

Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network



Dear Readers,

2021 has been a special year for the development of the Knowledge Network. Together with our Member States, we created the functioning and steering bodies of the Knowledge Network, gearing up to the launch of this initiative today, on 7 December, the *Knowledge Network Day*.

We are excited to present our work and we want the Knowledge Network Day to become an institutional, political and operational milestone for the Knowledge Network.

What is its goal? We want to foster stronger synergies among practitioners, policy-makers and scientists; all must be brought into the equation. Common exercises, bilateral and multilateral exchanges, cooperation, common projects, are on our list of actions the Knowledge Network is to take. The Knowledge Network online platform will provide the necessary space and means for those synergies and partnerships, and Civil Protection Forum next year is to make the first review of all that will have been achieved, and plans for the future.

There are good examples of partnerships and common activities and exchanges already.

In November, I attended the workshop on the 2021 forest fire season in Athens, held under the UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme. My meetings with the Greek Minister for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection and other European senior officials corroborated the central role of sharing lessons learnt in the Knowledge Network's mandate. There was also a clear commitment of national authorities to take joint action under the UCPM.

Activities, which will be at the heart of the Knowledge Network, kept growing. After almost two years of remote training, first responders and operational decision-makers met again in the field to train and exchange knowledge.

The full-scale exercise "SIQUAKE" took place in Slovenia in October where more than 850 first responders from Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Austria, Italy and the EU trained on the response in the aftermath of a strong earthquake. I feel privileged to have observed the exercise in person and witnessed the excitement of the European civil protection community about being back in action.

Last September, Ukraine hosted the international field exercise EU-CHEM-REACT 2 where first responders from Lithuania, Latvia, Moldova, Poland and Ukraine trained on cross-border hazardous chemicals and biological contamination scenarios. More recently, in November, 12 teams from Turkey, Greece, Italy, France, Austria, Bulgaria and Spain trained on earthquake response in Turkey, which hosted its first ever MODEX.

Our next steps should be to consolidate and strengthen the Knowledge Network community and design further strategic activities that will serve the needs of the stakeholders and partners.

I will be happy to start this new phase with you, in a hope that 2022 will allow for even more practical implementation of all we discussed and developed.



Janez Lenarčič
European Commissioner for Crisis Management

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And much **more...**

Knowledge Network formally established

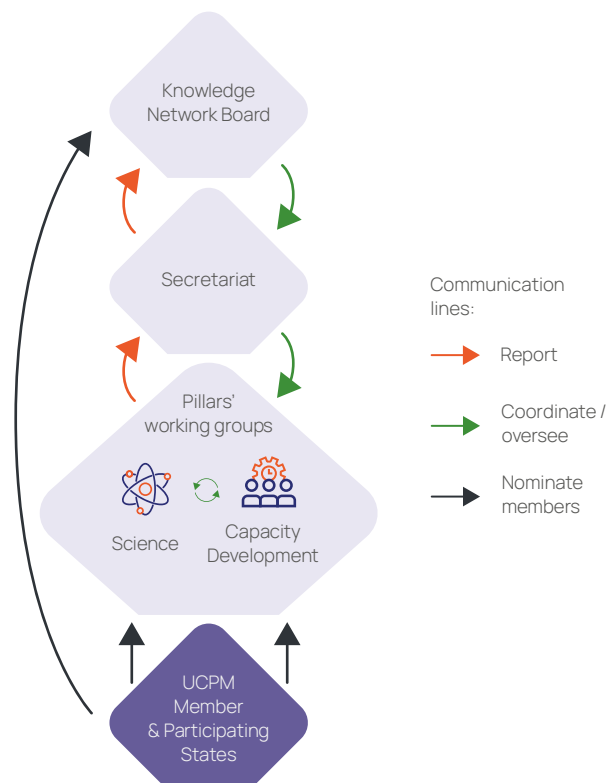
On 10 November, the Commission formally established the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network with [Commission Implementing Decision 2021/1956](#), following Member States' consensus at the 38th Civil Protection Committee meeting. The implementing decision lays out the governance structure of the Knowledge Network and explains its way of operating. This paved the way for the first Board meeting that took place on 7 December, as part of the ceremonial launch event.



Civil Protection Committee after casting the vote on the Knowledge Network's Implementing Act on 21 October 2021. © 2021 Joanna Serdynska

The governance structure of the Knowledge Network is composed of advisory bodies, bringing together representatives of the Member and Participating States of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), and a secretariat provided by the European Commission. Together, they advise on and ensure the smooth running of the network.

The pillars - Capacity Development and Science - are where activities are initiated, planned, designed and implemented and their working groups will support the technical work of the Knowledge Network.



The **Capacity Development Pillar** aims to connect, promote and strengthen capacity development initiatives relevant to civil protection and disaster-management stakeholders. It focuses on existing programmes and projects, such as the UCPM Training and Exercises programme, the Exchange of Civil Protection Experts programme, the Knowledge Network partnerships and the UCPM Prevention and Preparedness programme.



The **Science Pillar** aims to bring together academia, practitioners and decision-makers for multi-disciplinary, cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation. One of its objectives is to apply scientific knowledge to disaster risk management - particularly prevention and preparedness activities - more efficiently. The Science Pillar builds on and integrates existing scientific structures and networks supporting the UCPM.

DRMKC taking a one-step further: Towards the Science Pillar of the Knowledge Network

Interview with Alessandra Zampieri, Deputy Director of the “Space, Security and Migration” Directorate, and Head of the Disaster Risk Management Unit of the Joint Research Centre



The 5th Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre (DRMKC) Annual Seminar took place on 17-18 November, after two years of break caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. What are the news from the DRMKC's community after so long?

We are back! After two years of deep changes, for the entire world and within our team, we are back with even stronger ambitions for the DRMKC.

During the Annual Seminar, we could count on the active participation of representatives from more than 40 countries, following different sessions and engaging in lively discussions through many interesting questions and comments. Many more joined us through livestreaming. The input from the audience was extremely valuable to understand the expectations of the community and of the UCPM Member and Participating States and to guide our challenging but exciting next steps.

The Implementing Act of the Knowledge Network put DRMKC at the core of its Science Pillar. We are already at work to make this transition happen: from a mainly internal knowledge centre of the Commission, co-

chaired by JRC and DG ECHO and coordinating the DRM efforts of 12 policy directorates general, the DRMKC is ready to become the reference knowledge centre for all Member and Participating States. We look forward to having productive working relations ahead, supporting the elicitation of the vast DRM-related knowledge from the national scientific communities across the UCPM, for the benefit of the entire European DRM community.

It looks like you are calling for a participatory approach to the Knowledge Network's Science Pillar. How do you plan to achieve this?

Only by proactively sharing our respective knowledge and know-how, collaboratively mapping our standing needs and jointly creating new synergies, we will be able to build a Science Pillar which will be owned and productively used by all of us. Moreover, as it emerged during the Annual Seminar, it is not only about “knowing what we don't know”, it is also about “learning how to use what we already know”.

Nowadays there is a large part of scientific information which is still not (fully) exploited due to lack of awareness, understanding and operationalisation capability. We are already trying to move in this direction. For instance, DRMKC collaborates with the CONRIS Network for Risk, Safety & Security Studies and the Coventry University, which is hosting a series of 12 [online, open-access Disaster Risk Management Training seminars](#) between September 2021 and April 2022. They provide international, state of the art,

evidence-based knowledge, which should contribute to the quality of DRM practices. As I mentioned, this is only one example of the many more collaborations we aim to create with the interested national scientific entities in the context of the Knowledge Network's Science Pillar.

Finally, it will also be crucial to establish a close collaboration with the Capacity Building Pillar of the Knowledge Network. The discussions during the Annual Seminar highlighted the fact that the practitioners/science interface is as important as the policy makers/science one. The experience of professionals in handling disasters is the only way to proof-test the usefulness of our policies and scientific concepts and orient all future efforts.

The Annual Seminar made clear the DRMKC's global dimension and ambitions, with contributors from all over the world. Will there be a place in the Science Pillar for the local stakeholders to express their point of view, share their knowledge and engage in the debate?

The local level is where science and policy meet reality. It is crucial to have local communities represented and engaged in the work of the Science Pillar. Failing to address the local dimension of Disaster Risk Management and Reduction means failing to translate science and knowledge into practice. Therefore, we will treasure the contribution of local stakeholders to the debate and exchanges within the Science Pillar!

At the Annual Seminar, for example, we made sure to have this point of view represented among the invited speakers. In the session “Science for Union Disaster Resilience Goals” we had the project coordinator of “Resilient Europe and Societies by Innovating Local Communities” (RESILOLOC) sharing how the project is helping to translate global concepts and frameworks, like the Sendai Framework targets, into something applicable and useful at local level, to assess and improve the resilience of local communities.

Some of the DRMKC tools are already being adapted to address the local level. [The INFORM risk index](#), a global, objective and transparent tool for understanding the risk of humanitarian crises and disasters, is updated into a subnational version for Caucasus and Central Asia (8 countries) and for South Eastern Europe (3 countries). It will help develop a common understanding of the root causes of risks and improve DRR strategies at the regional and national level for a long-term risk reduction perspective.

Another example is the [Risk Data Hub](#), a geospatial web platform that presents pan-European data and methodologies for disaster risk and vulnerability assessment. It is designed to include in the analysis also local data and, to a limited extent, it already does so: by clicking on a country in the web platform, one can focus on its administrative divisions. There is also a possibility for customisation under a profile with restricted access: each interested user from national authorities can acquire such type of access and make use of the Risk Data Hub in its own way. By uploading their data, they can then visualise and analyse it in conjunction with all those that are already present in the platform, as, for example, Austria did in the past.

How are the outcomes of the Annual Seminar going to inform the implementation of the Science Pillar?

The 5th Annual Seminar is for us only the beginning of a sustained dialogue. We are now in the process of analysing in detail outcomes of the event, all comments and suggestions, to make sure to translate them into foundation elements of the roadmap for the Science Pillar.

At the seminar, we discussed some of the current hot-topics for DRM, like the definition of the Union Disaster Resilience Goals and the design of transboundary, cross-sectorial, challenging scenarios to test them against in the coming years. In this, we should be guided by the idea of “thinking the unthinkable”: we should not stop at what we have experienced in the past, we should go beyond and reason around what this new society, with its new threats – and combinations of them – might bring us to cope with in the future.

Both COVID-19 pandemic and the developments of the climate change impacts are clear signs of the need to go beyond what is considered probable, to be prepared also for what is only plausible. However, to be so visionary, we need everyone’s

engagement! We will certainly build our first ideas for the roadmap of the Science Pillar around the results of the DRMKC Annual Seminar. But we also hope it to be a continuous exchange with the scientific community, the practitioners and the policy makers, with opportunities to co-shape it as we go along.



The scientific activities of the Knowledge Network are led by the **Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre**, the Commission’s science and knowledge service. Established in 2015, it brings together experts and knowledge from different locations inside and outside the Commission to provide solid scientific evidence for policy-making.

More information:

- DRMKC [website](#)
- 5th Annual Seminar: [Recording & Material](#)
- [A dedicated newsletter](#) about DRM activities within the European Commission.



Behind the scenes of the hybrid 5th DRMKC Annual Seminar. © 2021 Maria Aguado Ruiz

EU Civil Protection without borders: First European field exercise against bio-chemical threats since COVID-19 conducted in Ukraine

Over 500 participants from national rescue and fire service teams from Latvia, Moldova and Poland took part in the 'EU-CHEM-REACT-2' full-scale field exercise on 27-29 September 2021 in Lviv, Ukraine. Coordinated by the European Union Civil Protection Team, the exercise saw them training alongside Ukrainian teams on mitigating major chemical, biological and natural disasters. This was the first EU civil protection field exercise held since the outbreak of COVID-19.



Next to the teams engaged in the exercise, there were also representatives from 17 European countries and the European Commission present, including EU observers and VIPs.

The exercise scenario reflected the increasing complexity of real-life chemical emergencies and natural disasters. It tested the teams' ability to respond to three distinct emergencies, happening simultaneously across the region. The scenario included the derailling of a train transporting chlorine and the destruction of a water chlorination installation during a European Games football

match, coupled with the threat of flooding of a major chemical plant in Moldova. Different teams and services worked together to respond: emergency response services of Ukraine and Moldova, the UCPM, and international teams representing various capacities from water pumping, to boat rescue and CBRN response. The scenario also introduced the possibility of trans-boundary movements of air pollutants, requiring international information exchange and cooperation between neighbouring countries.

The exercise was based on the EU-CHEM-REACT-2 Field Exercise Handbook - Situation Manual. Ensuring COVID-19 safety and security during the exercise was fundamental. Based on Ukrainian and EU safety rules and the project's COVID-19 manual, the participating teams were separated and followed strict logistics, accommodation, meals and sanitary rules. All participants were vaccinated and intervention teams were tested for coronavirus before entering the exercise venue.



In the scenario being tested, Ukraine requested international assistance through the UCPM, based on the anticipated intensity and potential negative health, environmental, security impact and international impacts of the disasters. Latvia and Poland were ready to provide the rescue capacities requested by the ERCC. Moldova offered its assistance to Ukraine based on trans-border cooperation. The on-site provision of international assistance was coordinated via the ERCC through a European Union Civil Protection Team (EUCPT), supported by a Technical Assistance Team (TAST). Besides coordinating, the EUCPT provided information updates, reported to the ERCC and assisted in situational assessments. The Ukraine Local Emergency Management Authority (LEMA) was responsible for the work of national and international responders. After an initial deployment of national capacity, LEMA deployed international assets after assessing that the worsening of the situation called for it.

Thanks to EU-CHEM-REACT project, we improved Ukraine preparedness and response capacities and cooperation within the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. At our university, we are now ready to train members of the UCPM and other relevant European staff.

Prof. Miroslav Koval, Rector of the University of Life Safety in Lviv

All these operations ran smoothly, increasing the knowledge of the UCPM in Eastern Europe and improving collaboration in responding to chemical disasters in a trans-border context. The exercise also highlighted the need for simplified border crossing procedures to carry out international rescue operations. The conduct of the exercise demonstrated a high level of preparedness of Moldova and Ukraine to cooperate with the UCPM. Senior participants from these countries

This exercise fully implemented the vision and practice of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network as an inclusive multi-stakeholder hub to share knowledge and expertise, good practice and cooperation between professionals. Given the significant national potential and capacities within the Eastern Neighbourhood countries and their wish to provide input into the Knowledge Network, I am convinced that the development of the Knowledge Network will in practice implement EU civil protection without borders.

Amb. Krzysztof Paturej, ICCSS President,
EU-CHEM-REACT-2 Project Coordinator

confirmed the importance of the [EU-CHEM-REACT-2 project](#) and the scenario exercises for their alignment with UCPM and EU tools in civil protection. Ukraine proposed the development of a draft roadmap for its membership in the UCPM.

This exercise was a core element of EU-CHEM-REACT-2 project funded by the European Union. The project addressed a need to improve prevention, preparedness and response to chemical and natural disasters simultaneously affecting participating countries, through a series of exercises, to test and enhance national capacities, use of the UCPM, and trans-border and international cooperation.

For more information on the project partners and the series of exercises conducted between 2019-2021, see: www.ecr.iccss.eu

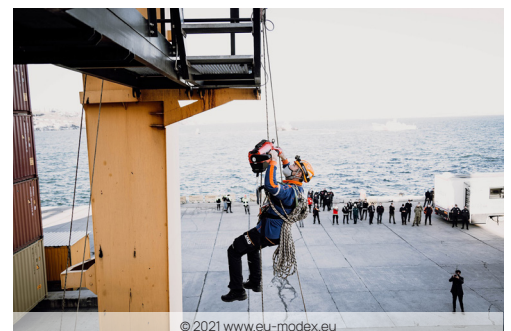


MODEX Turkey: 1,715 rescue workers collaborate with one aim, saving lives

Tekirdağ, Turkey was the location of one of the most recent Module field exercises (MODEX), conducted between 11 and 14 November. The exercise was a huge success and an important milestone in developing a good relationship with Turkey in this important field of Civil Protection. Gerard Guerin, Seconded National Expert at the European Commission, said: "The exercise has surpassed all of our expectations, hopefully in twenty years' time we will look back and remember this MODEX as the beginning of our great cooperation with Turkey".

The largest ever MODEX field exercise conducted under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) training and exercise programme counted 1,715 participants, a European Union Civil Protection Team (EUCPT) made up of experts from 7 different EU Member States and 13 participating capacities from 7 different countries. These included:

- Urban Search and Rescue teams from Turkey (AFAD & AKUT), France, Greece, Austria and Bulgaria;
- Emergency Medical teams from UMKE Turkey (EMT2) and Spain (EMT1);
- Emergency Remoted piloted Aerial System (EMERPAS) from France;
- A Technical Assistance and Support Team (TAST) from Italy.



A large multi-national, multi-sectoral team of experts designed, planned and conducted the earthquake scenario. They came from across Europe and worked very closely with the Turkish National Civil Protection Authorities (AFAD), the Turkish Ministry of Health, AKUT and many other national and international stakeholders. Donatella Salvi of the European Commission said: “The collaboration and willingness of all the stakeholders to work together was amazing, this is a true demonstration of European Solidarity and highlights why the European Commission is supporting such endeavours to better prepare emergency responders at all levels should a real disaster happen”.



Many prominent Civil Protection figures from across Europe paid a visit to the exercise. Among them were: Süleyman Soyly, Turkish Minister of the Interior; Ambassador Nikolaus

Meyer-Landrut, European Commission, head of the European Union Delegation to Turkey; Edem Wosornu, the Chief of UN OCHA's Response Support Branch; Sebastian Rhodes-Stampa, Chief of UN OCHA's Emergency Response Section, also representing the INSARAG Secretariat; and Felix Bloch, Head of Unit Knowledge Network & Evidence-Based Policy at DG ECHO, European Commission. During the press conference, Turkish Minister of the Interior Süleyman Soyly expressed his full support for both MODEX and Turkish participation in the UCPM, committing to strengthen Turkish engagement in the future.



During the exercise, the Italian TAST undertook the certification for the European Civil Protection Pool. The team focal point, Mr Alberto Boanini, said that the team had worked extremely hard over many months to prepare for the certification process and the MODEX exercise was the opportunity to demonstrate to the peer certifiers their competence.



This MODEX was conducted under COVID-19 conditions and was only possible due to the fantastic cooperation with the Turkish Ministry of Health who provided PCR tests to all participants and developed a COVID-19 exercise handbook as well as protocols to ensure a safe conduct of the exercise.

It seems that COVID-19 is not going away anytime soon. Developing and respecting sound

protocols is key to continue exercising, to prepare response capacities and experts to operate safely under pandemic conditions and be ready to deploy internationally.

To read more about EU MODEX, follow [this link](#).

The implementation of the EU MODEX in Tekirdağ was particularly important, because Turkey is a key player as a Participating State in the UCPM and at the same time the country with the highest risk of severe earthquakes in our immediate neighbourhood. It was therefore critical to test the cooperation in such an emergency as well as the procedures and host nation support under real conditions.

Harm-Bastian Harms, Exercise Director, LOT 3 MODEX

SIQUAKE2020 Full-Scale Civil Protection Exercise

The full-scale civil protection exercise [SIQUAKE2020](#) was successfully conducted from 4-8 October 2021 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The exercise was based on a scenario of a strong earthquake striking the central Slovenian region including Ljubljana (the economic, infrastructure and cultural centre of Slovenia) and affecting a large proportion of the Slovenian population.



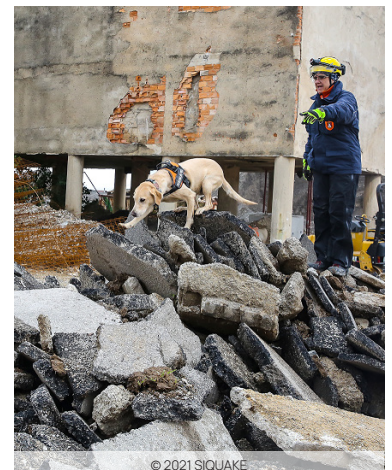
#SIQUAKE2020

Highlights

The exercise aimed to test national disaster management and coordination procedures and activities as well as the implementation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) procedures, by incorporating various international response capacities into a national response. The outcome was very successful, as it resulted in:

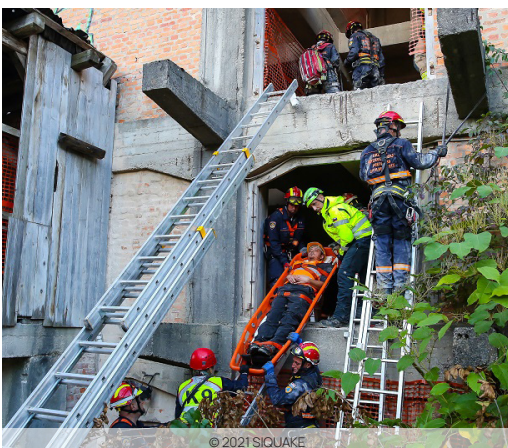
- Complete testing of the Host National Support activities, including integration and cooperation of EUCPT in the HNS Cell, in line with the national and EU HNS Guidelines.
- Good interoperability between national and international rescue teams in various fields of response operations (USAR, damage assessment, mass shelter, and medical support).
- A successful and safe implementation of the full-scale civil protection exercise during the pandemic, enabled by good planning and all actors' strict adherence to protective measures.
- The first virtual EU Observers Programme, with live feed from the field.
- Extensive media and public awareness campaign.

The exercise was held at 11 working sites for urban search and rescue activities, one site for the temporary shelter and emergency medical assistance, and 31 locations for damage assessment. The exercise activities included, among others: initial situation awareness, priorities and needs assessment; rapid damage assessment; urban search and rescue activities; emergency medical assistance and Host Nation Support to international assistance.



Participants

Over 650 members of Slovenian rescue teams and services and coordination structures participated in the Full-Scale Exercise, and 200 members of foreign teams supported the national response, including from Croatia, Hungary, Austria and Italy, as well as the European Civil Protection Team supported by Technical Assistance and Support Team.



The EU Emergency Response and Coordination Centre (ERCC) supported the exercise remotely. In addition, there were 150 exercise role-players, 24 instructors, six members of the evaluation team, and 95 employees of the Slovenian Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief involved in the preparation and implementation of the exercise.

COVID-19 safety

Due the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the organisers, in coordination with the Slovenian National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ), developed a series of measures to mitigate possible COVID-19 health issues on-site. The aim of the measures was to contain the spread of disease and to make SIQUAKE2020 safe

for all participants. Participants had to present a valid VTR (vaccinated-tested-recovered) on arrival and take a COVID-19 Rapid Antigen test. Exercise organisers also appointed a COVID-19 safety officer, who

was following all the activities of the exercise and provided guidance on social distancing, face masks, and other general COVID-19 prevention measures.

EU Observers Programme and VIP Programme

The EU Observers Programme was held fully online on 6 October 2021, the first full-scale exercise observers programme to do so. More than 80 representatives from various countries and organisations participated. Observers were able to follow live plenary and presentations of the exercise and exercise participants from the field (HNS, EUCPT, team leaders, EXCON), as well as the livestream from the two exercise locations.



implement this (virtual) way of presenting the exercise in the future.

The physical VIP Observers Programme was organised on 7 October 2021. European Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič and the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia Matej Tonin joined the programme. The VIP observers learned about the exercise activities through presentations and field visits to the exercise locations: search and rescue activities, temporary mass shelter for displaced people, and the base of operations, where they met with the EU Civil Protection Team, Host Nation Support cell and Exercise Control.

I welcome this full-scale exercise as an important part of developing response capacities. What is more, it also provides an important occasion to assess disaster management procedures and activities. We have the opportunity to identify relevant needs and priorities for future widespread emergencies. Particularly in areas such as mass shelter operations and rescue support. By working together and sharing our knowledge through this project, we are further developing and improving our response capacities. And importantly, this way we are also strengthening our coordination across all levels – locally, regionally, nationally and EU-wide.

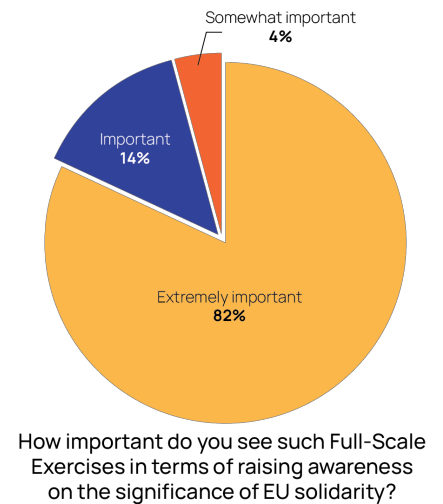
Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Crisis Management

SIQUAKE2020 project

The exercise was the key event of the [SIQUAKE2020 project](#), supported through the UCPM. The project was led by the Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief in cooperation with the City of Ljubljana, the German Federal Agency for Technical Relief, the Italian Department for Civil Protection and the Croatian Ministry for the Interior.

Various pre-exercise activities during the project encouraged cooperation among different stakeholders at local, regional, national and European level. Examples of this are: a Mass Shelter Workshop, a Host Nation Support (HNS) Workshop, a Civil Protection Exercises and Mission in Pandemic Conditions online Workshop, a Table Top Exercise and initial and final planning conferences.

Watch short [exercise video](#).



The EU Civil Protection Pool certification process: the experience of the Slovenian High Capacity Pumping module

The Slovenian High Capacity Pumping module (SI-HCP) from the Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief (ACPDR) successfully completed its certification process by participating in an EU MODEX field exercise in Timisoara, Romania from 20-23 October 2021. We interviewed Deputy Team Leader of the SI-HCP Matjaž Domijan, who is also responsible for the UCPM adaptation grant that supported their certification process.



What was the benefit of carrying out the European Civil Protection Pool (ECP) certification process for you and your team?

The ECP certification process helped us - through its three-step process - to verify that our procedures, operational capacity and self-sufficiency adhere to the legislative standards that are needed. In addition, it encouraged constant improvement of the capacity's performance. I believe that the commitment to the Pool and the certification process bring a sense of responsibility and confidence to the team and a degree of predictability in an otherwise unpredictable working environment.

Given the increase of severe weather events and the limits of national response in overwhelming emergencies, it is good to know that we can rely on European solidarity that is predictable and able to integrate quickly and efficiently into the national response - this for me is the essence of the ECP.

Your team also benefited from an EU grant for "adaptation costs" in 2019. How important was it for the development of the team members and the whole capacity to be able to acquire new equipment and update your procedures?

I really hope that the adaptation grant we implemented (International Deployment Adaptation Project - IDAP) is a "textbook" case for adapting national response capacities to perform adequately in an international environment. The project was designed around gaps identified in previous deployments and exercises, alongside recommendations and lessons learnt from the Slovenian Cave Search and Rescue (SI Cave SAR)

certification and adaptation process. The Slovenian High Capacity Pumping (IDAP) project complemented a national project to strengthen HCP units from seven of the most flood-prone regions of Slovenia. This gave us the building blocks for the operational component of the SI HCP module, formed by joining any two of the regional HCP units.

The project addressed the gaps in personal protective equipment, unit rescue equipment, transportation and ICT equipment in order to ensure a full compliance with Article 12 of UCPM legislation (self-sufficiency of modules) as well as to train the operational roster personal to perform efficiently in an international environment. The module concept allows for various scenarios, including the deployment of the capacity if part of the regional HCP units were engaged at home. The motivation and the performance of the module would not be on the same level if we had not implemented the adaptation grant.

To add to this, I would like to highlight that some of the equipment procured has already



supported UCPM operations, such as the delivery of assistance to Croatia after the earthquake in December 2020 and combating forest fires in North Macedonia in August 2021. Some of the items procured are also supporting the national COVID19 response operation.

The final exercise took place in Romania in the wake of a new

wave of COVID-19. You had to take additional precautionary measures during the exercise. How challenging was it and what did you learn from this experience?

I believe that it was a good decision to keep the exercise despite COVID-19, as we already had several quite difficult UCPM deployments in a COVID-19 context before the

re-start of the exercise cycle. I think that the sanitary situation does bring additional difficulties to a mission or an exercise, but this is the reality. This experience confirmed the need for a solid contingency plan and the means to implement it. I believe that the EU MODEX exercise in Romania gave us an insight into gaps that we would wish to address in the future.

UCPM certification in a nutshell



UCPM certification allows modules, Technical Assistance and Support Teams (TAST) and other response capacities to test and improve their team skills and capabilities to reach the high quality international standards that enable them to register in the European Civil Protection Pool (ECP). This includes resources pre-committed to the UCPM by the Member States and Participating States to react rapidly and in a predictable manner when a disaster strikes. It exemplifies EU solidarity in action.

The certification process has three complementary steps: a consultative visit, a table-top exercise and a final certifying field exercise (the third step can be waived for some specific categories of modules).

LEARNING

UCPM remote learning during COVID-19: paving the way for the future UCPM Training

The European Union launched the UCPM Training Programme in 2004 to improve the competences of the European civil protection experts and ensure compatibility and complementarity among the intervention teams deployed on international UCPM missions. Since its start, the training programme offered more than 12 000 training opportunities to 5 400 experts.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, for the first time ever, the European Commission and the partner Training Centres in Member and Participating States had to postpone all face-to-face training courses. To continue sharing the knowledge they decided to move some courses to the virtual format.

Managing online courses kept us all up-to-date and connected to the UCPM Training Programme. It was great to see how colleagues made their best to create and participate in new learning experiences by using online technologies. I believe that success relied mainly on the human factor - a strong willingness to keep working together and a rapid change of mind-set have been essential. It has been an enriching learning process and challenges made us stronger.

José Azorín, THW Training Centre Neuhausen
On behalf of the OPM Consortium

Pioneered by the Online Operational Management Course (OPM) with the German THW Training Center in Neuhausen in lead, several other courses quickly followed: the Modules Basic Course (MBC) and the Technical Expert Course (TEC), led by the Slovenian Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, the Community Introduction Course (CMI), led by the Italian Civil Protection, and the Commission-led Seminar for Mechanism Experts (SME).

In 2021 there were more than 20 courses online. To offer participants the best learning experience, the courses staff tried and tested new methods, technologies and formats, always with an open-mind to improve as they go along. Participants' feedback was encouraging. While missing physical interaction, many still enjoyed learning online. They acknowledged the quality of courses and opportunity to access knowledge about the UCPM, even during the pandemic.

This experience has been a steep learning curve for everyone involved in the UCPM Training Programme. While face-to-face courses are slowly resuming, we are going back to physical classrooms with new knowledge and changed mind-sets. One thing is sure: the future training programme will be ready to combine the best of both worlds!

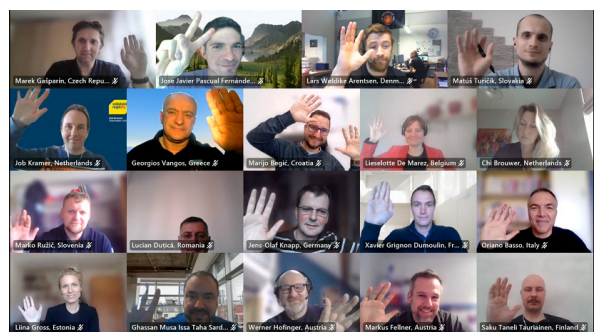
Organising online training was a great challenge, new to the CMI course and to most of us. The exchange of views among lecturers, trainers and management led to a course methodology tailored to the online system. It was also a great opportunity to consider, in a new perspective, the learning objectives of the course. Participants' feedback was positive and useful to introduce changes and improve the online CMI. However, everyone felt the lack of interaction, personal exchanges and reduced opportunities to network. The experience gained and the lessons learnt will be a reference for the future.

Grazia Curalli, Italian Civil Protection Department
On behalf of the CMI Consortium



Digitalisation of the MBC and TEC courses seemed as the only sensible solution after a lengthy disruption of the training programme. By adapting to the new reality, we developed new ways of communication, new course schedules and a learning methodology adjusted to the digital environment. Participants saw benefits of online courses in improved accessibility for everyone, but missed informal networking. The output from the courses 'mission exercise' however showed that the online environment allows to organise better the group work and distribute tasks more efficiently – the aspect that should be considered in the future UCPM Training Programme.

Milena Dobnik Jeraj, Administration for Civil Protection & Disaster Relief, Slovenia
On behalf of the MBC and TEC Consortium



Learn with us!

Besides residential courses, the UCPM Training Programme offers self e-learning modules on different disaster management topics, such as the Introduction on the UCPM (available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic), Cultural Sensitivity and Gender, Information Management or the Pre-UCPM Deployment Refresher Courses. Upon registration, all modules are freely accessible on: <https://ucpm.e-learning.cc>

Contact: ECHO-CP-TRAINING-EXERCISES@ec.europa.eu



LEARNING

Welcome to the EU OSIC: a new UCPM training course on the integration between local and international emergency response teams

The first EU On-Site Integration Course took place in the Belgian province of Luxembourg from 8 to 12 November 2021. Organised within the framework of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), it was the pilot of four courses within the EU OSIC project.

In disasters, it is crucial that all emergency services are coordinated. This is especially true if the scale of the disaster is so big that the country calls on international solidarity mechanisms and intervention teams from other countries for help. Through the UCPM, international relief teams have been training for years to ensure good cooperation and coordination amongst them.

However, “the integration of international teams in domestic emergency management had so far not been included as such in the UCPM Training Programme”, states Anne Baetens, the Belgian National Training Coordinator and course director. “The EU OSIC, organised with our partners, the civil protection organisations of Algeria, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia and Spain, aims to fill this gap”.



For my province struck by the floods in July, this training is an excellent opportunity to learn more about the Mechanism and to better prepare our own host nation support. I am convinced that this training will help our intervention services in the province to integrate international teams if necessary.

Olivier Schmitz, Governor of the Province of Luxembourg, Belgium

Throughout the week, participants coming from the host nation and international teams discussed in depth the operational challenges that could arise when working together. This included aspects such as soft skills, leadership and decision-making.

The EU OSIC took place face to face, one of the few courses over the past two years. “As personal interaction, and the challenges involved, is central to this course, it was not possible to conduct it via a digital platform”, explained Guy Beckers, responsible for safety during the course. “We have taken tight measures to organise it as safely as possible. For example, all participants and staff had to be vaccinated

and self-tested on arrival to enter the course bubble, and stayed at the training venue. I think that with these measures we struck a good balance between organising an interactive training and guaranteeing maximum safety”.

The EU OSIC is also connecting with other UCPM activities to support the lessons learnt process, in line with the Knowledge Network’s spirit. Some of the participants have been On-Site Commanders or Team leaders in previous exercises such as Riwaterex and Cascade, and this course will be used to train personnel involved in the future Domino 2022 exercise.

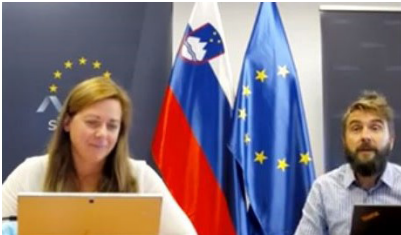


As a follow-up to this pilot training, three additional courses will be organised in Spain, Norway and Serbia in 2022. Invitations for these courses will be sent to the National Training Coordinators.

LEARNING

2021 National Training Coordinators annual meeting

The European Commission (DG ECHO) and the Slovenian Presidency of the EU organised the 2021 annual meeting of UCPM National Training Coordinators (NTCs) in September. For the second year in a row, the NTC annual meeting took place online.



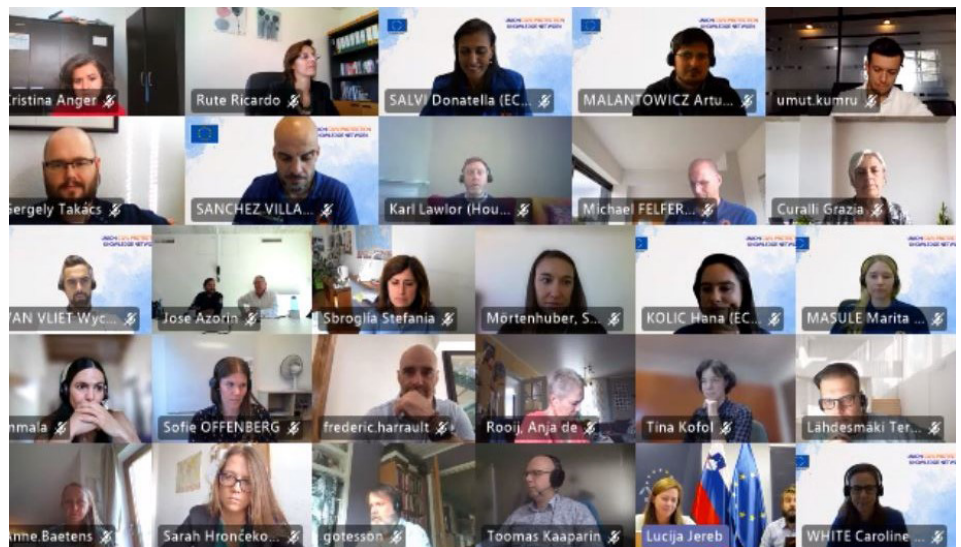
NTCs reconnected through updates on the UCPM training, exercises and exchanges programmes, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre and the UCPM legislation, with a focus on discussing together the future UCPM training programme.

After presentations on the key elements of the new training programme, the 50 participants discussed in small groups the tasks and role that NTCs will have in support of the future programme rollout.

Using the online collaborative tool MIRO, participants deliberated on various aspects related to the training of future civil protection experts taking part in international UCPM missions. These included for instance the NTC's contribution to training participants' performance assessment and evaluation. They also looked at the future programme outreach and promotion needs, for example how to ensure inclusive access to courses and exercises.

The meeting, organised in a constructive and light-hearted spirit, also featured a memorable virtual visit of the Slovenian Training Centre.

The next NTC get-together will take place in the Czech Republic in autumn 2022.



Contact: ECHO-CP-TRAINING-EXERCISES@ec.europa.eu



National Training Coordinators

NTCs have an important role in the UCPM Training and Exercise Programme. They select and nominate participants to the UCPM training courses and exercises and follow their learning and development. They build and maintain close relations with the national civil protection authorities, civil protection experts and stakeholders, training coordinators of other UCPM Member and Participating states, civil protection training centres and the European Commission. NTCs promote and raise awareness on the Union Mechanism training and exercises and the UCPM at large. Their role is essential to encourage improvements and to support take-up of new UCPM preparedness activities at national level.

FROM THE COMMUNITY

One day in the life of an ERCC duty officer

“Goodnight Antoine, night Jefferson”. Looking up from their desks with a smile they say to me, “Good morning Eric”. It is 8:41 am on Monday morning and I am heading home for a much-deserved rest after twelve and half hours at work and my last night of shift. Sleep comes quickly but six hours later in a tired daze, it is already time for coffee, breakfast and more coffee. The phone buzzes. “Shall we meet for drinks tonight?” ... “Yes!”. After a very active year with multiple activations, the forest fire season is over and that alone is reason to celebrate.

It is now 19:00 in Place de Londres, Brussels. Our regular meeting place has a pleasant atmosphere and the first round of drinks are under the belt. At the table sit firefighters, an English teacher, a carpenter, a beekeeper, an internationally renowned DJ, sailors and former military officers – all members of the EU Emergency and Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) Duty System. The discussion naturally focuses on work and a nearby table overhears our exchanges and can't help but engage us in conversation. “What do you guys do?”, asks a curious student. “Disasters”, I respond.



The diverse work of a Duty Officer, or as we prefer, “Emergency Response Officer,” has always been an excellent conversation starter. The explanation continues, “we also do satellites, airplanes, helicopters, high-capacity pumping and occasionally marine mucilage”. “Marine mucilage?” “Yes”. “Did I also mention the naval ships, old soviet airplanes, COVID-19 and Ebola?” Each of us then take turns explaining how the ERCC is working 24/7 monitoring and responding to natural and human induced disasters all around the world. How we work 36 hours over three days or nights to maintain the system. The firefighters among us proudly show videos of Canadair airplanes scooping water out of the Danube or the latest search and rescue techniques

deployed during the most recent training exercise. The more technically inclined colleagues explain how we provide the GPS coordinates to request satellite imagery after a disaster.

The conversation is interrupted as a few colleagues begin to leave. “Leaving already?”, we asked slightly surprised. They are on day shift tomorrow and need to be at the office at 8:00 am. “Will it be busy?”, asks the student. Unfortunately, yes. In addition to the over 40 active emergencies, there has just been an explosion in Africa and we are in the

process of deploying a team of experts. We need to contact the ambassador to accept the assistance offered by some of the Member States as well as find the T-shirt sizes of the experts. The departing colleagues explained that the job of the Duty Officer ranges from some of the highest level of communication to the most mundane yet essential of tasks of making sure our experts depart with the right equipment. With that explanation, they wished the colleagues and our newfound friends a good night. A day in the life of this Emergency Response Officer from the always-open ERCC draws to a close.



Eric Adrien, 7 November 2021

To read more about the work of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre, see [ERCC portal](#).

FROM THE COMMUNITY

UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme – Thematic meeting on the 2021 forest fires in Europe

The UCPM lessons learnt thematic meeting on the 2021 forest fires in Europe took place at the headquarters of the Greek Civil Protection authorities in Athens on 22–23 November 2021. The UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme offered Member and Participating States this discussion platform to exchange experiences and identify key lessons from the recent extreme forest fire season.

Over 60 participants from the UCPM Member and Participating States and Commission services attended the meeting, with many more connected online. Representatives from both civil protection and forestry authorities were invited to the meeting to jointly prepare for future wildfire seasons, in a holistic approach identifying the broadest possible range of lessons.



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During the high level opening session, Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Crisis Management, and Christos Stylianides, Greece’s Minister for the Climate Crisis and Civil Protection, underlined the worsening effects of climate change and the need to constantly reinforce civil protection efforts and capacities across the whole disaster cycle. The Commissioner stressed that to do so: “all stakeholders have to come together to share, exchange and learn from one another [...] to better anticipate the challenges that will emerge with future forest fire seasons”.



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Besides focusing on response activities, the meeting also focussed on prevention, preparedness and recovery, and discussed lessons implemented from previous forest fire seasons. The World Bank offered insight into the steps taken in the development of Greece’s new national disaster risk management plan, a project co-financed under the UCPM Prevention and Preparedness

Programme (Track 1). The European Commission presented a range of EU support and investment tools available to Member States, and gave an update on the latest forest fire related training and exercises as well as the launch of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network platform.

Today, Europe faces many significant disaster threats and cooperation is key to address them. By taking a joint-approach to disaster risk management, all European countries can be prepared for future possible hazards. Our discussions will be an important step to address emerging forest fire risks. It will help with our forward planning for future wildfire threats, both for the 2022 forest fire season and for those to come.

Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Crisis Management

The meeting was marked by discussions based on the rich input provided by presenters and participants. The lessons and good practices identified will feed into prevention, preparedness and response activities, as well as training exercises. The meeting also highlighted the overall benefits of UCPM coordination and support, including through the use of UCPM assets such as the European Civil Protection Pool or rescEU.



UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme

The Lessons Learnt Programme aims to improve future responses and ultimately enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the UCPM as a whole. It is an invaluable platform for exchanges, whilst promoting the UCPM and awareness about its supporting tools. As shown in this last event, gathering stakeholders from across the disaster risk management cycle to identify lessons and exchange knowledge from past events is key to better prepare for future ones.

FROM THE COMMUNITY

SAVEMEDCOASTS: Understanding the impact of sea level rise in Europe

Regardless of whether the world manages to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial level, some long-term impacts of warming are already underway and are likely to be irreversible. They include sea level rise, whose effects are already visible in Europe, particularly in the Mediterranean basin.

In the words of an entrepreneur from Venice: “Over the past 50 years, I have had to continually raise the floor of my laboratory to defend myself from the rising sea level which continues to rise more and more every year. I am thinking of moving upstairs to be safer and keep my gear dry”.

The [SAVEMEDCOASTS](#) project, funded by the [UCPM Prevention and Preparedness Programme](#), developed a methodology to improve the assessment of risks stemming from sea level rise and highlighted the most exposed 165 coastal areas - “hotspots” (less than two meters above sea level) – around the Mediterranean sea. It did so by combining topography, vertical land movements, climatic scenarios from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), tides and sea level rise predictions. The high resolution data obtained from these hotspots provided detailed sea level rise scenarios, including the potential amplification of tsunami risk and storm surge events (abnormal rise in seawater level during a storm) in sea level rise conditions. The project also developed a [geospatial data-sharing hub](#) that serves as a user-friendly tool for creating and sharing interactive thematic maps.



The second phase of the project ([SAVEMEDCOASTS 2](#)) received a grant in 2019 to expand the work in other vulnerable Mediterranean areas. Through the “KnowRiskFlood” campaign, the project is raising awareness in communities in areas at high risk of flooding. There is a particular focus on youth, involving students and their teachers in workshops and providing them with knowledge, resources and educational tools.

The project is also improving sea level rise predictions, flood and multi-hazard scenarios, spatial decision support systems and disaster risk management plans. Local

authorities and decision-makers are involved in decision-making, through questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and workshops that aim to develop site-specific sea level rise adaptation and mitigation policy tools.

The project’s results have already been considered by the municipalities of Cinque Terre and Venice in Italy. Venice is incorporating the project outputs into its Climate Change Adaptation policy. The Emilia Romagna and Liguria regions in Italy used data from the SAVEMEDCOASTS project to revise their regional plans for the protection of the marine and coastal environment. A coastal municipality near Rome in Italy as well as the Paros and Lefkada islands in Greece are also interested in SAVEMEDCOASTS data for the revision of their plans for the protection of the marine and coastal environment and infrastructures. Communities involved in the protection of maritime heritage sites will also find the SAVEMEDCOASTS results useful to understand possible effects of sea level rise on areas of high cultural value.

When I was a child, I remember the sea was far from my house even during storms, but now the coastline has retreated so much that waves are flooding roads and fields. I am aware I am now living too close to the sea, sometimes in dangerous situations, but I want to live here. This is my land. This is my house.

**A resident of Acquacalda village,
Lipari Island (Italy)**

You can watch [a short video](#) on Sea Level Rise Scenarios Along the Mediterranean Coasts.

FROM THE COMMUNITY

News from the European Observatory on disaster risk and crisis management best practices (ROADMAP)

The ROADMAP project, funded through the UCPM, is working to set up European principles on disaster risk and crisis management based on cooperation between the scientific community and disaster risk management authorities. The project is a partnership of the Italian Centre for Risk Reduction (CI3R), the Italian Civil Protection Department, the Portuguese ADAI and the Norwegian University of Stavanger.

Experience, good practices and implemented solutions in the EU Member States and beyond contribute to shape this work towards a shared understanding on disaster risk management between decision-makers and scientific actors. ROADMAP is working to establish a European Observatory on disaster risk and crisis management good practices that will contribute to the ambitions of the Knowledge Network.

ROADMAP has implemented a number of activities in 2021:

- Publication of [periodical bulletins](#) provides up to date information of good practices and solutions in disaster risk management around Europe.
- Thematic papers help deepen knowledge on issues related to disaster risk management. They are prepared with the support of experts selected through a dedicated call for experts published on the [news section](#) of the ROADMAP website and other channels. The first thematic paper, “Good practices in a multi-hazard risk operations according to a scenario-based approach”, is due in December 2021.
- Bulletins and thematic papers will feed the ROADMAP Solutions Explorer, an online web-tool allowing to search and browse for good practices and solutions in DRM.
- There will be a final vision paper, setting out the disaster risk and crisis management doctrine.



Broader networking activities with the disaster risk management community are also boosted by the project. The [First ROADMAP webinar](#) “The nexus between Scientists and Decision Makers in Disaster Risk Management” gathered more than 200 participants and can be watched on the project’s [YouTube channel](#). The second webinar is scheduled for 6 December 2021.

An [Advisory Group](#) of disaster risk management experts from both science and decision-making worlds, and from across Europe, supports ROADMAP’s work. For more information, visit: <https://roadmap.ci3r.it/>

NEW RESOURCES

Current practice in flood risk management in the European Union



This [European Commission report](#) presents a compilation of current practices in Flood Risk Management (FRM) in the European Union (EU). It focuses on particular aspects identified by Member States (MS) as being challenging to tackle, and the report is based on cases that have been made available by MS. The objective is to strengthen FRM in the EU via the compilation and dissemination of approaches that could potentially be adapted and replicated across MS, regions or localities.

The short-list of aspects prioritised by MS covers the whole cycle of FRM, i.e. from identifying, assessing, mapping and communication of present and future flood risk, through to the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of flood risk reduction and associated management measures. The information is based on the review of 34 cases through meetings with practitioners from 15 MS. In terms of success stories, a number of cases were identified and presented, including nature-based solutions. The latter include cases reconnecting rivers with their floodplain in Spain and the UK, river restoration projects in Hungary and planting native species to slow the flow and stabilise river banks in Portugal.

NEW RESOURCES

Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face

The European Commission's staff working document is now available in a publication format! The new publication can be downloaded or ordered to be printed on the [EU Publication's Office website](#). The 2020 edition presents the latest available evidence on disaster risks that threaten the EU, drawing on the national risk assessments developed by the EU Member States and on the Commission's cross-sectoral policy and scientific work.



The report recognises that the coronavirus pandemic is the worst emergency seen in EU history, but also warns that disaster risks are not limited to infectious diseases. The review of national risk assessments suggests that the top 5 disaster risks of concern to national authorities across the EU are floods, extreme weather events such as heatwaves, industrial and nuclear accidents and wildfires. Other risks that receive considerable attention in national and the Commission's reports include epidemics,

disruption of critical infrastructure, terrorism, cyber threats, seismic risks and animal and plant diseases.

The overview cautions that in the future, we can expect more extreme events and increasing damage due to climate change, environmental degradation, growing instability abroad and other risk drivers. Against this complex backdrop, the report calls for further action to address major risk factors, increase cooperation across borders and sectors, sustain investment in risk reduction and resilience, boost the EU's collective capacity to respond to large-scale disasters, build resilience of critical infrastructure and improve risk financing strategies.

Annual Report on Forest Fires in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa

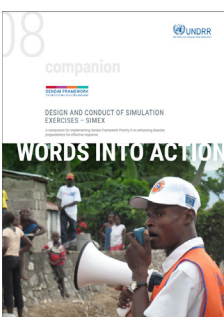
After the worst-ever year in 2019, 2020 was another year in which fires burnt large areas of natural land in Europe. Despite the increased level of preparedness in EU countries, about 340 000 hectares (ha) burnt in the EU in 2020, which is an area 30% larger than Luxembourg.

The 2021's fire season is even worse. At the time of the release of this report, almost 0.5 million ha have gone in flames, 61% of it being forests that will take years to recover. About 25% of the zones that burnt in Europe were inside the Natura 2000 sites. The EU has reinforced in 2021 its capacity to assist countries during this fire season, and this has already been extensively used for the large fires that hit the Mediterranean region this summer.



[The report](#) provides invaluable insights in this context, describing national fire management activities and the actions taken at both national and European levels during the fire campaigns.

Words into Action Guidelines: Design and Conduct of Simulation Exercises



This [concise guideline on design and conduct of simulation exercises](#) (SIMEX) is part of the Words into Action Guideline series on practical implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction Priority 4 component on enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response.

It targets emergency managers, relevant government officials and many other actors responsible for disaster preparedness planning and drills. It consists of three main sections: General Information on Simulation Exercise, or SIMEX; the Process; and Existing Guidance.

COMING UP

New Technologies for Search & Rescue Operations 9 December 2021 (online)



The workshop will be divided into two parts. The first (10-12am) will provide an update of the project's progress to interested stakeholders. The second part (1-3pm) will address SAR operations in the context of the recent wildfires (Greece) and floods (Belgium, Germany) in Europe. SAR experts will exchange their experience and lessons learnt in facing these crises, namely discussing the challenges encountered and the technologies used to carry out their operations.

The event will be held in English. [Registration](#) required.

Readiness for receiving international assistance in the Middle East 15 December 2021 (online)



The webinar will focus on the question of cross-border, regional and international assistance in case of natural and technological disasters in the Middle East, as well as on cooperation in humanitarian emergency situations. It will investigate existing gaps that need to be closed, but will also look into positive experiences. Key stakeholders and practitioners of the region, EU experts, international organisations as well as academia will present their perspective.

The event will be held in English. [Registration](#) required.

RESPONSEE Full-Scale Exercise 27-29 April 2022, Bosnia & Herzegovina Earthquake scenario. [More information](#).



ARCTIC REIHN Full-Scale Exercise 4-5 May 2022, Norway Nuclear accident at sea scenario.

DOMINO Full-Scale Exercise 17-19 May 2022, France Chemical accident & medical scenario.

Would you like to receive future updates on the **Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network** directly to your mailbox? If yes, please let us know by filling in this [short form](#).