport of COVID 19 material?

No. EU HAB operations can provide support for transport of staff and humanitarian cargo needed either to respond to COVID 19 needs or to ensure the continuity of the humanitarian response.

Who can have access to the EU HAB services?

All actors involved in humanitarian response are potentially eligible to benefit from EU HAB transport services. Users of EU HAB can be actors either funded by EU or not. Users do not need a Framework Partnership Agreement with DG ECHO.

Once an EU HAB operation has been approved for Phase 2 “Preparation”, DG ECHO and MS will inform humanitarian partners having expressed needs during Phase 1 “Assessment” through DG ECHO Field Offices and Logistical Clusters.

Is the EU HAB a regular transport system for humanitarian aid?

No. EU HAB is a temporary mechanism to address the urgent need for transport of cargo and staff in the COVID 19 pandemic context. It aims to complement the UN common services plan implemented by WFP. EU HAB operations will not be regular flights. The number of flights will be determined by the transport needs for cargo and staff. EU HAB will not be activated in case regular commercial routes are being resumed.

Do Member States need to provide airplanes in an EU HAB operation?

No. MS are not requested to provide air transport capacities. DG ECHO is responsible for the identification and contracting of logistical solutions adapted to the needs through its Framework Contract for logistical services. EU HAB is different from the repatriation operations where MS hire transport and get a 75% reimbursement from EUCPM. EU HAB is in charge of contracting the required transport based on the demands of MS and humanitarian partners and EU HAB covers 100% of the transport cost.

Are users of the EU HAB flights expected to pay a fee for passengers or cargo?

No. EU HAB services, both staff movement and cargo, are free of charge for users and covered 100% by the EU.

Is the EU HAB part of the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI)?

No. EU HAB is different instrument from the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI). While EU HAB operates to enable the continuity of humanitarian aid outside the EU, ESI has been activated to support EU Member States in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the ESI, DG ECHO will implement three actions:

1. Cargo transport (e.g. assistance and relief items) to the Union from third countries and within the Union.
2. Facilitation of transfer of patients within the Union and from the Union to a third country.
3. Facilitation of transport within the EU and to the Union from third countries of medical personnel and teams.

What are the EU HAB routes or flights foreseen? Is there a way partners can stay informed about upcoming plans and flights – potential routing or scheduling?

Based on the needs undertaken during the Phase 1 “Assessment” and requests from EU Member States, DG ECHO will approve certain number of operations for Phase 2 “Preparation” and should it be justifiable, for Phase 3 “Implementation”.

An updated list of those countries under Phase 2 “Preparation” and Phase 3 “Implementation” is available at the DG ECHO website.

Partners are invited to share their needs with relevant DG ECHO Field Offices. Once an operation is approved to move to Phase 2 “Preparation”, those actors having expressed needs will be contacted to confirm the details of transport needs.

The exact dates of a flight will be only known when an operation moves from Phase 2 “Preparation” to Phase 3 “Implementation”.

What countries are a priority for the EU HAB? How priorities are defined?

The EU Humanitarian Air Bridge has a worldwide coverage focussing on the most pressing humanitarian operational bottlenecks. EU HAB supports the transport of humanitarian and medical cargo and humanitarian staff to countries facing difficulties of access due to COVID 19 preventive measures. EU HAB aims to ensure continuity of aid. The operations must respond to several needs: guarantee the delivery of COVID-19 related equipment, sustain the flow of humanitarian supplies (in areas where aid has been impeded due to the recent transport restrictions), and facilitate the movement of humanitarian staff.

The Commission is currently assessing together with the EU Member States the urgency and feasibility of several potential destinations. For the first flights, the focus is mainly on Africa, but also critical areas in the Middle-East and Latin-America are among the options.

The Commission decides on the selected destinations, based on proposals received by the Member States and the needs identified by DG ECHO HQ and Field Offices in collaboration with EU Delegations, Member States and humanitarian partners.

All actions are implemented in conformity with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and the civilian nature of humanitarian operations. A specific attention is paid to make certain that any transport operated under the facility is exempt from COVID-19 cases.

Are ECHO flights departing only from EU countries?

The EU HAB is a flexible initiative, which adapts to needs. So far, the EU HAB focus has been to facilitate transport of cargo and staff located in Europe. This approach complements transport facilities managed by UN or made available in other continents.

What is the difference between the EU HAB and WFP flights?

EU HAB flights are not regular and will be made available on ad hoc basis according to needs and complementing WFP services, focusing in clearing backlog mainly in Europe. EU HAB aims to freight direct flights avoiding the use of hubs if possible.

What kind of support is provided by the EU HAB?

EU HAB provides free transport capacity for cargo and passengers. EU HAB may also assist to consolidate cargo in a departure point within Europe to increase efficiencies.

The relevant EU Delegations in third countries will support the Member States' services in facilitating diplomatically the necessary demarches for a smooth arrival and departure of planes. While efforts will be made to facilitate the issuance of all necessary permits, users are responsible for the preparation of the cargo and request of the necessary permits. Case by case coordination will be needed during Phase 3 "Preparation".

How do I book a request for an individual humanitarian staff?

Partners are invited to share their needs with DG ECHO Field Offices. Once an operation is approved to move to Phase 2 "Preparation", those actors having expressed needs will be contacted to confirm the details of transport needs.

The exact dates of a flight will be only known when an operation moves from Phase 2 "Preparation" to Phase 3 "Implementation".

What passengers can use EU HAB flights?

EU HAB flights prioritise humanitarian staff followed by staff of international development agencies and diplomatic staff.

On the return, once the movement of humanitarians is ensured, remaining space may be made available for repatriation in complementarity of repatriation flights. Since these flights are covered 100% by the EU HAB, the use of flights is free of charge.

Should NGOs request access to a given EU HAB operation to their respective Member State?

No. Once an EU HAB operation has been approved to move to Phase 2 "Preparation", all coordination will take place with DG ECHO and the requesting Member State.

What are the sanitary measures used in EU HAB? Does the country specified quarantine requirement will still apply when travelling from EU HAB?

Sanitary measures will be done in accordance to the regulations in place in the countries of departure and arrival. More details on the specific measures for each operation shall be shared during Phase 3 "Preparation" and Phase 4 "Implementation".

How can I contact DG ECHO on the EU HAB?

Request for general information can be addressed at the following mail address: EU-HUMANITARIAN-AIRBRIDGE@ec.europa.eu

Information of transport needs in a given country shall be shared with the relevant DG ECHO Field Office.