



# European Civil Protection Forum 2018

## Final report



Civil Protection in a Changing Risk Landscape  
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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

# European Civil Protection Forum 2018

*"Civil Protection in a Changing Risk Landscape"*

## FINAL REPORT<sup>1</sup>

### I. INTRODUCTION

From 5 to 6 March 2018, the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the European Civil Protection Forum, a landmark event organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), gathered some 900 representatives from the European civil protection community, including EU Member States' governments, civil protection authorities in Europe and the European Neighbourhood<sup>2</sup>, first-line responders, academia, international organisations, NGOs and European institutions to discuss the current developments in the Union Civil Protection Mechanism framework and put forward new ideas for tackling common challenges.

During the **Roundtable with Local Governments, "Scaling up Disaster Prevention: from Local to European Level"**, representatives implementing prevention measures at local and regional level, along with stakeholders managing EU funding and financing instruments, discussed synergies between different programmes in the field of disaster risk prevention and the need for scaling up investments. Panellists highlighted that although sufficient funding has been made available for prevention activities, a more efficient use of the available funds is needed. The role of national civil protection authorities should be to help local and regional authorities channel their investments adequately.

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<sup>1</sup> This report was compiled by the Civil Protection Policy Unit of the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and does not represent the views of the European Commission, nor the speakers.

<sup>2</sup> Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYROM, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo, Lebanon, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine.

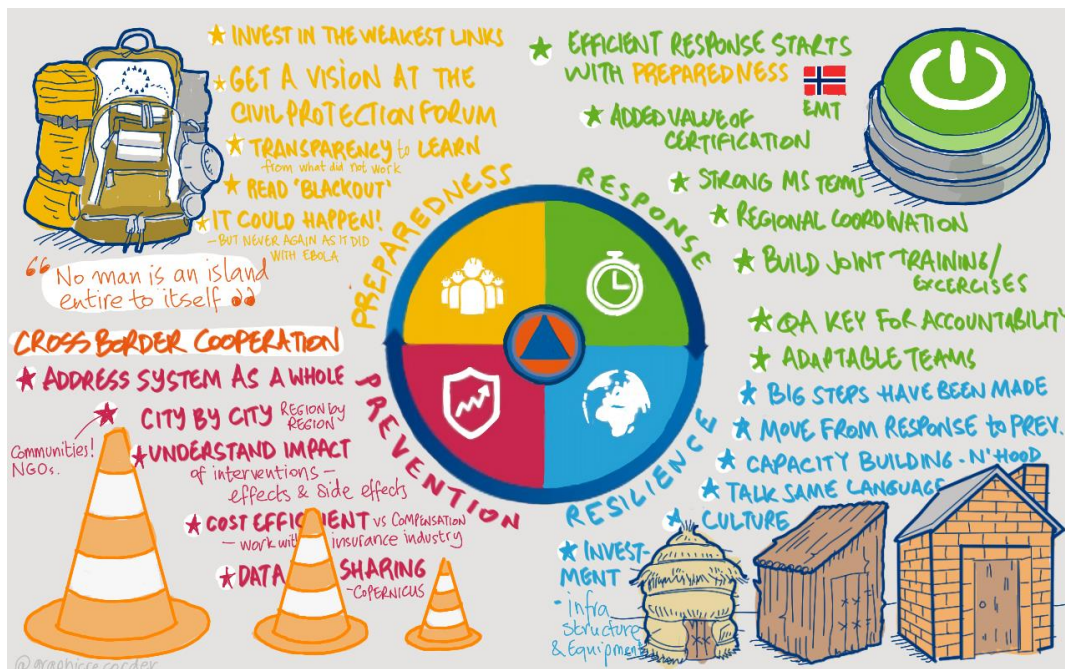


During the **first plenary session**, “**rescEU: Solidarity with Responsibility**”, political leaders discussed recent developments in the area of European civil protection focusing on efforts to enhance the European capabilities in emergency response and regain the confidence of European citizens by bringing the EU closer when they most need it. The **second plenary session**, “**Working Across Sectors to Increase Climate Resilience**”, focused on the need to adopt a cross-sector approach when mainstreaming climate change considerations into EU civil protection policies and increase the synergies between disaster risk management planning and climate change adaptation strategies at all governance and policy levels.

Organised under four strategic pillars, 12 break-out sessions covered the main issues emerging from the recent evaluation of the UCPM’s performance as well as additional analytical work carried out on the Mechanism.

### FORUM PILLARS

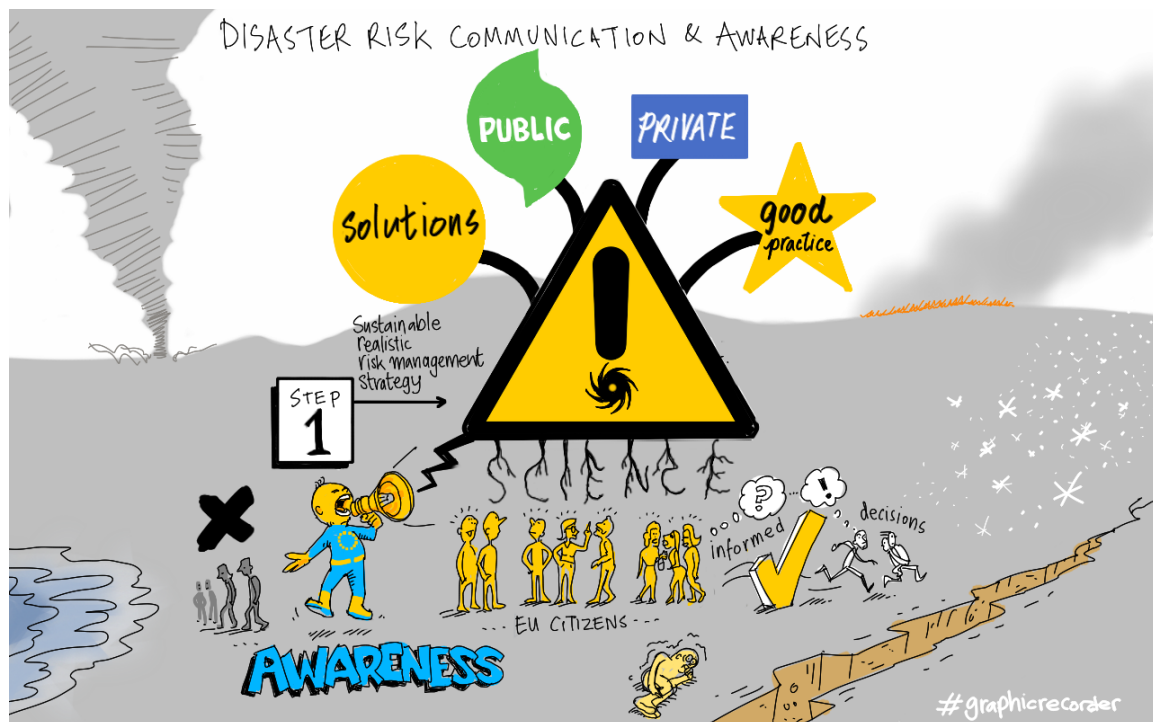
1. **Strengthening preparedness:** *Enhancing Europe's collective capacity to respond*
2. **Simplifying response:** *Every second counts*
3. **Scaling up prevention:** *Small actions, big changes*
4. **Fostering Resilience:** *Working with Europe's neighbourhood*



Alongside the Forum, the exhibition on Disaster Risk Communication and Awareness showcased different solutions and good practices presented by public and private organisations from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Turkey and UK, in addition to a number of international organisations (e.g. IFRC, UNESCO).

In addition, the Forum hosted the signing of an Administrative Arrangement between the National Office of Civil Protection of the Republic of Tunisia and the European Commission's Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. This agreement aims at enhancing cooperation on disaster risk prevention, preparedness and emergency response, reinforcing thus the EU-Tunisia Privileged Partnership.

The [photos](#) and the [video](#) showcasing the highlights of the conference are available online.



## II. OVERVIEW OF KEY MESSAGES

### Pillar#1 Strengthening Preparedness

- *In addition to disaster risk prevention which plays a key role when preparing for disasters, a regional approach to preparedness is crucial to counter forest fire risks. Prevention measures such as improving forest and land management as well as legislative reforms need to be put at the centre of the discussion. However, taking a regional approach is also extremely important when it comes to forest fires preparedness and response. For instance, when dealing with fast evolving fires, the need for reactivity and efficiency, as well as neighbouring support is essential. Knowledge sharing among regions that share the same risks can help countries be better prepared. Initiatives for regional and sub-regional cooperation in the context of forest fires management (including with the support of the UCPM) can offer useful lessons.*
- *Strengthening the capacity building components of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), e.g. related to training and exercises, is essential. The new proposal on rescEU includes the creation of a Knowledge Network. This Network should aim at increasing synergies among specialised training and exercise centres and reinforcing inter-operability by including national expertise and structures as well as promoting a participatory approach. This would provide the UCPM with a more robust scientific and knowledge base to better address the changing risk landscape. The creation within the Knowledge Network of a common European Master's Degree in disaster management and of an Erasmus-type programme for civil protection experts is a desirable step that could foster a broader disaster risk preparedness culture across Europe.*
- *Energy black-outs, as a result of vulnerabilities of critical infrastructure networks, affect all sectors of European societies, with immediate negative effects on populations and economies. Each type of critical infrastructure is susceptible to different disaster risks and essential services that are part of daily activities, such as the provision of electricity, clean water, medicines, and food, are embedded in a system of infrastructures and cross-border interdependencies. European civil protection needs to plan jointly with the critical infrastructure community in advance to avoid cascading impacts. The increasing terrorist and security threats have changed the current risk landscape and the civil protection community needs to reflect on how to more comprehensively address risk in order to minimize its social and economic impact.*



## Pillar#2 Simplifying Response

- *Several key priorities need to be addressed when responding to complex emergencies that transcend sectors:*

(i) Focus on multi-stakeholder emergency response beyond national level when it comes to large scale accidents and disasters, which presents specific challenges related to interoperability, financial, procedural, legislative and policy aspects. Such issues should be addressed in "peace time".

(ii) Increase cooperation between different response communities (civil protection, marine pollution, medical sector, etc.). It is essential to secure the bridge between civil protection, other sectors and stakeholders, as most emergencies require cross-sectoral preparedness and a joint response.

(iii) Take into account severe limitations and challenges in dealing with mass burns casualties, both at national and EU level.

(iv) Respond in a timely fashion: there is a critical "window of opportunity" in all areas of intervention (Urban search and rescue, medical sector, marine pollution).

(v) Strengthen the development of dual (multi)-use response capacities which could be used by different response communities, e.g. Slovak Flight Service aircraft, EMSA Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems Services (RPAS).

(vi) Fully integrate non-governmental and private expertise/capability into European response operations.

- *Certifying quality of pre-identified disaster response assets is essential to ensure accountability towards the affected people.* Quality assurance should lead to sharing best practices, promoting and facilitating peer reviews and preparing toolkits to ease the development or review of Standard Operating Procedures among the response teams. The classification process, training, procedures and necessary equipment provide added value. A sustainable approach would consist of first, developing strong national teams for national response activities, second, strengthening the emergency management and coordination of incoming response teams and third, developing the preparedness of the teams to respond in their neighbourhood at regional level.
- *More cooperation is needed between the EU and health actors to address large-scale health emergencies.* Coordination mechanisms among the EU and organisations such as WHO, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and NGOs during outbreak response must be improved. The EU could contribute by offering response capacities such as emergency medical teams for outbreaks & conflicts, mobile laboratories for infectious diseases, medical evacuation for infectious diseases for the larger responders' community. A trans-European approach is needed to make these teams interoperable and better adapted to each context.
- *When operating in conflict zones, specific guidelines are necessary for response operations, to ensure the respect of humanitarian principles.* Building joint training

and exercises and sharing knowledge between the EU and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) is crucial for the coordination of international emergency response. More actions are needed on local preparedness especially in countries at high risk, as well as cooperation with local communities.

### Pillar#3 Scaling up Prevention

- *Multi-level, cross-sectoral and transnational partnerships constitute an effective tool for disaster risk reduction.* Transnational cooperation can be improved by developing a holistic framework for regional risk assessment/management which builds on the implementation of the United Nation's Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- *The development of a culture of prevention and disaster risk awareness is a critical starting point.* Social networks and new technologies can play an important role in this process. For instance, early education about natural disasters in the Danube region has served as a good practice.
- *Strategic and operational coherence between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction is pivotal.* These two areas share the same goal: increasing resilience across society to impact of climate-related events. Fostering coherence between these policy areas means improving the knowledge base, data collection, strategic planning and altogether better outcomes from both sectors' work. Risks become ever more multi-dimensional and cannot be confined to one sector. Therefore, concerned stakeholders need to foster a cross sectoral and multi-hazard approach. Climate change adaptation actors can learn from the disaster risk communities, where the communication across sectors is better established.
- *Need to develop financial solutions for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction which build on a holistic approach.* Climate change risk and vulnerability assessments must be applied at all stages of project management. Communities are better placed to promote the right level of knowledge, data collection and to foster synergies and collaboration. To enhance coherence and integration of these two policies towards prevention, the EU could provide opportunities through funding for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation communities - possibly at practitioner level - to come together and learn from each other. The Multiannual Financial Framework needs to be risk-informed and needs to ensure a link across prevention and preparedness.
- *Adequate preparedness, improved coordination at EU level and enhanced capacity building is needed for better protection of cultural heritage.* The facilitation of pre-event assessments and pre-defined recovery actions and targets can lead to greater and more effective protection of cultural heritage in emergencies. Disaster risk assessment and the related risk reduction measures should be introduced into the planning and management cultural heritage resources. The proposed Civil Protection Knowledge



Network should develop in-depth knowledge, analysis and data collection and assessment of risks to cultural heritage. Strengthening coordination at EU level among National cultural heritage authorities, research centres, and emergency response actors is fundamental. In the context of the ongoing revision of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, capacity-building initiatives and best practices should be harnessed and scaled-up to address the existing gaps. Dedicated cultural heritage units within civil protection agencies should be created.

#### **Pillar#4** Fostering Resilience in Europe's Neighbourhood

- *International cooperation with Europe's Neighbourhood and Enlargement countries is an indispensable asset for responding to emergencies.* Networking, common language and the development of procedures and modules are of great importance when fostering resilience in the European Neighbourhood.
- *A regional approach for countries sharing similar risks is needed, in particular regarding preparedness and response to disaster risks.* Dialogue at technical level amongst peers must continue. Concerned actors need to make full use of all available tools (exchange of experience, study visits, training and joint simulations both at command post and full scale) in order to bridge gaps with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism and ensure host nation support.
- *Closer institutional cooperation is needed to address needs and priorities specific to each region.* Significant progress has been made in last ten years in bringing neighbouring and enlargement countries closer to the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, with four enlargement countries becoming Participating States of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. However, further national capacity building at both operational and administrative levels as well as additional investments in prevention, preparedness and response capacities are needed. Diversified partnerships in the form of bilateral agreements, administrative arrangements and regional initiatives are identified as key priorities for the development of stronger linkages in the European Neighbourhood. The scope of cooperation needs to be expanded to areas such as new technologies research, urban development and sustainable recovery.
- *Feeding the results of risk assessments and disaster loss data collection into national disaster risk management policies and actions remains an important challenge.* Engagement at both political and technical level is essential in order to develop sustainable solutions and address gaps in response capacities but also in the field of disaster risk reduction. 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.