

SHAPING THE EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION COMMUNITY TO FACE NEW CHALLENGES

The European Civil Protection Forum (EU CP Forum) organised by the European Commission's Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) became a traditional discussion platform expected by the entire European civil protection community. The first Forum took place in 2003. At that time, the "Community Civil Protection Co-operation Mechanism" was just established and the EU had only 15 Member States. Further editions followed in 2007, 2009, 2013, 2015 with different themes, but always the same objective: better support countries facing disasters. As stated by Mr Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management at the European Commission at the opening ceremony of the 6th EU CP Forum, *"We need to make sure that in time of emergency, no country is left alone. This is how we define European solidarity in practice"*.

Through the years, the largest public event on European cooperation in the field of civil protection brought together more and more participants to take stock of achievements, share lessons learnt and put forward new ideas for tackling more challenges. In the meantime, the number of European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (EUCPM) Participating States increased to 34.

The 2018 Forum that took place on 5-6 March in Brussels was the 6th one, under the central theme of *"Civil Protection in a Changing Risk Landscape"*. The event gathered no less than 900 representatives of the broader European Civil Protection community - first-line responders, academia, international organisations, private sector, NGOs, European institutions, as well as representatives of the 34 EUCPM Participating States and of Partners Countries from the European Neighbourhood East and South (Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Moldova, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, Ukraine).

One of the objectives was to take stock of the EUCPM halfway through its implementation. The performance of the EUCPM during the first half of its implementation framework (2014-2020) has recently been evaluated in a series of documents and reports¹ which provided the Commission with useful insights and key challenges, and opened the way on a reflexion to increase the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the EUCPM. The result is a proposal to strengthen the EUCPM through the creation of "rescEU" - a reserve of civil protection capacities (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/news/resceu_en). This proposal was adopted in late 2017 by the Commission and is currently discussed in the Council of the EU and in the European Parliament.



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¹ European Court of Auditor's Review of the UCPM; Commission's Report on the Progress made and gaps remaining in the European Emergency Response Capacity; Special Eurobarometer Report 2017 on Civil Protection; Commission's Staff Working Document on the Overview of Risks in the EU; Commission's Staff Working Document on the Interim Evaluation of the UCPM; Commission's Report to the European Parliament and the Council on the Interim Evaluation of the UCPM.

Changing risk landscape: because climate change “is not a fake news”

The three objectives of the 2018 CP Forum were to serve as a sounding board for new ideas and developments in the sphere of civil protection and disaster risk management, including cooperation at EU level and with neighbouring countries beyond 2020, to facilitate networking, mutual learning and cooperation within the European civil protection community and, most importantly, to provide a platform for discussion with various stakeholders on pressing policy questions which are likely to shape the future development of the Mechanism.

At the time when changes in the global risk landscape are affecting the mandate of civil protection authorities at local, regional and European levels, strengthening the EUCPM is not a luxury but an urgent necessity. *“Climate change is real. Climate change is here. Climate change is not a fake news and nobody denies this reality”*, insisted Commissioner Stylianides. This is one of the reasons why the 6th EU CP Forum positioned itself as the ideal stage to discuss the “rescEU” proposition. This proposal aims at reinforcing the EUCPM by boosting financial support to the existing voluntary pool, by establishing a dedicated reserve of operational capacities at the Union level, as well as to reinforce preparedness and prevention measures.

“The new hard reality of complex, more frequent natural disasters made the Mechanism stretch to its limits”, stated Mr Stylianides, recalling recent major disasters inside and outside the EU and giving some statistics about the activation of the EUCPM: 92 times since 2014 and 32 times in 2017. *“The EU should offer more than condolences”*, concluded the Commissioner, referring to the consequences in terms of human lives. *“We have to be prepared for what is not forecasted because the next disaster is just around the corner”*, emphasised Ms Elisabetta Gardini, Member of the European Parliament, rapporteur of the “rescEU” proposal.

Disaster “Risk is everyone’s business”

In this context of rising disasters with increasingly serious human, economic and social consequences, disaster “risk is everyone’s business”, underlined Mr Johannes Luchner,



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Director for Emergency Management at DG ECHO. Supporting this remark, responsibility and solidarity were indeed the watchwords of the 12 panel sessions ran during the two days’ Forum. These debates were tied within the four pillars of the Forum: simplifying response, fostering resilience, scaling up prevention and strengthening preparedness. The EU CP Forum hosted also two plenary sessions. The first one focused on “rescEU”, solidarity with responsibility: a session for European political leaders and institutional stakeholders to present their views on the proposed changes to the current EU civil protection legislation. The second session proposed a closer look to “working across sectors to increase climate resilience” and called for strengthening, within the EUCPM, the ties between civil protection authorities and the main socio-economic sectors involved in the climate risks management.

The EU CP Forum was also an opportunity to hear the people from the field, *“the courageous first line responders”*, as described by Mr Stylianides, in the framework of “inspiring stories” sessions. Participants heard remarkable presentations about prevention measures like “safer buildings, stronger communities” by Mr Agostino Goretti, a senior earthquake engineer at the Italian Civil Protection Department, about forest fire management with “Flying



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above the fire” by Mr Fernando Adrados Morán, Lieutenant Pilot at the Spanish Air Force and about the health issues in emergency situations like “In the frontline, responding to health emergencies” by Ms Virpi Tuulikkinen Teinilä, emergency health expert and consultant from Finland.

An exhibition on Disaster Risk Communication and

Awareness was also part of this 2018 CP Forum. It showcased different solutions and good practices presented by public and private organisations from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, in addition to a number of international organisations (e.g. IFRC, UNESCO).

rescEU, to tackle disasters even better

rescEU is an ambitious new plan to strengthen Europe’s ability to deal with disasters caused by natural and manmade hazards. rescEU is anticipated as a reserve at European level of civil protection capacities such as aerial forest fighting planes, special water pumps, field hospitals, urban search and rescue and emergency medical teams. These should complement national assets and the proposal is to be managed by the European Commission in order to support countries hit by disasters such as floods, forest fires, earthquakes and epidemics. This proposal comes in light of more complex and frequent disasters that have increased in frequency and in intensity and have seriously affected many European countries over recent years. In 2017 alone, over 200 people were killed by disasters in Europe and over one million hectares of forest have been destroyed. But disasters caused by natural hazards have also a severe economic impact, on top of this human cost: since 1980, EU Member States have lost over EUR 360 billion in weather and climate extreme events. In Portugal alone, the direct economic damage of forest fires between June and September 2017 is estimated at close to EUR 600 million, representing 0.34% of Portugal’s Gross National Income².

“In our interconnected world environmental, economic, technological and geopolitical risks are more linked than ever before. Communities, societies, economies and the environment are becoming more and more exposed to this new interconnected reality. No country is immune. No country can face this challenge alone”, explained Commissioner Stylianides when presenting the rescEU initiative. The Commission’s proposal focuses on two complementary strands of action, targeting a stronger collective response at European level, and an improved prevention and preparedness capacities.

Strengthening European response capacities:

- An EU civil protection response reserve of civil protection assets is proposed to be established to assist Member States in responding to disasters, when national capacities are overwhelmed. rescEU should include assets, such as fire-fighting aircrafts and water pumping equipment, which should complement national capacities. All costs and capacities of rescEU would be fully covered by EU financing, with the proposal to have the Commission retaining the



operational control of these assets and deciding on their deployment.

- In parallel, the Commission will assist Member States to boost their national capacities, by financing the adaptation, repair, transport and operation costs of their existing resources – whereas today only transportation costs are partially covered. The assets would become part of a shared pool of emergency response resources under the European Civil Protection Pool, and would be made available for deployment when disaster strikes.

Stepping up disaster prevention and preparedness:

- Under the rescEU proposal, Member States will be asked to share their national prevention and preparedness strategies, in order to collectively identify and address possible gaps.
- The proposal strengthens cooperation and coherence with existing EU policies dealing with prevention and preparedness. This includes for example the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, the European Structural and Investment Funds, the Solidarity Fund, environmental legislation (e.g. flood management plans and eco-system based solutions), research and innovation and policies to address serious cross-border threats to health and more.

Finally, the proposal aims to streamline and simplify administrative procedures in order to reduce the time needed to deploy life-saving assistance.

² STRENGTHENING EU DISASTER MANAGEMENT: RESCEU SOLIDARITY WITH RESPONSIBILITY - Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the council and the Committee of the regions – (COMM 2017) 773 FINAL (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/eu_disaster_management_rescue.pdf)

The Neighbourhood at the heart of the “fostering resilience” pillar

The PPRD East 2 Programme was strongly represented at this 6th European Civil Protection Forum through the participation of 2 Partner Countries’ representatives – Ms Rusudan Kakhishvili from Georgia and Ms Nadejda Chetraru from Moldova - and the Programme’s Team Leader, Mr Sergej Anagnosti in 3 panel sessions under the 4th pillar “fostering resilience in Europe’s Neighbourhood”, and through the presence of PPRD East 2 National Programme Coordinators from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The first debate focused on “key elements for making international assistance effective” and Moldova was represented by Ms Chetraru, Head of Analysis, Planning and Coordination Directorate at the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (GIES) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Panellists agreed that common procedures among countries are at the base of international assistance effectiveness, and multinational teams represent a challenge, yet an added value. Expressing her point of view, Ms Chetraru explained that running regional field exercises is a key element in order to test procedures and also multinational teams. She comforted her statement with the example of the recent EU MOLDEX 2017 full-scale field exercise that took place in Moldova last September within the auspices of the PPRD East 2 Programme.

At the second panel titled “Towards a stronger partnership between UCPM and Europe’s neighbours, what are the priorities?” Ms Kakhishvili, Disaster Manager at the Emergency Management Service, represented Georgia. This panel reflected the statement of Commissioner Stylianides that “the new hard reality of complex, more frequent natural disasters made the Mechanism stretch to its limits”. The debate has indeed raised the issue of the mobilisation capacity of rescue teams under the Mechanism when several countries are facing the same type of disaster simultaneously. This was the case during the summer of 2017 when several European and Southern Mediterranean countries had to deal with devastating forest fires. Ms Kakhishvili explained that NATO allies and Partner and neighbouring countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus,



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Iran, and Turkey) have helped Georgia to contain a major forest fire in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region in August 2017 through the activation of the NATO’s Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC).

The third panel was about “linking risk assessment to emergency planning” where the Team Leader of the PPRD East 2 Programme Mr Anagnosti took part. It was an opportunity to recall that prevention and preparedness remain at the core of disaster risk management process. This is where EU funded Programmes play an essential role in the field of capacity building as a supporting tool to achieve approximation of the EU legislation and institutional sustainability. To guarantee the sustainability of the established procedures, initiated processes and achieved results beyond duration of the Programme, “we do not work for them (Partner Countries), but with them”, explained Mr Anagnosti. He also highlighted the importance of the regional dimension, especially for the trainings and exercises, which was supported by the remark from another panellist who explained that “*exchanging business cards over the rubbles is already too late*”.

The Forum, an additional motivation to get closer to the EUCPM

The participation and the attendance of the Eastern Partners Countries to this Forum represent a significant step ahead of the preparation of the 3rd phase of the PPRD East Programme. “We have almost reached the end of the second phase of the Programme and we need to think together what we will do after”, explained Mr Jean-François Moret, EU PPRD East 2 Programme Manager from DG NEAR. “Now, each (Partner) country needs to know where it stands and how it intends to position itself in relation to this (EUCP) Mechanism. For us, it is important that they leave the Forum inspired, that they can measure the path travelled, and what they can bring to their cooperation with the Mechanism”, added Mr Moret.

Most of the Partner Countries representatives



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attended the Forum for the first time, with the thirst to learn and hear new experiences from other countries and a will for networking with the European civil protection community. For the Moldovan team who attended the forum for the first time, the impression was highly positive. *"We were impressed and inspired by the debates and different experiences"*, explained Mr Ghenadie Barbu, Chief of the Coordination, Planning and Operations Directorate of the GIES and PPRD East 2 Steering Committee member. *"We are looking forward to get closer to the Mechanism as our country has now modified and adopted HNS legislation and HNS Standard Operating Procedures"*³. Mr Nazar Boryshkevych, Deputy Head of Euro integration and International cooperation department of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine and PPRD East 2 National Programme Coordinator for Ukraine stated that this Forum *"is an additional motivation to continue our cooperation with DG ECHO and to come closer to the EUCPM"*. The impression was similar for Mr Jeyhun Isgandarli, Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Azerbaijan and PPRD East 2 National Programme Coordinator. This event *"provided good opportunities for the Partner Countries to discuss needs and priorities for the future partnership with EUCPM and that was a good incentive and inspiration for other countries"*. Mr Giorgi Ghibradze, Director of the National



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Crisis Management Centre at the Emergency Management Service of Georgia, and PPRD East 2 National Programme Coordinator, considered the Forum as a major opportunity to establish contacts and debate about lessons learnt. While *"approximation to the EU legislation is a goal towards which we tend, the participation to this Forum made our feeling stronger to be part of this big European Civil Protection family"*, stated Mr Ghibradze.

Key messages from the 4th pillar: "Fostering resilience in Europe's neighbourhood"

The 4th pillar involved 3 debates and 12 speakers during the two day Forum. Wrap-up and conclusions of each session served as a base for key messages. At the top of the priorities, the regional approach for countries sharing similar risks, in particular regarding preparedness and response to disasters, and the international cooperation with Europe's Neighbourhood and Enlargement countries is considered as an indispensable asset for responding to emergencies.

Panellists focused on legal approximation and institutional cooperation that remain essential to bring Partner

Countries closer to the EUCPM. Significant progress has been made in the last ten years as four enlargement countries became EUCPM Participating States. Nevertheless, further developments are needed in the field of national operational and administrative capacities, as well as in prevention, preparedness, reconstruction and rehabilitation skills and competences. Diversified partnerships in the form of bilateral agreements, administrative arrangements and regional initiatives have been identified as key priorities for the development of stronger linkages in the European Neighbourhood. When fostering resilience in the European Neighbourhood a greater importance should be given to networking, common language and in the development of common procedures and approaches.

Finally, it has been underlined that coherence and continuation of current Programmes must be ensured in order to achieve sustainable solutions. Experience has shown that tangible results can be achieved when best practices are incorporated into the national civil protection/disaster risk management systems. However, panellists highlighted that an important challenge remains on feeding the results of flood risk management, disaster risk assessments, and disaster loss data collection and processing into national disaster risk management strategic decision-making and policies.



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³ Governmental regulation on Host Nation Support (HNS) has been already adopted in June 2017. More recently, Moldova tested the national HNS Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) adopted in November 2017 on providing support as Host Nation during emergency situations.

Highlights

Implementing lessons from exercises

The real value of the exercises – both table-top and field exercises – is only achieved when the lessons observed have resulted in revision of guidelines, operating procedures or even legislation. Only then can the lessons be considered “learnt”. Following the Regional Table-Top Exercise in March 2017, which was the lead-in to the full-scale field exercise EU MOLDEX 2017 in September 2017, a general Lessons Learnt Conference was held in Prague in February 2018 (see Newsletter 5). The PPRD East 2 expert team is now conducting missions to each Partner Country to identify the specific lessons identified for each country, and to ascertain when and how these lessons should be implemented. Missions to Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova have confirmed that important lessons have been learnt; legislation is being reviewed, training procedures amended, and cooperation between involved national institutions is being intensified. At the regional level, Regional Coordination Workshop will be organised in July 2018 to look at the mechanisms for coordination of international emergency relief operations. This will address the lack of familiarity, experienced during the EU MOLDEX 2017 exercise, with such tools as the Reception and Departure Centre (RDC), the Urban Search and Rescue Coordination Cell (UCC), and the Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (VOSOCC).

Host Nation Support - from identified lessons to lessons learnt

During the EU MOLDEX 2017 there was a lot of identified HNS lessons. Two significant ones are already being implemented in Belarus and Moldova. Belarus, which originally planned to integrate the HNS “host nation” function as a separate section into their “Plan for protection of population and territory in case of natural and man-made disasters in Republic of Belarus”, decided to develop one single document regulating the HNS procedures. In Moldova, one of identified lessons resulted in drafting a new Law “On exemption of taxes and legal fees connected to the entry/exit into/from the Republic of Moldova of international intervention teams/modules”, thus aiming to streamline border crossing procedures, including exemption of any customs and export/import fees for international teams coming to support Moldova in emergency response operations or for exercises, or transiting



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through Moldova territory. The PPRD East 2 Programme has been actively supporting both innovations.

Continuation of civil protection volunteerism activities

The implementation of the CP volunteerism (CPV) continued in Belarus by organising a 2nd meeting of the national CPV WG on 27 February 2018 in the Ministry of Emergency Situations in Minsk. Open and constructive debate contributed to clarify the steps and processes which the CPV WG is going to take towards the adoption of the amended Law on Fire Safety which introduces establishment of volunteer fire-fighting units, and consequent development and adoption of the Governmental and Ministerial Decrees on CPV. The PPRD East 2 team introduced at the meeting a Set of Templates and Guidelines for Certification of Civil Protection Volunteer Organisations. This Set of Templates is a tool adapted by the Programme with the aim to support the development of certification procedure for CP volunteer organisations and to harmonise certification conditions and parameters amongst the Partner Countries, and the Partner Countries and EU.

Looking forward

In the forthcoming period, attention will be paid to refresh and maintain ERRA in the six Partner Countries. Missions will be carried out to provide on-the-job training to key beneficiaries’ IT experts on administration and maintenance of ERRA IT platform. In addition and in parallel, and following the inaugural meeting of the national working group on disaster risk assessment, the inaugural meeting of the national inter-institutional working group on flood risk management is scheduled to be hosted in Baku on 13 June 2018 by the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The main objective of the meeting is to discuss and agree with the national stakeholders on the next steps to approximate national flood risk management legislation of Azerbaijan to the EU Floods Directive. In addition to the national level activities addressing thematic priorities selected by the Partner Countries, regional workshop on disaster loss data collection and processing, and Europe and neighbourhood based HNS Conference are anticipated to be organized in the forthcoming period.