

**Dear Reader,**

This summer has again shown the extraordinary value of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism for solidarity in the European Union and beyond. In addition to several ongoing operations, 15 new activations were addressed with multiple deployments of aerial means, teams, equipment and medical supplies from Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

While this reminds us that extreme weather events are here to stay, we can also see that the UCPM is now a firm component of the overall civil protection architecture in the European Union. Based on the EU Treaty that empowers the EU to support Member States in the area of civil protection, we have, together with Member States, created a system that shows its strengths when it is needed most. And in order to continue to do so, we know that training and exercises are essential.

In the beginning of September, I participated in the 'EU MODEX Second Wave 2023' conducted around the city of Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki, just north-west of Warsaw. The exercise made it very clear: testing procedures and interoperability of teams, as well as joint learning, are essential for successful deployments. It is really the pre-condition for success in the event of any international deployment: UCPM preparedness and response must go hand-in-hand.

The wildfires and the floods seen in many parts of Europe have occurred at a time when the Russian aggression against Ukraine continues – and so does EU solidarity, including through the UCPM. We continue to provide material and medical assistance, deliver power generators and energy items; we also support Ukraine's demining efforts to allow the civilian population to return to their homes.

Climate change, a war of aggression, and a pandemic threat all prompt legitimate questions about the future of the UCPM. Is the set-up robust enough? Do we need a better-integrated system? Will the UCPM need to be further re-enforced, and is its mandate still appropriate? For me, it is very clear: while the UCPM must continue to deliver on its core functions and tasks, we should together discuss the mid- and longer-term perspective, so that the UCPM can continue to adapt to new challenges and threats.

As the Mechanism is under constant development, this autumn we are also seeing the opening of a new chapter in the [UCPM Training Programme](#). After many months of intense discussion and preparations, we are rolling out a revamped professional training offer for the benefit of the UCPM community. I would like to thank all involved in this important activity of the Knowledge Network and big step forward for the UCPM.

I trust you will find this tenth newsletter interesting.



Maciej Popowski
Director General, DG ECHO, European Commission

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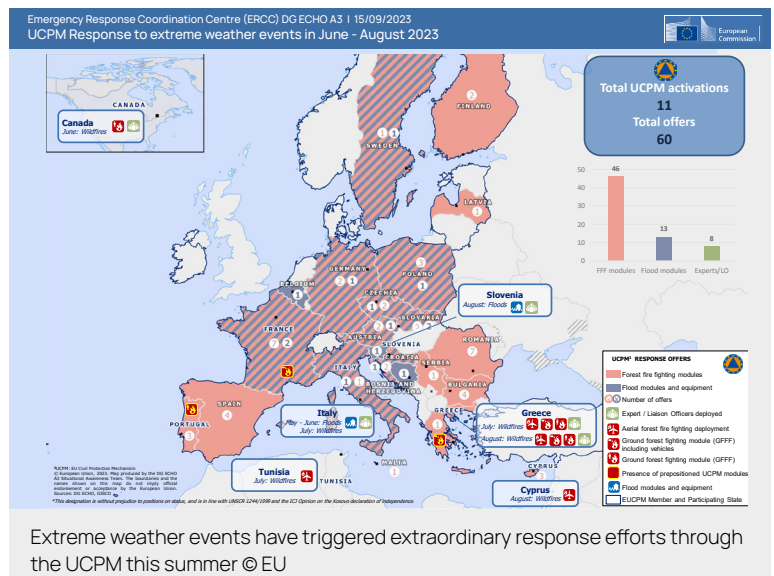
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A summer of disasters – How did the UCPM respond?

The [summer of 2023](#) has seen Europe battered by heatwaves, record-breaking wildfires, and catastrophic floods, often occurring simultaneously. Parts of Greece, Italy and Spain saw record-breaking temperatures above 45°C. The wildfire in Alexandroupolis in Greece was the largest wildfire in Europe since records started in 2000, burning an area of more than 90 000 hectares and killing at least 20 people. At the same time, other parts of Europe experienced significantly more rainfall than average, resulting in UCPM activations for floods in Slovenia and Italy, while exceptionally large floods were also recorded in Greece, Austria, and northern European countries such as Sweden and Norway. Ireland potentially experienced [its wettest July on record](#).

For the UCPM, the extreme weather meant responding to extraordinary situations. For the first time, on 6 August, the UCPM was activated within the same day for both flood and wildfire disasters, when flooding affected two thirds of Slovenia and wildfires raged in Cyprus. From May to August, the Commission's Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) facilitated around the clock large-scale operations to respond to floods in Italy and Slovenia as well as wildfires in Cyprus, Tunisia, Italy, Canada, and twice in Greece.

Much of the EU's response to this wildfire season was possible thanks to anticipatory work done in the ERCC: the UCPM had prepared by doubling its rescEU fleet and pre-positioning ground fire-fighting teams in Greece, France, and Portugal. Additionally, a dedicated wildfire monitoring team was created in the ERCC with the support of Member States' experts and scientists to exploit the entire range of available early warning systems. As a result, for the two activations from Greece, more than 1 000 firefighters were mobilised, along with 21 planes from the rescEU reserves and the European Civil Protection Pool, which carried out over 900 water drops in total. Both times European teams were deployed in less than 24 hours. In the largest rescEU deployment to date, 12 UCPM member and participating states were involved in these operations.



In parallel to the response to these disasters, the ERCC also coordinated the repatriation of EU citizens from Niger, the evacuation of burn victims after the industrial accident in Romania, and the response to the wildfires in Canada. All of these operations came on top of the ongoing coordination of assistance to Ukraine in the largest and most complex UCPM activation so far.



The performance of the UCPM this summer stands as proof of the diversity of types of response the Union can provide and the ERCC's ability to coordinate and manage several very different crises simultaneously, while operating at full capacity.

“As disasters break records year after year in a context of heightened insecurity across the globe, we must ensure that the ERCC, as the Commission's cross-sectoral crisis hub, is equipped to fulfil its role with all the tools and resources necessary for joint situational awareness, early warning, anticipation, information exchange and operational coordination” European Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič said.

rescEU shelter reserves: Developing a capacity during an ongoing emergency

Hosting millions of displaced people fleeing the war in Ukraine was, and continues to be, one of the major challenges faced by the EU and its Member States. Despite the great solidarity shown through unprecedented coordination efforts via the UCPM, it soon became clear after the outbreak of the war that the emergency shelter reserves of the Union were insufficient to face this, and other potentially upcoming large-scale events.



MSB mobilised almost 19 000m² of shelter material © MSB/Anders Heyle

After a rapid consultation with Member States, [the Commission granted EUR 62.3 million](#) to the civil protection authorities of Sweden (MSB) and Romania (IGSU) to procure and create a reserve of shelter units and other assets under rescEU in order to address this gap. Under very challenging circumstances, these countries managed to successfully procure tents, prefabricated shelters and containers to host over 30 000 people. Moreover, a reserve of generators, hygiene facilities and over 50 000 beds, which could be used in reception buildings, transit centres or even bomb shelters, was added.

Until early 2023, 3 000 of these prefabricated Relief Housing Units and 16 000 beds were delivered to several locations across Ukraine and Slovakia, some even to places where conflict was ongoing at the moment of deployment. These challenging logistic operations required more than 500 trailers carrying over 16 000 m² of cargo.

While their primary function was temporary accommodation, the shelters have also been used as heating points, allowing families to rest, connect to electricity, or have a warm drink. Some units also served as much needed safe spaces for children to play or attend classes. Together with the manufacturer, MSB developed an ad-hoc insulation design in record time to ensure that the units would be able to withstand the heavy conditions of the Ukrainian winter, which routinely drop below -20°C. Additionally, Romania delivered generators to power 30 hospitals in the country, as well as three large water purification units after the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka Dam, ensuring access to potable water for thousands of people in the area.



The prefabricated shelter units served as temporary accommodation, heat spots, classrooms and more © EU/Elena Giral

Soon after the deployments to Ukraine had been concluded, a large-magnitude earthquake hit Türkiye and Syria, leaving millions of people in need of shelter assistance. The rescEU reserves were again mobilised, delivering 500 prefabricated shelter units to Kahramanmaraş, the epicentre of the earthquake, and 2 000 tents to the heavily-affected province of Hatay. The latter were deployed by Romania immediately in the aftermath of the disaster and used for short-term assistance.

The six shelter sites in Kahramanmaraş first hosted the local staff of the only functioning hospital in the city, and later (once more units were assembled) accommodated other families, who were able to move out of tents and find some comfort and privacy in the shelters. Once again, the flexibility of these units proved to be one of their greatest strengths: during summer, some were used temporarily to host university classes and exams. Now, as some families on the university site find more durable accommodation, the shelter units will be used to host university students for the newly-started semester.

Poland's rescEU Hub becomes emergency energy beacon for Ukraine



The rescEU hub in Poland is working to channel critical energy supplies to Ukraine © RARS

Russia's deliberate shelling of Ukraine's energy infrastructure is causing severe hardship for numerous families and companies by depriving them of essential energy services. This dire situation has resulted in the unavailability of electricity, heating, hot water and warm meals for thousands of people. The so-called 'rescEU Energy Hub' is supporting Ukraine in delivering critical energy assistance to guarantee basic energy provision and to help the country repair its energy infrastructure.

Following the 'International Conference in Support of the Ukrainian People' held in Paris last December, Commissioner for Crisis Management Lenarčič and Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki inaugurated the new Hub. Commissioner Lenarčič emphasised the initiative's purpose to "boost energy donations for Ukraine in its darkest hour". The idea was to channel assistance, including energy-related items, from international partners, including G7 countries and the private sector, through the UCPM.

In March, 169 generators from Australia's philanthropic organisation, the Minderoo Foundation, were delivered to Ukraine through the rescEU framework and its Hub in Poland. These generators are now part of many distribution points across the country, providing shelter and a warm space during power cuts. In addition, 1 million LED bulbs from Danish logistics company Maersk have been channelled through this system, helping the country transition to a cleaner and more efficient form of energy compared to traditional light bulbs. Other donations, including tons of power cables, bushings, power transformers and more generators are currently being processed.

The rescEU Hub has streamlined the delivery of over 1 500 generators to Ukraine, in addition to managing in-kind donations. These generators are part of the EUR 114 million grant awarded to Poland, intended for the procurement and establishment of a rescEU energy reserve. This quantity surpasses the 1 000 units Commissioner Janez Lenarčič announced in January of this year to be delivered to Ukraine. These generators range from small to large capacity, and are being used to ensure energy provision for essential services such as hospitals, schools, and government facilities. This is in addition to the 2 900 generators and millions of energy items already offered via the UCPM.

The Hub, managed by the Polish Agency for Strategic Reserves (RARS), consists of a network of four logistics centres, providing various options for the most efficient reception of assistance, both from inside the EU and from international donors. "By centralising the assistance in Poland, we were able to ensure that the items complied with high quality standards, while streamlining transport processes and minimising the environmental impact," said rescEU Team Leader Francesco Pontiroli Gobbi.

With ongoing attacks on energy infrastructure and the approaching winter, energy needs will continue to be a high priority for Ukraine. This includes high-voltage equipment such as transformers, autotransformers, gas turbines, power generators, and other electrical equipment necessary for the repair and functioning of the energy and gas infrastructure.

The Hub is ready to receive further assistance, and donors are welcome to check [an up-to-date list](#) of what is needed and to contact ECHO-Donations@ec.europa.eu for the next steps.

More information: [Belgian rescEU hub channelling aid to Ukraine | UCP Knowledge Network: Applied knowledge for action \(europa.eu\)](#)

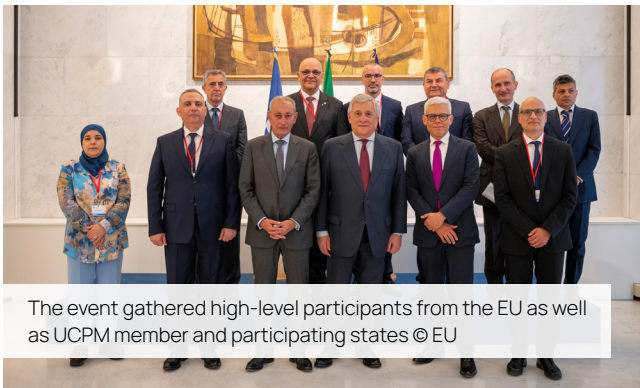
High-level event on Climate Change and Civil Protection and launch of PPRD Med flagship programme

DG ECHO and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) co-organised an event hosted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 5–7 June 2023 in Rome, Italy. A combination of several Mediterranean-focused meetings, the event programme included: a high-level session on Mediterranean civil protection and climate change attended by ECHO Director General Popowski; the launch of the new UCPM Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and Man-made Disasters in Mediterranean programme (PPRD Med); the second meeting of the UfM Regional Dialogue Platform.

The event gathered delegations from all Southern Neighbourhood countries, most of them represented by their Director General for Civil Protection or Civil Defence, as well as several UCPM member and participating states (CY, ES, FR, ME, IT, RO, SL) and UCPM programme consortia.

A number of high-level participants, such as Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Tajani and UfM Secretary General Ambassador Kamel, were present at the event. In unison with the country delegations, they acknowledged the severe impact of climate change in the Mediterranean basin and confirmed their willingness to increase solidarity and cross-border cooperation to better prepare for and mitigate future disasters. With great concern about the increased frequency and intensity of disasters, which is particularly acute in the Mediterranean, they called for a wider use of existing high technologies, like AI and the involvement of citizens and volunteers.

Furthermore, the participants expressed a need to reinforce the Knowledge Network and agreed on the urgency of a closer working relationship between the EU and its Southern Neighbourhood at cross-border and regional levels. They also shared their appreciation for the significant contribution of the UCPM and its cooperation model and programmes covering the entire disaster management cycle.



The event gathered high-level participants from the EU as well as UCPM member and participating states © EU

“In this moment of not only national, but regional grief, as Italy, Algeria, Spain and Jordan have experienced deadly floods in the past weeks, we need strong measures and mechanisms for reducing risks and vulnerability, and increasing natural and societal resilience across the Euro-Mediterranean region.”

UfM Secretary General Nasser Kamel

Moldova joins the UCPM



Minister of Internal Affairs of Moldova, Adrian Efras, and Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič, during signature of the agreement granting Moldova membership status in the UCPM © EU

Moldova has signed an agreement with the EU to become a participating state of the UCPM. The agreement will enter into force on 1 January 2024, after it has been ratified.

On the occasion, Commissioner Lenarčič said: “Today, I am proud to welcome Moldova to the family of European rescuers: the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. This step comes five months after I presented Moldova with a pathway document on next steps for joining the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. While Russia’s brutal attack against Ukraine resulted in thousands of Ukrainians fleeing from the war, Moldova proved itself to be a reliable partner, hosting and sheltering many.”

Strengthening governance for disaster risk management in Europe: Systems, strategies and action plans – Workshop of the Spanish Presidency



The delegates and experts spent two days discussing disaster management governance in the EU and beyond © Dirección General de Protección Civil y Emergencias

Europe is changing, and so are the risks we are facing. They are becoming more frequent, larger, and more complex. At the same time, and despite all efforts to improve and increase disaster response capacity, a purely responsive strategy cannot be enough to cope with the changing risk landscape. Capacities are limited, so it is necessary to rethink Disaster Risk Management (DRM) systems to adapt them to these new challenges, considering not only how to cope with disasters, but above all, how to avoid them or at least reduce their consequences.

To this end, 62 delegates from the UCPM member and participating states, as well as 15 experts on civil protection and DRM from various institutions involved in this field, met in Aranjuez, Spain for the Spanish Presidency Workshop for Civil Protection Experts. The event took place on 5 and 6 July, with the main objective of exploring how to strengthen DRM governance in the EU.

The workshop was structured around a plenary session in which experts stimulated the working sessions, clarified concepts and ideas, and gave an overview of the current state of DRM governance from different perspectives. The experts came from institutions central to the field of DRM, such as DG ECHO, UNDRR, the World Bank, OECD, as well as national civil protection authorities.

To deepen the specific objectives of the workshop, three parallel working sessions were set up, each involving some 25 delegates and experts. Participants of the first session actively discussed systems, governance, and institutional frameworks, while the second session covered instruments and tools for disaster risk reduction (DRR) planning. The final session engaged the delegates on the topic of monitoring and measurement of DRR governance. The dynamic and fruitful sessions produced an important set of recommendations and key actions as a final outcome.

Delegates agreed that a more resilient European Union must focus more on prevention rather than response. It also needs adaptable and flexible legal systems and frameworks that support an inclusive approach, involving the whole of society at all stages of the DRM cycle, so that no one is left behind. This requires improved evidence-based decision-making at all levels, bridging the gap between science and policy, and scenarios that take new challenges into account, and are regularly updated based on reliable data.

In short, there is a need to move from words to actions by developing and implementing strategies and action plans for different time horizons, from the short- to the long-term, with a comprehensive and holistic approach at all levels and in all sectors. All of this requires monitoring and measurement tools and processes to find out what is working and what is not.

Stronger DRM governance systems will make the EU more resilient. As the Spanish Presidency team declared, it was important to spend two days discussing and debating DRM governance, but this is only a first step that should be followed by many more to achieve this goal. Our societies have no time to waste.

The new ISO standard on Crisis Management

In October 2022, the International Organisation for Standards (ISO) issued a new standard on crisis management (ISO 22361:2022). This represents the first ever internationally agreed codification of general guidelines and best-practices on how to establish, test, and continually improve an organisation's strategic crisis management capability. Its publication is especially relevant to the Commission's broader efforts to invest in the Union's preparedness and resilience, including through the UCPM (and in particular the ERCC, which is considered the genuine future operational crisis management hub of the EU).

The new ISO provides us with a blueprint to systematically assess and improve the Commission's crisis management capabilities to better prepare for the next crisis and keep citizens out of harm's way. Therefore, the Commission wanted to take this opportunity to briefly introduce the new ISO to the broader civil protection community, and to encourage everyone to engage with this highly useful resource.

According to Kev Brear, Project Lead for ISO 22361:2022, the new guidelines are based on two premises:

1. In an age of continuous, increasingly complex, transboundary and multisectoral crises, 'past success in managing crises does not guarantee future success';
2. Organisations should plan, train, and prepare for worst-case scenarios.

To this end, the guidelines outline seven interlinked principles which should be central to any organisation's crisis management capability, and offer a good basis for reflections on continual improvement: Leadership, Governance, Strategy, Risk Management, Decision-making, Communication, Ethics, and Learning. Notably, these guidelines are the first ISO standard that actively includes the principle of ethics. Very much in line with the Commission's emphasis on European values as a key strength, this standard acknowledges how an organisation's core values are crucial to building an effective crisis response, increasing the support of affected parties, building trust, and averting reputational damage.

The guidelines then go on to discussing the importance of interweaving strong leadership with an adaptive organisational structure, a resilience culture, and dependable technical competencies. Building on this, ISO 22361 identifies specific recommendations for:



The ISO standards help organisations to strengthen their crisis management capabilities © EU

- Identifying core leadership skills and responsibilities;
- Addressing decision-making challenges faced by crisis teams in action (e.g., knowledge vacuums);
- Preparing for crisis communication, and managing relationships and reputations;
- Investing in training, validation, and learning processes.

Continuous improvement is the underlying theme of the guidelines. We believe this to be a great tool to help us continue reflections on the fitness-for-purpose of the Commission with regard to crisis management, to identify gaps, and to formulate where we need to be and how we intend to get there.

To further this discussion, the Secretariat-General of the Commission is looking into co-organising a conference on this standard with the [Geneva Centre for Security Policy](#), to be held back-to-back with the EU Civil Protection Forum next year – so stay tuned!



LEARNING

UCPM Training Programme kicks-off with the UMI course in Italy

Following its launch in July, the new UCPM Training Programme kicked off in September with the Union Mechanism Introduction course (UMI), the residential part of which took place from 10 to 14 September in Volterra, Italy. UMI is the introductory course to the UCPM Training Programme where participants explore their potential to develop as UCPM deployable professionals in different roles and functions, enhancing their understanding of the international disaster environment.

22 Participants from 17 different countries attended the first UMI course. They learned, inter alia, about the UCPM operations in preparation and response to disasters, the roles played by the different actors involved in deployment, the tools used, the roles and functions of modules and other capacities' key staff, as well as of the European Union Civil Protection Team (EUCPT) and Technical Assistance Support Teams (TAST). They were also initiated on how to best apply the social and personal competencies expected in an international disaster response context. As with the majority of UCPM courses, the UMI uses blended training methodology, encompassing self-paced e-learning, webinars, in-person training, and post-course activities. It has a total duration of six and a half days.

“As UMI Course Director, I really feel the responsibility to train, at our best, the people coming to the courses. Considering the emergencies that are now all over the world (...) this really is of enormous responsibility for us.”

David Fabi, Head of the Emergency Support Unit at the Italian Civil Protection Department, Volterra



The UMI course provides participants with an introduction to the UCPM © EU

Would you like to take part in international missions under the UCPM?

Consult the [training catalogue](#) on the Knowledge Network Platform for more information and course descriptions, and contact your National Training Coordinator.

After a long revision process with the cooperation of a variety of stakeholders, the new UCPM Training Programme is now oriented toward the ever-changing needs in disaster response and the growing scope of the UCPM. It will prepare different target groups for their specific role in the UCPM by providing them with tailored training courses in line with their function. To this end, the programme is structured along four main training areas. The last edition of the newsletter included an overview of the new UCPM Training Programme as a whole. This article takes a closer look at the 'deployable' pathway.

The so-called 'deployable' pathway is initialised by the UMI course, and targets experts and response capacity personnel who are to be deployed on UCPM missions, such as EUCPT experts, technical experts, Technical Assistance and Support Teams, and key personnel from modules and other response capacities. This pathway is composed of 12 UCPM courses, including four EC-UN joint courses that provide experts with specialised training.

The 'deployable' track is centred around the European Civil Protection Pool, which participants will join upon successful completion of the UCPM courses and the certification process through EU MODEX exercises. Since 2004, more than 15 000 training opportunities have been offered, in which over 6 200 experts strengthened their capacities to respond to disasters globally under the UCPM umbrella.

The Commission supports the Eastern Partnership region in preparing and responding to disasters



To enhance the complexity of the exercise, CBRN elements were incorporated © Ministry of Internal Affairs Georgia

Increasing preparedness plays a crucial role in saving lives. Throughout this summer season, the Commission supported countries of the Eastern Partnership region (the Republic of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) in reinforcing their preparedness for disasters with the organisation of two full-scale exercises in [Georgia](#) and Moldova.

On 14–16 June, a [regional full-scale exercise](#), co-organised by the regional civil protection PPRD East 3 programme and the Emergency Management Service of Georgia, took place in Tbilisi, Georgia. It focused on enhancing preparedness and response capacities of Georgia, as well as on strengthening cooperation with the UCPM and between the Eastern Partnership countries. As part of the programme, two preparatory exercises took place in the cities of Telavi and Borjomi to test the early warning and early action procedures developed with the support of PPRD East 3.



Participants in Moldova exercised their capacities responding to floods, health emergencies and CBRN scenarios © EU

The exercise scenario focused on wildfires with cascading effects, including car accidents and missing people. The realism of the scenario was enhanced by a simultaneous but unrelated chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) event. In addition to the national response, the exercise required international assistance and the activation of the UCPM, which tested the interoperability of national and international actors.

More than 350 emergency operators assisted, with teams from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Italy, and Sweden. In addition to the EUCPT, the UN Country Team provided advice on coordination of international teams to the Emergency Management Service of Georgia.

“Together with the Georgian Emergency Management Services, we designed the exercise to create challenging situations for the responders, so they can do assessments, make decisions, and react accordingly. This exercise provided a unique opportunity for the participants from the region and beyond to jointly get ready for responding to wildfires. The field experience they gain will increase their mission readiness and contribute to their learning process. Success is only possible with the joint efforts of our very international team,” explained Kinga Perge, Exercise Director.

One month later, from 12–14 July, a UCPM-funded full-scale exercise took place in Chişinău, Moldova. Based on a gap analysis of national and international responses to emergencies in Ukraine and Moldova, [EURO-MED-REACT](#) focused on simultaneous CBRN scenarios, floods and health emergencies. Besides the Moldovan teams, five UCPM member and participating states (Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Romania, and Ukraine) sent teams to take part in the full-scale exercise, which continued for 48 hours without any breaks. Several international organisations were also involved. This exercise was preceded by two tabletop exercises (TTXs), which occurred simultaneously in Moldova and Ukraine. These TTXs gathered all relevant national stakeholders and resulted in a request for assistance to the UCPM, which served as the basis for the full-scale exercise.

Both exercises were followed by Lessons Learned meetings, where participants had the chance to identify, reflect on, and share further key takeaways from the exercises.



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

MODEX on flood response in Poland



Director-General Maciej Popowski visited the EU MODEX in Poland, © KGPS

Warsaw and Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki, Poland, recently took centre stage as the backdrop for the [LOT2 EU MODEX consortium's flood simulation](#). The simulation encapsulated the harrowing reality of a two wave flood emergency precipitated by intense rainfall affecting several regions of the country. The exercise took place from 5 to 8 September 2023 and was set to test the capabilities of six specialised international modules from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, Finland, and Ukraine. ECHO Director-General Maciej Popowski, who visited the exercise, underlined the importance of sustained preparedness, especially in the face of increasingly unpredictable climate-related events.

Full-scale exercise on Natech response in Austria

The [FORMATEX23](#) full-scale exercise addressed the challenges posed by natural hazards leading to technological accidents. The main simulation of the exercise, which took place from 14 to 16 September 2023 in Linz, Austria, focused on sustained rainfalls causing significant flooding in the Danube River's cross-border region between Austria and Germany. With a consortium representing eight different UCPM member and participating states and led by the Upper Austrian Fire Brigade Association, the exercise facilitated collaboration among different countries and agencies, emphasising preparedness on the intersection between natural and technological hazards through the flooding of industrial zones and harbours.

MODEX on medical capacities in Türkiye



The EU MODEX in Türkiye tested medical capacities of the participating teams and modules © EU

Within the context of the EU MODEX 2021–2023 initiative, Türkiye conducted a significant [earthquake simulation exercise](#) from 18 to 22 September where national and international medical response teams faced a challenging real-world scenario. The exercise unfolded as a devastating earthquake of magnitude 7.4 RS hit the province of Çanakkale. Damaged communication networks, collapsed infrastructure, and severe casualties set the stage for a challenging simulation. Over the course of four days, the teams were immersed in a lifelike test of their medical response abilities, cooperation, and readiness in a demanding context.

Spotlight on Tsunamis – Ongoing research, funding, and opportunities

Tsunamis are a natural phenomenon that does not receive as much attention in public consciousness of Europe as many other hazards. [In this interview](#) published on the Knowledge Network platform, Professor Jörn Behrens, an applied mathematician with over 30 years of experience in the field of numerical methods for atmospheric and oceanic simulation, outlines the relevance of tsunami risk for Europe, gives an overview of ongoing research initiatives, and explains how the Knowledge Network can help in these areas.

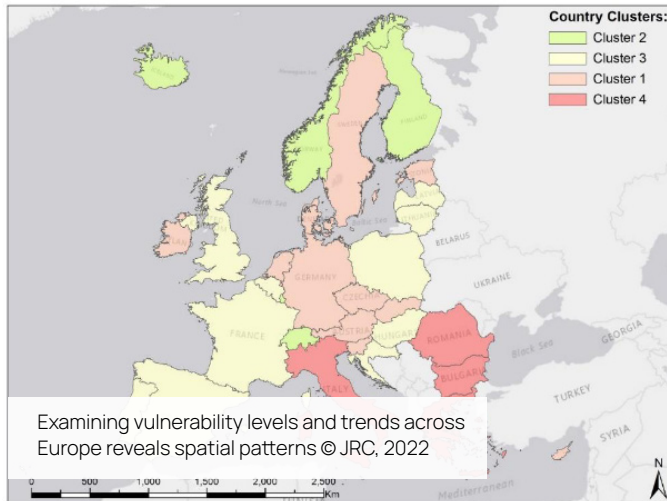
To learn more, check:



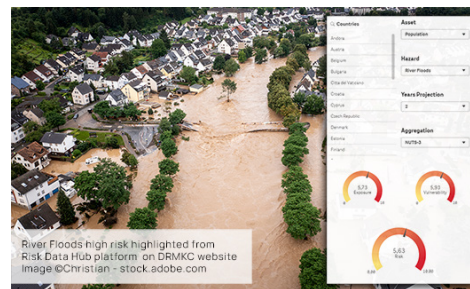


SCIENCE

The EU's Risk Data Hub: Navigating Disaster Risk Management



The EU [Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre](#) (DRMKC) coordinates the [Risk Data Hub](#) (RDH), an innovative platform centralising disaster risk, damage, and loss data. This initiative reinforces the [EU Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation](#) and aligns with the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#).



Core features of the Risk Data Hub

The RDH stands as a vast reservoir of tools and methodologies essential for DRM. It champions an open-source risk assessment methodology, ensuring transparency and accessibility. Moreover, the platform can generate insights on all combinations of hazards and assets, as well as on damages to physical assets and fatalities pertaining to different types of disasters, and for different geographical scales and time frames.

Insights from the RDH report

The 'Evidence for Disaster Risk Management' report encompasses five analytical studies building on the data available in the RDH. The [first report](#) delves into European losses from single hazards, juxtaposing historical damages with current risk levels. The second identifies regions susceptible to multiple hazards. The third shines a light on areas exposed to new or emerging risks, especially in the face of climate change. The fourth assesses trends in vulnerability, focusing on socio-economic and environmental factors which are not linked to a specific hazard. Lastly, country-specific reports provide a comprehensive view of risk-related aspects within individual Member States.

Key discoveries

Over the past 30–40 years, Europe's significant economic losses have predominantly arisen from river floods, accounting for 42%, followed by flash floods at 12%, and earthquakes at 10%. Countries like Italy, Germany, and Spain have withstood the worst of these natural calamities.

Notably, the UCPM and the Flood Directive have played a role in the declining trend of river flood impacts. 661 European regions are emerging as new risk areas, with states like the Netherlands and the UK facing increasing risks.

The road ahead for the Risk Data Hub

Future plans for the RDH involve refining vulnerability indicators and updating baseline data on hazard and exposure. The platform aims to integrate the latest hazard data and incorporate validated risk information from research projects (e.g. [BORIS](#), [CLIMAAX](#)). A significant objective is to enhance user accessibility, ensuring a seamless experience and making the RDH an indispensable tool for proactive DRM in the EU.

Copernicus Emergency's upgraded early warning system for floods is ready to support civil protection efforts. Here is how

The Copernicus Emergency Management Service has rolled out a major upgrade to the [Global Flood Awareness System \(GloFAS\)](#) with the introduction of version 4.0. This advancement aims to improve flood prediction and management, supporting the work of civil protection professionals, decision makers in national authorities, and international aid organisations.



Floods in Chile, June 2023
© Carabineros Region del Bio Bio

Sharper precision for rescue operations

The new GloFAS 4.0 operates at a 0.05 degrees resolution (~5km), doubling the precision from its predecessor's 0.1 degrees (~10km).

By incorporating the latest research, remote sensing techniques, and in-situ datasets, the revamped system keeps providing registered users with increasingly accurate and timely insights that raise awareness in regions likely to experience a flood event.

This is particularly relevant for areas where national or regional flood early warning systems are unavailable or provide limited information only. The GloFAS forecasts complement national and on the ground information, and provide a broader basis for decision-making before a flood event strikes.

Improving hydrological predictions

The open-source hydrological model LISFLOOD (a cornerstone of GloFAS) has undergone significant upgrades, too. A hydrologic model calibration using nearly 2 000 in situ gauging stations was performed to improve the simulation and prediction capacities.

The model also went through a regionalisation of model parameters that transferred knowledge from gauged catchments to ungauged catchments. As a result, GloFAS 4.0 ensures regions without direct in situ discharge observations can also benefit from the improved modelling.

In addition, based on this improved model, a new hydrological reanalysis spanning from 1980 to 2022 was created. This reanalysis enables users to analyse past floods, low-flow events or hydrological trends.

Proactive disaster management

The hydrological reanalysis data was used to generate global flood hazard maps for different flood return periods at 90m resolution. These maps are not only an important feature to estimate the impacts of a predicted flood, but they are also highly relevant for long-term flood management strategies.

Users can now access the enhanced GloFAS 4.0 [via the GloFAS Map Viewer](#). In the meantime, GloFAS v3.5 will be maintained until April 2024 to serve users who need more time to adapt to GloFAS v4.0.

Feedback on the new version is encouraged, emphasising the collaborative spirit of enhancing disaster management tools. Users that are interested in further technical details about GloFAS v4.0, and in general about GloFAS, can find more information in the [GloFAS Wiki](#).

The future impact of El Niño's intensification

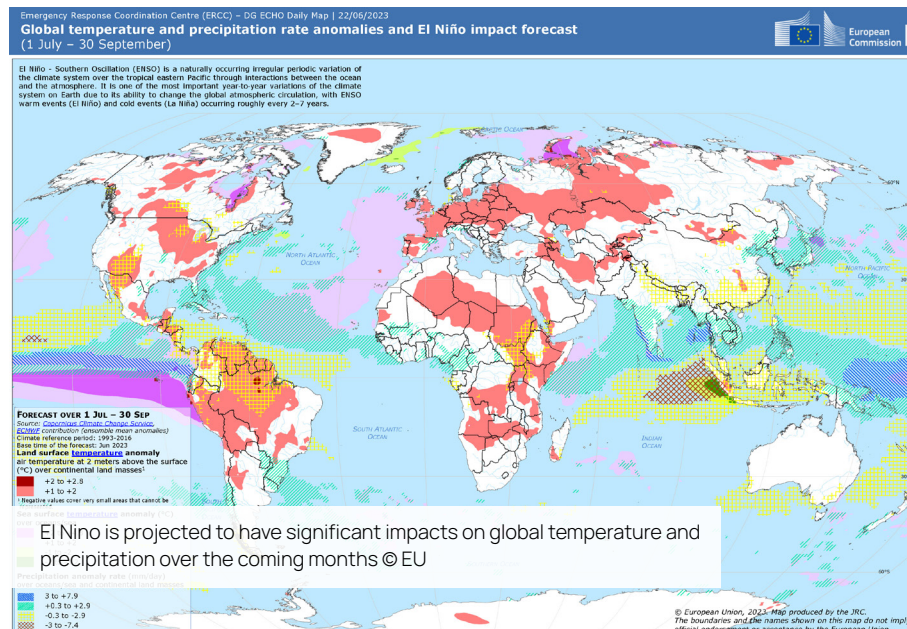
The El Niño - Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is a naturally occurring irregular periodic variation of the climate system that develops in the tropical eastern Pacific. It occurs every two to seven years, and plays a central role in global weather fluctuations. Its analysis is particularly relevant, as ENSO is the dominant mode of natural climate variability on seasonal to annual timescales, and its influence is felt on every continent.

The JRC anticipates that the current El Niño phase could significantly impact populations worldwide. A new analysis identifies key regions of interest and what the rest of 2023 might bring, in terms of exposure and potential risks. This [overview](#) of the ENSO phenomenon shows that the El Niño conditions which are related to warm events are already unfolding. They are projected to continue to intensify over the analysed period (July–November 2023) and lead to changes in global temperature and precipitation patterns. The latest forecasts from September 2023 show further warming of the tropical Central Pacific, with a range of moderate (<1°C) to unprecedented (~3°C) changes in temperatures due to El Niño by the end of the year.

The researchers identified 11 regions of interest based on anticipated changes in temperature and expected climatic anomalies spanning from July to November 2023.

Outlook for river basins and exposed population

Numerous river basins in South America and Central Asia exhibit a high probability of experiencing low-flow conditions as a result of the common influence of climate change and the new El Niño phase. In contrast, several catchments in southern India and the upper Brahmaputra River basin exhibit a persistent likelihood of encountering high water volumes. The risk of floods in most of the Sahel–Sudan and Chad basins is also high.



The report also tries to quantify the exposure in terms of population via the analysis of the [Global Human Settlement Layer](#) (GHSL) database. The GHSL provides detailed, global information about built-up surface (residential, industrial/commercial) settlements and their population. Using the GHSL population data, scientists are able to evaluate how many people can be expected to experience abnormally high temperatures and anomalous precipitation rates in the areas under analysis. In terms of precipitation deficit, Australasia stands out as the region where a substantial portion of the population is likely to experience diminished rainfall compared to the norm.

Background information

This report has been compiled by the JRC's [European Crisis Management Lab \(ECML\)](#) that collaborates with the [Emergency Response Coordination Centre \(ERCC\)](#) of DG ECHO to provide valuable insights and anticipatory analysis for effective response and coordination during crises.

Improved situational awareness for forest fires



In 2023, the UCPM was activated multiple times to support countries severely affected by forest fires on a global scale. A series of UCPM activations started early in the year, beginning with the wildfires in Chile in February and Canada in June, with operational resources deployed to both countries to tackle these extreme events.

More recent activations have mostly been focused on the Mediterranean region, culminating in the largest [rescEU aerial firefighting](#) operation to date, carried out in Greece. Moreover, the Copernicus Emergency Mapping service, which provides situational awareness maps, was activated for the detailed mapping of 22 individual fires across several countries.

The most severe wildfire ever recorded within the EU occurred near Greece's city of Alexandroupolis. The European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS), operated at the JRC, estimates that over 94 000 hectares of natural land were burned in this single blaze. At EU level, 41% of the burned territories, which (as of 8 September) amount to 192 851 hectares, were located within the EU's Natura 2000 biodiversity reserve.

Wildfires this summer also had an exceptional impact on tourist areas, hitting local economies hard. Janez Lenarčič, Commissioner for Crisis Management, said: "The European Union's largest aerial firefighting operation underscores our commitment to swift and effective collective action in times of crisis".

A key JRC-ECHO partnership

The JRC, in close collaboration with DG ECHO, continuously monitors forest fires and other emergencies, like earthquakes or floods, standing ready to assist affected states.

To enhance situational awareness of the fire's progression and to keep UCPM member and participating states, as well as the global humanitarian community, informed about ongoing developments, a comprehensive series of analyses is generally conducted. These analyses encompass a variety of daily information sources based on two pillars.

Firstly, satellite-based analysis includes up-to-date maps of the affected area, utilising very high resolution satellite images provided by the Rapid Mapping service of the Copernicus Emergency Management Service, when requested by Member States or the European External Action Service (EEAS). Furthermore, satellite analysis from EFFIS details the fire's evolution, encompassing burned areas, active fires, and thermal anomalies.

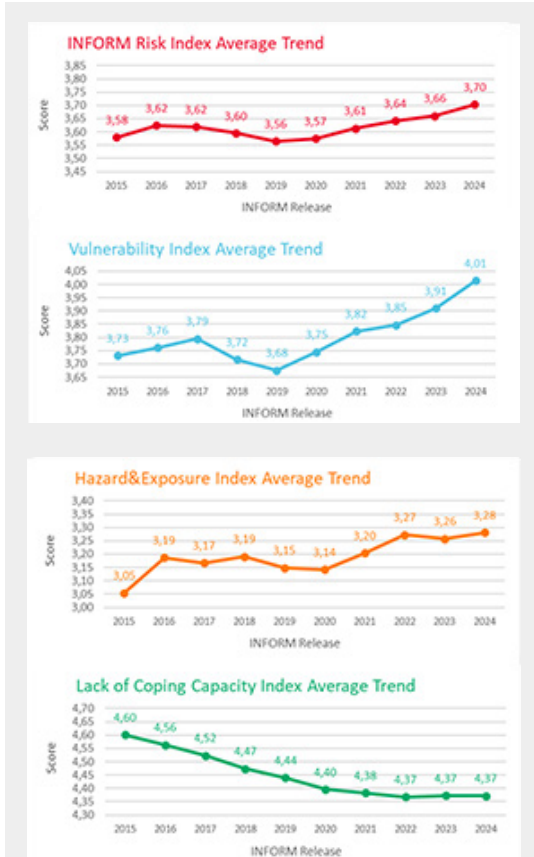
The second pillar focuses on aspects relevant for humanitarian response. It provides regular updates on rescEU activations and the evolution of response efforts, as well as impact data provided by national authorities.

The findings from these analyses are shared through the [ECHO daily maps](#) produced by the JRC European Crisis Management Laboratory, in collaboration with the JRC-EFFIS Team and the ECHO Situational Awareness Team. These maps integrate near-real-time scientific data with humanitarian responses, offering a comprehensive overview of the situations. In 2023, more than 15 maps have been produced thus far to support these critical events.





A Decade of INFORM Risk: Introducing INFORM Risk 2024



A set of four graphs showing INFORM Risk Index average trends between 2015 and 2024 © EU

More information:

[INFORM - Global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

The Joint Research Centre (JRC) marks an important milestone – a decade of INFORM and introduction of the INFORM Risk 2024.

A journey towards common understanding

Rather than just one product, INFORM is a suite of different products. In 2014, the JRC unveiled the first INFORM tool – the INFORM Risk Index. It resulted from collaboration between UN agencies, the European Commission, donors, and experts aiming to provide a fact-based foundation for humanitarian aid coordination.

The JRC’s goal was to create a shared understanding of crises and disasters via data-driven analysis. Covering 191 countries, the INFORM Risk Index became the go-to for multi-hazard risk assessments. It reshaped humanitarian risk assessment with a three-part model: hazards and exposure, vulnerability, and local capacity.

In 2018, the United Nations asked for INFORM to be used in support of disaster and climate risk management strategies. INFORM Risk’s actionable insights were recognised as valuable information to incorporate in national disaster risk reduction strategies.

Expanding the INFORM family

In 2020 and 2022, the INFORM family grew, and welcomed INFORM Severity and INFORM Climate Change, respectively. A fourth product to enhance anticipatory action – INFORM Warning – is already on the horizon.

All these products are global, open, reliable, and flexible, developed closely with partners, especially the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Trends from the past decade and the path ahead

Looking back, a sobering trend emerges from the past decade – a global increase in humanitarian crisis risk. Coping capacity has improved, but more people are now facing hazards with increased levels of vulnerability (see adjacent image). Conflicts, displacement, and the COVID-19 pandemic were important drivers of this trend.

Looking ahead, INFORM Risk 2024 brings improvements, notably in hazard assessment. It integrates a new algorithm to assess population trends ([GHSL P2023](#)) and features updates in natural hazard data. Moreover, it is now aligned with the [INFORM Climate Change model](#), covering earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, cyclones, droughts, and epidemics.



NEWS FROM OUR COMMUNITY

Horizon Europe funding opportunities in Disaster Risk Reduction

Through its Cluster 3 on [Civil Security for Society](#), and more specifically its Disaster-Resilient Society (DRS) thematic area, Horizon Europe provides a strong impetus in support of DRR policies.

The current [2023 call for proposals](#) is open until 23 November, featuring six topics in the DRS thematic area. These topics address:

1. Improvement of social and societal preparedness for disaster response and health emergencies;
2. Design of crisis prevention and preparedness actions in the case of a digital breakdown;
3. Interoperability and standardisation in response to biological toxin incidents;
4. Internationally coordinated networking of training centres for the validation and testing of CBRN-E tools and technologies during incidents, taking human factors into consideration;
5. Robotics: Autonomous or semi-autonomous unmanned ground vehicle (UUV) systems to enhance skills for use in hazardous environments;
6. Advanced technology solutions, institutional coordination, and decision-support systems for the first responders of last-kilometre emergency service delivery.

All topics aim to include first responders as part of project consortia. Horizon Europe's Cluster 3 [National Contact Points](#) can assist interested organisations in finding project partners and submitting applications.

Several new projects from the 2022 call are set to commence in October/November. These projects encompass various DRR features, namely:



CERIS events gather a community focused on research and capacity building in the DRS domain © EU

- Enhanced citizen preparedness in the event of a disaster (B.prepared and SYNERGIES projects);
- Preparedness for high-impact, low-probability events (AGILE project) understanding of citizens' psychological reactions in disaster events (RESILIAGE project);
- Improved impact forecasting and early warning for rapid deployment of first responders in vulnerable areas (GOBEYOND and MEDEWSA projects);
- Strengthened international cooperation addressing first responders' capability gaps (SYNERGISE project);
- Enhanced situational awareness and rescue operations during CBRN-E related events (ST BERNARD and CHIMERA projects);
- Networking as a crucial component of DRR-related research, exemplified by the DIREKTION project, which is just beginning.

Opportunities to learn about current research activities and network within Cluster 3 (covering DRS and other areas, like the fight against crime and terrorism, and border management) are available at the [Security Research Event](#) in Brussels on 24–25 October.

This will be complemented for DRR by the [annual DRS CERIS](#) (Community for European Research and Innovation for Security) event from 4–7 December, which will gather a wide community focused on research and capacity-building projects in societal resilience, governance, risk management, first-responder technologies, CBRN-E, and standardisation.

The CERIS initiative has built close links with the Knowledge Network.

An annual activity report will be available by early next year. It will provide information on key achievements of ongoing Horizon Europe projects in the different Cluster 3 areas. In the DRS area, research and innovation activities directly support initiatives like the Sendai Framework for Action, the UCPM, and the EU Climate Adaptation Strategy. Environmental policies addressing the Water Framework, Flood Directives, and the Seveso III Directive are also in focus.

Strengthening forest fire response: UCPM's module pre-positioning scheme

In August 2021, Greece, like the rest of the Mediterranean basin, was struck by a severe heatwave and forest fires. As part of the UCPM, France deployed land and air modules. Fearing a similar season in 2022, the UCPM initiated a new module pre-positioning scheme. In August of that year, France dispatched a forest fire land module from its Military Civil Protection Unit (FORMISC) to support the Greek firefighters and to share experiences.



Over the summer, France hosted four Ground Forest Fire Fighting (GFFF) modules as part of the prepositioning scheme © Cédric DUFEU

Building on the success of this operation, the UCPM has extended the pre-positioning scheme to the summer of 2023 and France also became one of the hosting countries. In the spring, France's Directorate General for Civil Protection collaborated with the UCPM, FORMISC, and the French National School for Firefighters Officers (ENSOSP) to prepare for the arrival of four Ground Forest Fire Modules (GFFF) as reinforcements throughout the summer. In July, ENSOSP hosted a Polish and an Austrian GFF module, followed in August by a Romanian module with vehicles (GFFV). Reception logistics were organised by ENSOSP, who led training, experience-sharing, and education. They were supported in this by the fire department of the Southern zone, which demonstrated equipment, facilities, firefighting techniques and strategy, as well as training and investigation techniques.

Following the same model, the Military Civil Protection Unit in Corte (Corsica) hosted an Austrian GFFF module and a Romanian GFFF module (which replaced a Slovenian module held back in its country due to severe flooding at short notice) during August to replace the French section of this unit that had departed for Greece (during August, and until mid-September given the operational situation, France once again deployed a GFFF module based on the 2022 model).

The Zonal Operations Centre offered operational assistance, placing the modules within the preventative system during the afternoons, with the support of local liaison officers. Activity was relatively subdued in July, but escalated significantly in August. The modules worked in conjunction with French resources, providing support and implementing the acquired knowledge.

This sharing of experience, entirely in the spirit of the Knowledge Network, has proved beneficial for all parties involved. It has enabled countries currently less affected by forest fires to learn from those where firefighters have been addressing the issue for many years. They will take this experience back home to prepare themselves for the challenges climate change is likely to pose to their forests.



Romanian firefighters supported their French colleagues during the wildfire season © Cédric DUFEU

They were also able to contribute their technical and material expertise, which was highly valued by their hosts. Moreover, their operational support enhanced the local response organisation. Notably, it also allowed France to refine its Host Nation Support in concrete terms to contribute to the doctrinal work being pursued in this area.

The Commission covered 75% of the cost of transporting the modules, and 100% of the costs of hosting them, including the acquisition of equipment for them.

Equalisation and disability inclusion in civil protection: Project 'SEE ME'

In emergency situations, persons with disabilities (PwDs) are recognised as a particularly vulnerable group. On the subject of equalising their rights and opportunities under these circumstances, the Civil Protection Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia has implemented the project 'SEE ME - Safe and Equal in Emergencies'. Financed under the Call for Proposals for Prevention and Preparedness projects of the UCPM, the project was carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Montenegro and the Administration for Protection and Rescue of the Republic of Slovenia.

Numerous activities to improve the protection of PwDs in critical situations were carried out within this project. An analysis of the specific requirements and deficiencies in the treatment of PwDs in emergencies resulted in the compilation of guidelines for assistance, one of the project's final outcomes.

In accordance with the PwD motto, 'nothing about us without us', a training session for members of the emergency services was organised. Representatives of several associations of PwDs, and individuals themselves, educated the first responders on how to communicate and approach people with different types of disabilities. The conclusions of this workshop were then published in a brochure for first responders.

At the workshops, representatives of the local and regional self-government entities responsible for preparation of emergency planning documents were gathered with the aim to include PwDs in the planning process. The project also demonstrated the benefits of linking data from PwDs to GIS systems. A video explaining a GIS model for guideline implementation and the advantages of GIS maps depicting locations of PwDs, along with accompanying instructions, was presented.



Aiming to demonstrate the joint operation of the first responders of project partners from Montenegro, Slovenia, and Croatia, an exercise with PwDs as role players was carried out. Its objective was to test the specific adaptation of preparation procedures for emergencies when assisting PwDs, and their implementation during crisis. Improved protection and safety entail non-discriminatory treatment of PwDs in all protection and rescue operations phases.

Various printed materials on the topic of self-help and response in an emergency were produced, including brochures, manuals, guidelines and video materials with sound recordings, subtitles, and sign language interpretation to be accessible for persons with different types of disabilities.

Director of the Civil Protection Directorate, Damir Trut (PhD), stated: "Only by jointly addressing open issues, and harmonising their approaches to planning and emergency preparedness in relation to the protection and rescue of PwDs, can partner countries further improve their coordination in providing cross-border emergency response".

These project activities will continue in a follow-up project, 'SEE ME 2', which will be funded under the UCPM to further empower PwDs and contribute to the equalisation of their rights and opportunities in emergencies.

Find more information at the link:

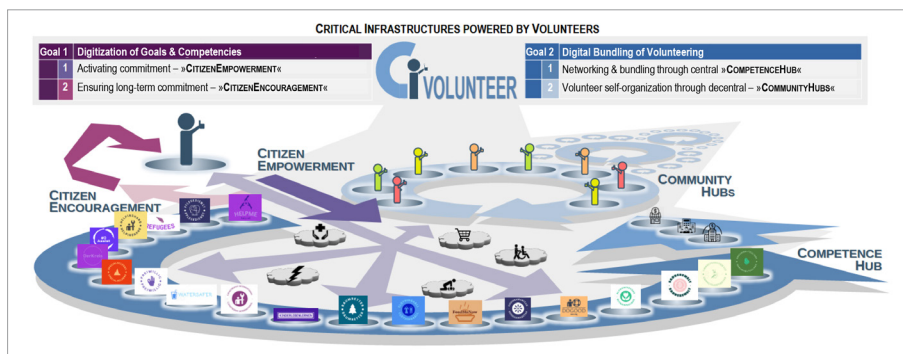
<https://civilna-zastita.gov.hr/safe-and-equal-in-emergencies-see-me/5692>

A digital platform for goal-oriented and competence-based bundling of volunteering in Austria

The voluntary commitment of citizens is an indispensable supporting pillar of critical infrastructures (CRITIS) in disaster management, rescue, or social services. However, developments in demography, social structure and volunteer motives have led to a more individualised and plural society. These profound changes, leading to a diversification and fragmentation of the volunteer sector, pose strong challenges to existing structures of CRITIS, endangering their sustainability.

These key challenges are addressed by our research project 'Civolunteer' (CRITIS Powered by Volunteers), funded by the Austrian security research programme 'KIRAS' of the Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF) and Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG). The project aims to create a **digital platform for goal-oriented and competence-based networking and bundling of volunteer** work across non-profit organisations to strengthen volunteer-dependent CRITIS. Such professionalisation of individual volunteering through adequate digital transformation should provide the basis for future viability of the voluntary sector and ensure a sustainable and comprehensive strengthening of CRITIS.

To address diversification, Goal 1, '**Digitisation of Goals and Competencies**', focuses on low-threshold involvement of citizens in strengthening CRITIS through two different pillars. The 'Citizen Empowerment' pillar aims to activate commitment by implementing low-threshold goal-setting/progress mechanisms. These can ensure flexibility in terms of timing, scope and form of engagement for citizens. The 'Citizen encouragement' pillar aims for long-term commitment by providing mechanisms for retrospective analysis of engagement contribution to CRITIS. By reflecting on personal and prospective future goals, it focuses on continuous personal development and lifelong learning to encourage long-term commitment for CRITIS.



For further information, please contact:

Dr. Birgit Pröll, JKU,
ci.volunteer.at
bproell@faw.jku.at



Towards a digital platform for goal-oriented and competence-based bundling of volunteering
 © Pröll, B., et al. (2023)

To tackle increasing fragmentation, Goal 2, '**Digital Bundling of Volunteering**', focuses on the digital networking and bundling of volunteering, employing a central 'CompetenceHub' and inter-connected decentralised 'CommunityHubs'. The 'CompetenceHub' targets networking of non-profit organisations (NPOs) in order to exploit cross-NPO synergies, i.e. 'competence-based bundling of the best forces' to strengthen CRITIS. The involvement of sponsors via corporate volunteering initiatives, as well as incentives for volunteers to strengthen CRITIS on a broader social basis, are also part of this approach.

The 'CommunityHubs' target self-organisation of volunteers in a crowd-driven manner by forming needs- and demand-driven grassroots communities in any area. These, in turn, through digitisation of goals and competences, act as local or regional facilitators to activate and ensure sustainable and comprehensive commitment for CRITIS.

The Civolunteer consortium is led by the Johannes Kepler University Linz and includes three other scientific partners: the FH Upper Austria Campus Hagenberg, Art University Linz and WU Vienna. Additionally, two business partners, x-Net GmbH Linz and doloops GmbH Vienna, as well as the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care, and Consumer Protection are part of the research project.

A contest of endurance, stamina, strength and determination



Participants compete against one another in a series of physically demanding tasks © Mol National Directorate General for Disaster Management/Péter Szőke

TFA-FCC HUNGARY, the International Firefighters' Competition of the Toughest Firefighters, encompasses everything a firefighter needs: endurance, stamina, strength, and determination. These are the essential attributes required by both male and female firefighters to successfully complete a two-course competition in full protective gear, equipped with a breathing apparatus on their back. The primary objective is to complete each course as quickly as possible, without getting any penalty points. This internationally-acclaimed competition was initially organised in Hungary in 2005, and since then, Hungarian firefighters have had the opportunity to showcase their abilities on home soil nearly every year.

On 23 June 2023, the Main Square of Szombathely, Vas County, hosted the competition. 91 competitors, including three women, as well as athletes from Croatia, Poland, Slovakia, and Austria, gathered at the starting line. Two firefighters competed simultaneously on a single track, facing challenges that closely resembled real-life scenarios encountered by firefighters during their duties.



The first part of the competition ends with participants pulling an 80 kilogram dummy across the finish line © Mol National Directorate General for Disaster Management/Péter Szőke

During the trials on the first course, competitors embarked on a series of physically demanding tasks. They began by ascending a 12-metre-high platform while carrying a 19-kilogram hose on their shoulders. Subsequently, they hoisted an equally heavy coil hose, placed it in a cage, and swiftly descended from the platform. The next task involved using a four-kilogram hammer to knock a piece of beam away and then accurately shooting and aiming with the so-called 'C' beam. Then, they had to pull an 80-kilogram dummy to the finish line.

After a brief intermission, the second part of the competition commenced. Although the breathing apparatus had been removed, the challenges were no less demanding. After delivering 50 strikes with a 5-kilogram hammer, competitors were required to transport two weighted leather bags, each weighing 15 kilograms, to a designated location. Finally, they had to roll up two pieces of 'B' hose. The stopwatch only stopped when competitors placed the hose in the cage and pressed the red button. The cumulative time from both courses was used to determine the final results. While women faced slightly modified course in some events, they too had to complete it within the allotted time.

More:

<https://www.facebook.com/fahungary2018>

<https://www.katasztofavedelem.hu/29/hirek/276403/a-legerosebb-tuzoltok-nemzetkozi-versenye-szombathelyen>

For competitors, the motivation for participating was to compete against the best and demonstrate their capabilities. In short, they aimed to prove themselves worthy of the title of the 'Toughest Firefighter'. This dedication is best encapsulated by the American writer John C. Maxwell: "The firefighter runs into the burning building not because he's fearless, but because he has a calling that is more important than the fear."

Throughout the competition, participants embodied this spirit, demonstrating unwavering commitment when facing the tasks. Prizes were awarded to men and women in separate age categories. Additionally, the organisers announced an overall winner who earned the esteemed title of the country's Toughest Firefighter and, as well as standing atop the podium, was presented with the prestigious travelling cup trophy for the following year.

Exploring wildfire from different angles: Documentaries and movies

This summer, countries across Europe have experienced record temperatures. In some cases, these were coupled with huge wildfires, leading to mass evacuations. Scenarios that years ago we would have only expected to see in the movies are sadly now increasingly common.

While we work strenuously to develop better solutions for disaster preparedness and resilience, stories can help us to explore a problem from new angles, listen to new voices, and learn.

In recent months, the following films on wildfires have been released. They focus on the need to communicate how this phenomenon is changing, and on improving preparedness and behaviour change.



- '[Elemental: Reimagine wildfire](#)' is a documentary that was released in April in the United States. It shows researchers at work in order to understand the effects of climate on forests, and the role that natural forests play in storing vast amounts of carbon. It invites viewers on a learning journey: from the escape from Paradise, the town nearly destroyed by fire in 2018, listening to the stories of people who have survived; to fire labs where researchers torch entire houses to learn why some homes burn and others remain standing; to Native Americans who employ fire to benefit nature and increase community safety, as they have for thousands of years. The documentary is available on paid streaming services.
- [From Devil's Breath](#) tells the story of two narratives that come crashing together: the inspiring community of survivors of the deadly 2017 wildfires in Portugal, fighting to ensure that what they have lived through can never happen again; and the potential and challenges of scientific discoveries. Streaming online is not yet available.
- [L'ombra del fuoco](#) ('The shadow of fire') is a documentary that witnesses the aftermath of the July 2021 forest fires in central Sardinia. A state of emergency was declared and Italy activated the UCPM: reinforcements of four Canadairs, two from France and two from Greece, supported the response, with one Liaison Officer from the ERCC deployed. The film followed the seasons after the fire over one year, observing the miracle of nature's rebirth after the tragedy. On screening in Italy, streaming online not yet available.
- [Fire](#) is a documentary by the European Space Agency (ESA) on how people on the frontline are using space to better monitor and fight fires. Earth observation has become crucial to those fighting climate change on the ground: ESA scientists explain the importance of both understanding the impact of fire on the climate, and monitoring the long-term trend in the pattern of global wildfire – particularly using Earth observation satellites. The documentary is the first episode of a new series of ESA documentaries centred around the elements.
- [Fire-smart stories](#) is a documentary about sustainable wildfire risk prevention. In the form of a journey, it tells the stories of fire-smart pioneers in rural areas that contribute to local economies and provide a sustainable future for their communities, but also have the power to mitigate wildfire risk. Currently many wildfires occur in abandoned rural areas, where people have left for the city, leaving behind agricultural and forestland that has become highly flammable. More fuels and a drier climate make for an explosive combination. So, how should this problem be dealt with? The documentary has been produced within the EU project Prevail, funded by the UCPM, and is available on [YouTube](#).



Do you know any interesting documentaries or movies which can effectively inform the population about risks, and encourage them to engage in actions that reduce risk? Recommend them to us at ECHO-CP-Knowledge-Network@ec.europa.eu!

COMING UP

7th DRMKC Annual Seminar & Wildfire Risk Management Project Clustering Event

Two important events will take place in Brussels on 21–22 November in the same venue, the Royal Library of Belgium.



The [7th Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre \(DRMKC\) Annual Seminar](#) will take place on **21 November**. Under the banner 'Moving knowledge into action: A roadmap to disaster resilience', this event is jointly organised by the JRC and DG ECHO, with opening remarks by the Spanish EU Presidency.

Within the framework of the Science pillar of the Knowledge Network, the aim of this year's [DRMKC](#) Annual Seminar is to bring together different voices from the Commission's policy and research Directorates, national authorities, and other stakeholders to reflect on how to define the pathways to a more resilient EU, especially in relation to climate and disaster risks.

The seminar will investigate how we can be better prepared to face the changing risk landscape and increase resilience at local, national and EU levels through DRM governance, research, innovation, and multi-stakeholder partnerships. The plenary sessions will be web-streamed, however in-person participation is highly encouraged.

Ahead of the 7th DRMKC Annual Seminar, an **online forerunner event** on findings (from globally cascading climate risks to European climate risk assessments) will take place on **8 November**. The event will be an informative session and an occasion to host Horizon projects [CASCADES](#) and [CLIMAAAX](#), which will present their work. For more information and registration, see: '[From globally cascading climate risks to European climate risk assessments](#)'.

"With scientists and practitioners, we will co-design solutions and identify collaborative approaches in the steps towards implementing the EU's disaster resilience agenda, including the Union Disaster Resilience Goals; from planning and adaptation for climate resilient cities and regions, to robust risk assessment processes, to strategic foresight."

Christina Corbane (JRC)

Following the DRMKC Annual Seminar, the **Wildfire Risk Management Project Clustering Event 2023** will take place on **22 November** in the same premises. The event is organised by the European Research Executive Agency (REA) together with the project [Firelogue](#), an EU Coordination and Support Action aiming to unite fire-related projects and exploit their synergies.

The event will showcase the first results of Wildfire Risk Management Green Deal Innovation Actions (TREEDS, SILVANUS, FIRE RES), FirEURisk, ECHO, and other fire projects. These projects focus practically on topics such as wildfire risk assessments and governance. Additionally, they explore questions around the coherence of the range of policies related to managing wildfire risk, such as forestry strategies or nature conservation. The aim of the Clustering Event is to exchange project activities, develop joint visions and collaboration options, and to facilitate the science-policy-practice exchange. Results of the above-mentioned projects, including innovative technologies, can be found on the 'Lessons on Fire' platform, powered by Firelogue.

We hope you can join us! For both events, participation is free, but registration is required:

<https://eu.eventscloudcom/200267489?t=35ef57210d7564972451cf54d70dc58a>

The Knowledge Network in action



DG Maciej Popowski visited the EU MODEX in Poland © KGSP



Director Hanna Jahns visited the FORMATEX FSX © FORMATEX23



Medical EU MODEX in Çanakkale, Türkiye © EU



EU MODEX in Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki, Poland © KGSP



UMI course in Volterra, Italy © EU



Training course for National Authorities UCPM Contact Points in Brussels © EU



EU Modex in Montana, Bulgaria © EU



FORMATEX FSX in Linz, Austria © FORMATEX23

SAVE THE DATE!: 8th European Civil Protection Forum

The next edition of the European Civil Protection Forum will take place from **4-5 June 2024 in Brussels, Belgium**. A chance to meet the civil protection community from Europe and beyond, the Forum will be the central networking and knowledge-sharing event of the upcoming year.

Join us for these two days to benefit from a rich program featuring high-level panels, discussions, and participatory workshops on many different areas of importance to the European civil protection.

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network

E-mail: ECHO-CP-Knowledge-Network@ec.europa.eu - Website: <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu>