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From:	Presidency
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
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Subject:	Report from the Slovak Presidency on the main achievements at EU level in the field of civil protection

1. Delegations will find attached a Presidency Report on the main achievements at EU level in the field of civil protection.
2. COREPER is advised to invite the Council to take note of the report.

**REPORT from the SLOVAK PRESIDENCY**  
**on the main achievements at EU level in the field of civil protection**

This report outlines the EU's main achievements in the field of civil protection during the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

During the Slovak Presidency discussions in the Working Party on Civil Protection (PROCIV) focused on two interlinked topics: connections between critical infrastructure resilience and civil protection, and flash floods. Strengthening cooperation between critical infrastructure protection and the civil protection communities allows synergies to be created by pooling knowledge and expertise especially in the fields of risk assessment, mapping and risk management. The topic of flash floods was researched with a view to increasing resilience of communities through improving dissemination of knowledge and development of technical guidance.

Civil protection has been heavily involved in the response to crises and disasters, both at national and EU levels. The Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) has been activated eleven times since July 2016.

## 1. Enhancing resilience of critical infrastructure

Recognising the need to strengthen the resilience of critical infrastructure, the Slovak Presidency has continued work to enhance links between civil protection and critical infrastructure protection, as damage to critical infrastructure from hydro-meteorological and climate-related hazards is expected to rise sharply<sup>1</sup>. This topic was already addressed during the first semester of 2016 by the Netherlands Presidency, which underscored the need for closer cooperation between civil protection and critical infrastructure authorities to enhance disaster prevention, preparedness and resilience. During its term the Slovak Presidency, approaching this topic from different angle, has focused on identifying synergies between civil protection and critical infrastructure communities in the areas where they would be most effective. Cooperation in the field of risk assessments and exchange of information at expert level has been identified as the most feasible. The Slovak Presidency also issued an overview of the connections between critical infrastructure and civil protection in Member States, based on the results of a questionnaire and discussions in PROCIV.

### Revisiting the approach to resilient critical infrastructure

On 13-14 July 2016 the Slovak Presidency held an expert workshop in Bratislava entitled 'Enhancing Resilience of Critical Infrastructure', attended by more than 60 critical infrastructure and civil protection experts. The objective of the workshop was to foster mutual understanding and cooperation between civil protection and critical infrastructure protection communities in the fields of risk management and emergency management. Experts were invited to jointly evaluate existing analytical and operational tools for managing the risk of disasters affecting critical infrastructure and put forward recommendations for addressing gaps and capitalising on existing or potential synergies.

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Research Centre, *Resilience of large investments and critical infrastructure in Europe to climate change*, June 2016.

Critical infrastructure plays a pivotal role during and after a disaster by providing lifeline services to the affected population and restarting its recovery in a wide range of socio-economic sectors. In areas such as public safety, provision of lifeline services and civil protection, mutual understanding is of paramount importance. During expert discussions it has been discovered that from the point of view of civil protection the definition of 'critical infrastructure' is broad and can be applied at many levels (European/transnational, national, sub-national, or within individual communities).

In addition, a possible innovative approach to risk management of critical infrastructure which focuses on the concept of *performance goals* has been proposed. This approach looks at the interaction of one or multiple hazards, vulnerability, and their impact on system performance, i.e. the ability to deliver, in the aftermath of a disaster, a pre-determined level of essential services to the community. Performance-based risk assessment for critical infrastructure takes into account inter-dependency and cascading effects of critical infrastructure failure as well as compounded risks. Performance goals for critical infrastructure, to be determined through a close cooperation of governments, operators and communities, provide a checklist to increase preparedness and, in the aftermath of a disaster, can serve as milestones for recovery.

#### Next steps

The results of discussions at the workshop and in PROCIV could be placed in the following categories:

*Strengthening cooperation between the civil protection and critical infrastructure protection communities, in the field of risk management.* This includes, among others: gathering existing knowledge, tools, and guidelines via the Commission's Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre; strengthening the exchange of information and cross-border cooperation in critical infrastructure protection; enhancing the user-friendliness of the Critical Infrastructure Warning Information Network (CIWIN); converging towards unified terminology as promoted by the European Program for Critical Infrastructure Protection.

*Gathering examples and illustrating the benefits of a performance-based approach to risk assessment and recovery preparedness of critical infrastructure.* This includes: converging towards a shared understanding of the performance-based approach; exploring, with the support of the Prevention and Response Planning working groups and in coordination with the Critical Infrastructure Programme and other relevant Commission services, whether technical guidance at EU-level could help Participating States enhance their risk assessment and preparedness practice for critical infrastructure.

## **2. Flash floods and resilience**

The main emphasis of the Slovak Presidency in PROCIV in this area was to examine whether flash floods merit a specific approach and technical guidance within the framework of the EU's flood-related policies. A flash flood is a rapid-onset flood mostly occurring in low-lying areas of mountain valleys and or at their mouth. Flash floods are distinguished from regular floods by their very rapid onset of less than six hours; in many cases the onset could take less than one hour. Based on the discussions held within the working party a set of recommendations can be issued in the areas of risk assessment and mapping, early warning and risk reduction measures.

### **Knowledge and technical guidance**

Differences from other types of flooding make flash floods a unique type of hazard which poses very specific challenges to policy makers, flood risk managers and emergency responders. In particular, due to their unpredictability and disparity between high impact and small spatial scale, responsibility for managing flash floods often remains at local level. Over the years, the European Union and its Member States have developed policy and tools for prevention of and preparedness for floods arising from different sources and these are firmly embedded in European and national legislation. However, flash flood risk management may benefit from more specific technical guidance and tools.

- The focus should be on finding a systematic approach to flash flood risk assessment and risk reduction, particularly at community level, as well as on efficient contingency planning.
- Innovative knowledge and approaches should be distilled into guidelines and tools that could eventually be translated into the existing EU level and national approaches, e.g. national building and spatial development laws.

## Risk assessment and mapping

A general framework for flood risk assessment, risk mapping as well as for developing flood risk management plans in the EU was set up by the Floods Directive<sup>2</sup>. Since the Floods Directive covers all sources of flooding, its provisions do not address exclusively flash floods. According to the Floods Directive Member States' experts shall identify areas where potential significant flood risk exists. This also includes flash floods which rise and fall quite rapidly with little or no advance warning.<sup>3</sup> To further elaborate the risk management for flash floods:

- Lessons should be drawn from pluvial flood risk management strategies<sup>4</sup> to which flash floods strategies are frequently related.
- Where appropriate, flood risk assessment and mapping could be further developed to address flash flooding and its specificities.
- Special attention should be paid to areas where the risks of flash floods and landslides overlap, as these two risks often do.

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<sup>2</sup> Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks, OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Based on information provided by European Overview Assessment of Member States' reports on Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and Identification of Areas of Potentially Significant Flood Risk

<sup>4</sup> Certain cases of flash floods fall into the category of pluvial flooding. These cases are already covered by the Floods Directive and, depending on the Member State, there is higher likelihood of specific measures to be implemented in this field.

- It is vital that flash flood risk assessments and maps be reflected in spatial planning procedures and civil protection contingency planning. It is also vital that flood resilience be taken into account by Member States in spatial development policies, in order to ensure maximum protection and performance of structures and services that could be considered critical infrastructure for the community. Adopting risk-informed policies for managing spatial development is a cost-effective and community-oriented approach which builds trust and avoids increased costs in the future.
- Contingency planning should allow for maintaining or recovering critical infrastructures (e.g. lifeline services) for the community in the event of potential damage caused by flash floods such as disruption of transport, energy and water supply as well as disruption of critical services protecting life, health, property and public order. Further cooperation between the critical infrastructure protection and civil protection communities is needed on this topic.
- European support for knowledge gathering and research is needed to improve flash flood risk reduction measures, as well as improved risk awareness of local communities to flash flood risk and relevant risk reduction measures.

- Early warning systems are dependent on accurate forecasting of flash floods, and in many cases forecasts are issued only at the last moment, or when the event is already happening. Although a rapid alert can greatly increase the impact in protecting people and assets, in some cases speed can increase the probability of a false alert. False alerts can have a very negative impact on the attitude of the public and they must be kept to a minimum if the population is to remain responsive to alerts.
- Flash floods often occur in places with no previous experience of flooding; therefore the population at risk needs to be educated on their exposure and measures to reduce flash flood risk, as well as proper conduct in the event of an alert and during the emergency.
- Regions found to be prone to flash flooding should include flash floods in their education on civil protection and awareness-raising campaigns.
- Areas identified by risk mapping should be prioritised for the improvement of meteorological services' technical equipment.
- Further research is needed in numerical weather forecast modelling and surface runoff modelling, which are critical for advance alerts.
- European support is needed to foster development of flash flood forecasting and early warning systems.
- Cross-border sharing of meteorological and hydrological data in border regions is essential for accurate forecasting.



Having reviewed the challenges posed by flash flooding, the key measures for increasing resilience can be summarised as the following:

- There is a strong incentive to focus on flash floods in knowledge gathering, risk assessment, mapping and management and civil contingency planning and early warnings.
- When updating flood risk mapping and flood risk management plans specific attention should be dedicated to flash floods in the Member States which are prone to their occurrence. The Working Group on Floods set up under the Common Implementation Strategy of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive can support this process.
- Member States need to reflect the risk assessment findings in spatial and civil contingency planning and enhance the resilience of existing infrastructures vulnerable to flooding so they can remain operational in an emergency.
- European support is needed for the development and adoption of weather forecast and runoff models offering the high resolution and short timescales needed to forecast flash floods. The Commission's Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre could serve as a vehicle for dissemination of research findings and sharing of best practices in flash floods management.

### **3. Management of consequences of terrorist attacks**

Following the recent terrorist attacks in several Member States, the Slovak Presidency has promoted further deliberations on the management of their consequences, started under the Netherlands Presidency.

As a starting point, on 20 and 21 September 2016 the Commission held an expert workshop on responding to terrorist attacks: challenges and lessons learned for civil protection and emergency services, which focused on planning and coordination, specific challenges for emergency medical services, disaster victim identification, and raising public awareness.

Discussions continued at the meeting of Director-General for Civil Protection held in Bratislava on 27-28 September 2016.

#### **4. Response to disasters and crises**

The response to the migration crisis in Europe is still ongoing. The UCPM was activated by Ukraine in June, but the advisory mission took place in September and October. In addition, the UCPM has been activated eleven times during the term of Slovak Presidency. These activations aimed to respond to the following new disasters and crises: yellow fever outbreak (Democratic Republic of Congo), earthquake (Cape Verde), forest fires (France, Portugal, Montenegro and Albania), floods (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania), drought (Bolivia) and hurricane (Haiti). Finally, a series of major earthquakes hit Central Italy on 24 August and 30 October, although these did not result in the activation of the UCPM.

##### **A. Ongoing migration crisis**

The only ongoing UCPM activation for the second half of 2016 relates to the refugee crisis: on 29 February 2016 Greece activated the UCPM for the second time. The main reasons were that Greece was still facing challenges concerning provision of accommodation and hygiene supplies. So far, 20 Participating States have provided in-kind assistance to Greece<sup>5</sup>, of which Slovakia, Norway and Malta provided in-kind assistance during the term of Slovak Presidency.

##### **B. Salt mine situation in Ukraine**

The UCPM was activated on 17 June 2016 with a view to deploying a small preparatory/scoping mission to support the national authorities and prepare the advisory mission. The main objective of the advisory mission was to conduct a comprehensive risk and threat assessment at the Solotvyno salt mine complex and its surroundings. The request from the Ukrainian and Hungarian authorities asked for an independent study to determine an action plan, which in addition to short-, medium- and long-term goals and their priorities, would define available resources for its achievement within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. The advisory mission took place between 14 September and 7 October 2016, and produced a technical report containing the risk assessment and subsequent recommendations. The report is being finalised and will be submitted to the requesting countries.

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<sup>5</sup> AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, FI, FR, HU, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PT, SK, ES, SE, SI, UK.

## **C. UCPM activations since 1 July 2016**

### **a) Democratic Republic of Congo – yellow fever**

The WHO requested support for the urgent deployment of a mobile laboratory team to provide diagnostics for yellow fever with PCR and serology capacity in Kwango province. A Voluntary Pool (EERC) specialised laboratory from Germany was deployed in July 2016 for about 3-4 months.

### **b) France – forest fires**

On 2 August 2016, France sent information about the unavailability of its fleet of Canadairs due to a technical failure in one of their aircraft. Consequently, France asked to be reinforced by the BufferIT aircraft, which was deployed on the same day, until 10 August 2016.

### **c) Cape Verde – seismic activity**

Following abnormal seismic activity on 1-2 August, the government of Cape Verde requested UNDAC support for contingency planning activities, with expertise in mass evacuation, volcanology and geology. UN OCHA requested UCPM support for this mission with technical experts. Three civil protection experts were sent as associated experts to UNDAC.

### **d) Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – flash floods**

On 6 August 2016, the capital city of Skopje was affected by heavy rain, lightning and strong winds, causing 23 deaths and the evacuation of over 1000 people. In response to the Macedonian government's activation of the UCPM, a civil protection team was deployed from 10 to 19 August. Nine UCPM Participating States offered international assistance, and a post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) mission was deployed from 30 August to 13 September 2016.

#### **e) Portugal – forest fires**

On 10 August, the Portuguese National Authority for Civil Protection activated the UCPM, requesting Canadairs to support the response to the emergency. As an immediate response, the ERCC mobilised the Aerial Firefighting Buffer Capacity managed by Italy. The Italian buffer capacity composed of one aerial firefighting aircraft and 10 specialised personnel arrived in Monte Real on 11 August. Portugal activated the Copernicus EMS satellite service. An ERCC Liaison Officer was also deployed to Lisbon to facilitate the Buffer Capacity's operations and to support the Portuguese National Authorities.

#### **f) Albania – forest fires (two activations – no intervention)**

After making a request for aerial forest firefighting aircraft on 25 August, Albania confirmed to the ERCC that the fire in the northern part (Shengjin) was finally under control. No aerial support was provided. Two days later, Albania feared that a fire in the southern prefecture of Vlora would spread to Greece and made another request for assistance. On 28 August, Albania informed the ERCC that the situation was under control and that no planes or fire engines would be needed.

#### **g) Montenegro – forest fires**

On 27 August, a forest fire affected the village of Bijela Gora, threatening houses and over 1000 people. Montenegro activated the UCPM and the ERCC mobilised the BufferIT aircraft. Montenegro withdrew its request the next day, when the situation was brought back under control.

#### **h) Bolivia - drought**

In August, Bolivia was affected by a drought caused by the El Niño effect. On 30 August, the UCPM was activated at the request of UN OCHA for technical expertise in hydrogeology and deep well water extraction. Experts from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were deployed to La Paz from 7 to 29 September to strengthen the UN OCHA country office for this mission.

#### **i) Haiti – tropical cyclone**

A category 4 tropical cyclone hit Haiti on 4 October. The Haitian south-western peninsula was affected. The tropical cyclone caused the deaths of 546 people and left 1.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. On 4 October, the ERCC received a request for assistance from UN OCHA to support the UNDAC team deployment to Haiti. On 5 October 2016, the Government of Haiti explicitly requested the activation of the UCPM.

Participating States offered assistance through the UCPM in the form of water purification modules and materials, camp support, strategic transportation capabilities and in-kind assistance. The UCPM contributed with significant amount of in-kind assistance from countries including Austria, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom. The ERCC mobilised the two French water purifications modules registered in the voluntary pool which operated in the city of Jérémie until 8 November and produced more than 1.2 million litres of fresh water. The two military vessels from the Netherlands provided strategic transportation capability between 11 and 26 October.

#### **j) Albania – floods**

On 12 November, Albania requested international assistance through the UCPM consisting of small and medium water pumps, motor chainsaws and hydraulic cutters.

## **D. Earthquakes in central Italy**

An earthquake of magnitude of 6.0 struck the central part of Italy on 24 August, occurring along the borders of the Abruzzo, Lazio, Umbria and Marche regions. The epicentre was located in the village of Accumuli. Around 5 000 people were involved in response operations, more than 4 000 people sheltered in camps set up by Italian Civil Protection, and many casualties and injured were reported. The ERCC supported with satellite mapping via the EU Copernicus Emergency Management Service. In total, EU Copernicus produced close to 80 satellite maps.

Relief operations were handled by Italian Civil Protection. Although no international assistance was requested, the Italian Civil Protection Department invited a team of EU CP experts to Italy for an observation mission. The main objective was to observe the rescue operations and identify to the extent possible best practices as well as lessons to be learned. The team will draft a report with the main findings which will be disseminated to the Participating States of the UCPM.

The seismic activity continued in Central Italy and two major earthquakes occurred in the area on 26 and 30 October. Serious damage has been confirmed to housing and infrastructures. Authorities performed assessment activities in the area. No victims were reported. Tented structures and recovery facilities in sport complexes have been set up to allow primary recovery and food provision in the most affected municipalities. Two weeks after the events, the number of people having received assistance was more than 24 000, of which about 9 000 moved to the Adriatic coast or the area of Lake Trasimeno to be housed in hotels and residences.

## 5. European Disaster Response Exercise (EDREX)

EDREX is an 18-month long exercise project commissioned by the European Commission, implemented by the Valcyría Consortium (Swedish MSB<sup>6</sup>, Italian ICPD<sup>7</sup> and the UK PHE<sup>8</sup>). The overall aim of the pilot project EDREX is to provide the ERCC and its interlocutors with an opportunity to explore, further develop and assess their combined crisis response capabilities at national, European (UCPM) and international level, to produce a comprehensive evaluation report and to provide the setting for the ERCC and participating interlocutors to create their own development plans. The aim is achieved through the following objectives:

- the design of EDREX (survey);
- a discussion-based exercise (DBX, 3-5 October 2016);
- a command-post exercise (CPX, 13-17 March 2017);
- evaluation of the two exercises and of the overall project, at a conference (4-5 May 2017);
- development plan (30 June 2017).

The purpose of the survey was to prioritise the 17 general crisis-response capabilities listed in the inception report in order to provide a focused exercise design and evaluation. Based on an analysis and the grouping of the general capabilities, the emphasis focused on:

- (1) inter-institutional, inter-sectorial and bilateral information communication to Participating States and interlocutors for establishing a common situational awareness;
- (2) clarifying decision-making roles and authority at different levels of governance;
- (3) clarifying procedures when using the Voluntary Pool, especially in relation to other international organisations; and
- (4) effective use of social and traditional media in crisis communication to the public.

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<sup>6</sup> Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency.

<sup>7</sup> Italian Civil Protection Department.

<sup>8</sup> Public Health England.

The discussion-based exercise was hosted by the Commission on 3-5 October 2016, with the participation of experts representing 19 Participating States and eight international organisations. It provided the participants with a good overarching knowledge on the ERCC response capacities and the challenges that arise with inter-sectorial coordination of a crisis that include national and international actors. On the basis of a consequence management-focused scenario including an earthquake in a fictitious third country situated at the eastern border of the EU, the exercise followed the following four stages:

- operational response to the earthquake (activation of the UCPM),
- the IPCR in information-sharing mode,
- full activation of IPCR, and
- invocation of the Solidarity Clause.

The evaluation process is an integral part of the discussion-based and command-post exercises.

The CPX, which takes place in March 2017 and is confined to the participants' crisis management response centres, will be designed to assess the four core capabilities of:

- establishing a common situational awareness picture,
- clarifying roles and responsibilities at different levels,
- further outlining and assessing the procedures involving the Voluntary Pool,
- using social and traditional media in public crisis communications.

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