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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Working Party of Chief Plant Health Officers (COPHS) on 28-29 November 2017 - Partial outcome of proceedings

EU preparedness for contingency planning in plant health: state of play and future activities

On 28 and 29 November 2017 the COPHS discussed the document prepared by the Presidency on preparedness for contingency planning¹ and agreed on the suggestions it contained.

Many delegations stressed the value of the work carried out by the Presidency and of the findings of the questionnaire²; they also highlighted the importance of involving stakeholders at an early stage and the difficulties arising from conflicting provisions in different policy sectors - notably in the domains of plant health and the environment - and access to private premises. They further indicated the paramount value of platforms for exchanging experiences and best practices.

¹ See Annex I
² See Annex II

The Commission representative also welcomed the work carried out by the Presidency. She emphasised that conflicts between different legislative areas should be solved in a pragmatic way, on a case-by-case basis, and that the rapid identification of land-owners was essential in the event of outbreaks; consequently, appropriate measures to that end should be put in place well in advance by Member States. She further indicated that careful consideration would be given to the idea of providing specific training on contingency planning within the framework of the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme.

Preparedness for Contingency Planning in the Plant Health Sector - Presidency Discussion document

- **INTRODUCTION**

This document emphasises the importance of contingency planning in the European Union and highlights the challenges and vulnerabilities the Member States (MSs) face when implementing contingency plans. In addition, the document suggests a number of steps that could strengthen the preparedness for contingency planning.

Delegations and the Commission are invited to acknowledge the importance of contingency planning and consider further ways on improving its efficiency.

- **BACKGROUND**

At this time of numerous phytosanitary crises and budgetary constraints, the Estonian Presidency set as one of its priorities the European Union's preparedness for contingency planning. Such planning is a useful management tool and an aid in handling emergency situations in a timely and efficient manner.

The recently revised EU Plant Health Regime and newly adopted Plant Health Regulation, (EU) 2016/2031 set out and explain the urgent need to work on preventive measures. The new Plant Health Regulation obliges MSs to have contingency plans in place for priority pests and to conduct simulation exercises, which are essential tools for addressing emergency situations. However, the MSs face challenges and vulnerabilities in contingency planning.

The Presidency presented their priority on preparedness for contingency planning to the COPHS at the Commission Working Group for COPHS held on 11-13 October 2017 in Tallinn, Estonia. The COPHS agreed that preparedness for contingency planning was an essential theme for the whole EU.

To gather information on the current situation and to identify weaknesses in contingency planning in MSs, the Estonian Presidency prepared a questionnaire entitled 'Strategical and technical preparedness for contingency planning in the plant health sector.'

The 'Report on Strategical and Technical Preparedness for Contingency Planning in the European Union Plant Health Sector' gives an overview of the current situation in MSs in terms of essential elements for contingency planning. These include management structures, an appropriate legal basis, practical experiences, resources, and the identification of strengths, weaknesses and ways to overcome deficiencies. MSs identified weaknesses in contingency planning and stressed that common guidelines, sharing of experiences, training, communication, coordination by the European Commission, MSs' activities and cooperation were crucial.

DIFFICULTIES

MSs face a number of challenges and vulnerabilities regarding contingency planning in general, and in implementing contingency plans and simulation exercises in practice. These are listed in the following.

Legal and policy issues

- Lack of efficient legal tools for enforcement of measures and collaboration between different entities and authorities at different levels; these measures and collaboration are needed in order to implement and enforce various components of a national plant health policy and to regulate activities in the public and private sectors;
- Conflicts between nature conservation and plant health policies;
- Problems related to premises identification, entry into premises, identification of landowners, and implementation of eradication measures on behalf of the landowners.

Communication

- Opposition by stakeholders to prescribed measures affects timely eradication measures;
- Insufficient knowledge about awareness raising and communication with the public and the media;
- Absence of crisis communication.

Organisation

- Responsibilities, rights and roles of each party are not clearly defined and recognised;
- Insufficient coordination with relevant authorities;
- Shortage of personnel and insufficient funding.

Training

- Limited knowledge of contingency planning;
- Lack of skills in crisis management, contingency planning and organising simulation exercises;

EXPERIENCES GAINED AND LESSONS LEARNED

MSs shared valuable experiences and pointed out several key elements which should be taken into account to handle crisis situations efficiently.

Communication

- Good, timely communication is key. This means that you need to define the target groups, communication policy and main messages in advance.

Organisation

- Decide on a 'single authority' responsible for contingency planning in each MS;
- Nominate a crisis manager;
- Set up a crisis management group;
- Keep the contingency plan short and simple, and use clear and plain language;
- Start contingency planning as early as possible. By having a plan you secure yourself beforehand and may save your organisation from failure if a pest is found;
- Identify whose assistance you may need (forestry experts/associations, arborists, National Rescue Board) and make agreements with them in advance;
- Write down all the steps of crisis handling – keep log data.

Resources

- Contingency planning requires investment of both time and resources – it takes time and commitment to involve all relevant bodies and prepare a good plan;
- The human and financial resources needed for eradication measures and compensation have to be estimated beforehand in order to know the minimum necessary for handling the crisis. Some harmful organisms (e.g. PWN) require eradication measures on a massive scale.

NEXT STEPS

Delegations and the Commission are invited to acknowledge the importance of contingency planning and to consider possible steps that could improve efficiency in contingency planning, including the following:

- *Improve the skills and knowledge of plant health, communication and crisis management experts through practical trainings and workshops at EU level, organised by BTSF, EFSA ;*
- *Participate in practical trainings and workshops organised by EPPO, IPPC and other relevant organisations;*
- *Exchange experiences and best practices (successful eradication stories from MSs and third countries) between MSs at contingency planning and simulation exercises organised by BTSF, EFSA, EPPO;*
- *Invite neighbouring or other MSs to participate in the simulation exercises as observers;*
- *Make elements of contingency plans publicly available to increase public awareness;*
- *MSs should work on collaboration between different entities and authorities; these measures and framework are needed in order to implement and enforce various components of a national plant health policy, and to regulate activities in the public and private sectors;*
- *Find legislative solutions to the problems related to premises identification, entry into premises, identification of landowners, and implementation of eradication measures on behalf of the landowners;*
- *Engage in horizontal cooperation among MSs to eliminate legal conflicts between nature conservation and plant health policy;*

- *Establish a list (group) of experts at EU level with specific expertise and experiences in contingency planning and crisis management to assist MSs;*
- *Prepare common guidelines or templates for emergency measures at EU level, to help ensure a common approach to contingency planning across all MSs;*
- *Discuss the topic of contingency planning at EU level with MSs experts to share experiences and produce guidance, with a view to improving cooperation and enabling better identification of appropriate action and possible EU harmonisation;*
- *Organise networking between MSs and EU reference laboratories.*

**Report on Strategical and Technical Preparedness for
Contingency Planning in the European
Union Plant Health Sector**

**The Estonian Presidency
of the Council of the European Union
1 July – 31 December 2017**

Contents

• INTRODUCTION	3
• BACKGROUND	3
EXPERIENCES GAINED AND LESSONS LEARNED	4
1. INTRODUCTION	9
2. SCOPE	9
3. FRAMEWORK OF ACTIVITIES	9
4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	10
5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE.....	11
1.1. 5.1 General Information on Contingency Planning in Member State.....	12
1.1.1. 5.1.1 Organisational and legal aspects	12
1.1.2. 5.1.2 Pest prioritisation	12
1.1.3. 5.1.3 Stakeholders' Involvement and Awareness Raising	14
1.1.4. 5.1.4 Difficulties	15
1.2. 5.2 Practical Experience.....	17
1.2.1. 5.2.1 General information	17
1.2.2. 5.2.2 Involvement	18
1.2.3. 5.2.3 Positive outcomes	19
1.2.4. 5.2.4 Difficulties	20
1.3. 5.3 Resources	21
1.3.1. 5.3.1 Coordination.....	21
1.3.2. 5.3.2 Budget and Staff.....	22
1.3.3. 5.3.3 Difficulties	23
6. EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED	24
7. THE MSS SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE CONTINGENCY PLANNING IN THE EU	25

1. INTRODUCTION

In times of numerous phytosanitary crises and budgetary constraints, the Estonian Presidency set, as one of the priorities, to highlight the importance of the European Union preparedness for contingency planning.

Contingency planning aims to prepare to respond well to a pest outbreak and its potential impact. Developing a contingency plan involves making decisions, in advance, concerning the management of human and financial resources, coordination and communications procedures, and awareness of a range of technical and logistical issues.

It is essential in the plant health sector for emergency response to devise an early detection and warning system, timely compiled and systematically revised contingency plans and an organisational structure with a clear line of command. The new Plant Health Regulation, (EU) 2016/2031, prescribes for a contingency plan to be in place for all the Member States (MSs). According to the Regulation, each MS shall draw up and keep up to date a contingency plan for each priority pest. However, there are challenges and vulnerabilities MSs face to implement contingency planning as a useful management tool and as an aid to ensure the timely and efficient provision of emergency response where it is needed when a crisis occurs.

With the aim to gather information on the current situation for contingency planning in MSs, the Estonian Presidency prepared the questionnaire “Strategical and technical preparedness for contingency planning in the plant health sector”. The information collected gives an overview of the current situation in MSs in terms of essential elements for contingency planning, such as management and legal basis, practical experiences, resources, identifying strengths and weaknesses and ways to overcome these deficiencies.

2. SCOPE

This document aims to provide an overview of the current situation and to highlight difficulties and challenges MSs face while implementing contingency plans and organising/carrying out simulation exercises. Furthermore, the document highlights suggested activities which MSs need to work on to strengthen preparedness for contingency planning. MSs have shared their practical experiences and lessons learned. Therefore that information has been added to this document. The information which has been compiled should be considered as a platform for further steps to improve efficiency in contingency planning.

3. FRAMEWORK OF ACTIVITIES

The Estonian Presidency invited all 28 MSs of the European Union (EU) to participate in completing the questionnaire “Strategical and technical preparedness for contingency planning in the plant health sector”. The questionnaire was answered by all 28 MSs of the EU. The timeline of activities is provided below:

- **June** – development of the questionnaire; plant health and communication experts from the Estonian Agricultural Board (NPPO) and the Ministry of Rural Affairs were involved;
- **26 July** – the questionnaire was sent to the MSs Chief Officers on Plant Health (COPHS);
- **September - October** – collection of responses from MSs;
- **October** – analysis of data by the Estonian Presidency Plant Health team;
- **11 - 13 October** – the Presidency presented their priority on preparedness for contingency planning to the COPHS during the Commission Working Group for COPHS held in Tallinn, Estonia. The COPHS agreed that preparedness for contingency planning is an essential theme for the whole of the European Union. Plant health experts from Finland, Austria and Estonia gave presentations on their practical experience in drawing up contingency plans and in carrying out simulation exercises. The lessons learned were highlighted and shared with the COPHS;
- **25 October** – the Presidency presented their priority on preparedness for contingency planning and outcome of the questionnaire to the MSs during the Council Working Party on Plant Health: Protection and Inspection. The weaknesses in contingency planning were identified by MSs and they affirmed that sharing of experiences, more coordination and common guidelines for the EU are crucial. It was also highlighted that the horizontal cooperation at the Commission level, for example, involvement of DG ENVIR is essential. It was concluded that work on preparedness for contingency planning needs increased attention;
- **28 - 29 November** – Working Party of Chief Plant Health Officers; the Presidency will provide the final report on “Strategical and Technical Preparedness for Contingency Planning in the European Union Plant Health Sector”. MSs are invited to have a discussion on shortcomings and further steps needed to address identified weaknesses in contingency planning.

4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Union is currently facing significant crises and emergency situations due to outbreaks of harmful organisms such as *Xylella fastidiosa*, *Bursaphelenchus xylophilus*, *Anoplophora glabripennis* which cause substantial economic, social and environmental impacts.

The recently revised EU Plant Health Regime and newly adopted Plant Health Regulation (EU) 2016/2031 justify and prescribe the urgent need to work on preventive measures. The new Plant Health Regulation obliges MSs to have in place contingency plans and conduct simulation exercises, which are essential tools to address emergency situations.

The Estonian Presidency set as one of their priorities the importance of the European Union preparedness for contingency planning. It set out to help to assess the current situation regarding contingency planning and to identify significant shortcomings. In this regard, the Presidency prepared a detailed questionnaire “Strategical and technical preparedness for contingency planning in the plant health sector”. The information collected gives an overview regarding contingency planning in MSs and reflects the situation in principal areas such as organisational responsibilities, management, legal basis, stakeholders’ involvement, human and financial resources. The questionnaire was designed to obtain feedback on practical experiences, identifying strengths, weaknesses and needs to overcome these deficiencies.

The information received gives an overview of the difficulties MSs faced with contingency planning. Some essential elements highlighted for contingency planning included insufficient coordination with relevant authorities, the responsibilities, rights, and roles of each party not being clearly defined and recognised; the absence of crisis communication; a legislative framework which doesn't provide a strong enough mandate to implement and enforce activities needed; lack of training; lack of human and financial resources.

Since contingency plans and simulation exercises are relatively new elements in the context of the new Plant Health Regulation, it was also highlighted that more coordination and support from the Commission is needed to facilitate the implementation of the new Plant Health Regulation.

In addition to the questionnaire, MSs shared valuable suggestions concerning the future steps that are necessary to address their needs in trainings, communications, coordination by the Commission, MSs activities and cooperation. MSs pointed out the necessity to receive more specific training on contingency planning and simulation exercises, to have EU common guidelines for contingency planning, to have common guidelines on communication with stakeholders and on coordination with the Commission.

The Presidency presented their priority on preparedness for contingency planning to the COPHS during Commission Working Group for COPHS held in Tallinn and the outcome of the questionnaire to MSs during the Council Working Party on Plant Health: Protection and Inspection.

The COPHS affirmed that preparedness for contingency planning is an essential theme for whole European Union. MSs noted the weaknesses in contingency planning and realised that the sharing of experiences, more coordination and common guidelines for the EU are crucial. The Commission and MSs concluded that more attention should be devoted to contingency planning and greater efforts are needed to improve on it.

5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire “Strategical and technical preparedness for the contingency planning in the plant health sector” was divided into three sections, which cover important elements for contingency planning:

- 1) general information on contingency planning in Member State;

- 2) practical experiences;
- 3) resources.

1.1. 5.1 General Information on Contingency Planning in Member State

The first section of the questionnaire aimed to get an overview of the current state in the MSs about organisational and legal aspects; pest prioritisation; stakeholders' involvement and awareness raising. A significant part of the section identified difficulties MSs have encountered with contingency planning.

1.1.1. 5.1.1 Organisational and legal aspects

Central Competent Authority (NPPO) is responsible for drawing up contingency plans in most MSs. Some MSs indicated that there is shared responsibility between the Ministry of Agriculture and regional authorities. In some MSs it is the sole duty of the Ministry of Agriculture. One (1) MS responded that, at the national level, the Central Competent Authority (NPPO) in cooperation with the Regional Competent Authorities is responsible for drawing up contingency plans and the Regional Competent Authorities are responsible for regional level.

Twenty-seven (27) MSs have contingency plan(s) in place.

Contingency plans are mostly legally based on a combination of Commission implementing acts and National legislation. One (1) MS answered that their legal basis comes only from the national legislation.

Main guidelines for MSs for drawing up contingency plans are EPPO standards, IPPC standards and EFSA recommendations. In cases where Commission Implementing Decisions for EU emergency measures exist, MSs use them as guidelines. Contingency plans of other MSs and non-EU countries have practical value in drawing up contingency plans as well as national contingency plans in other areas. MSs also rely on scientific publications and relevant experts when drawing up contingency plans.

In most MSs (19), national legislation gives sufficient legal basis to take timely necessary action in emergency situations.

1.1.2. 5.1.2 Pest prioritisation

Eighteen (18) MSs (Figure 1) indicated that they have criteria for prioritization for contingency planning. MSs named as prioritization criteria: pest risk categorisation; preliminary or full PRA; pest status in the MS; protected zone status of the MS; economic importance or social impact to the MS; new emerging pests for main crops of the MS; the EU legislation.

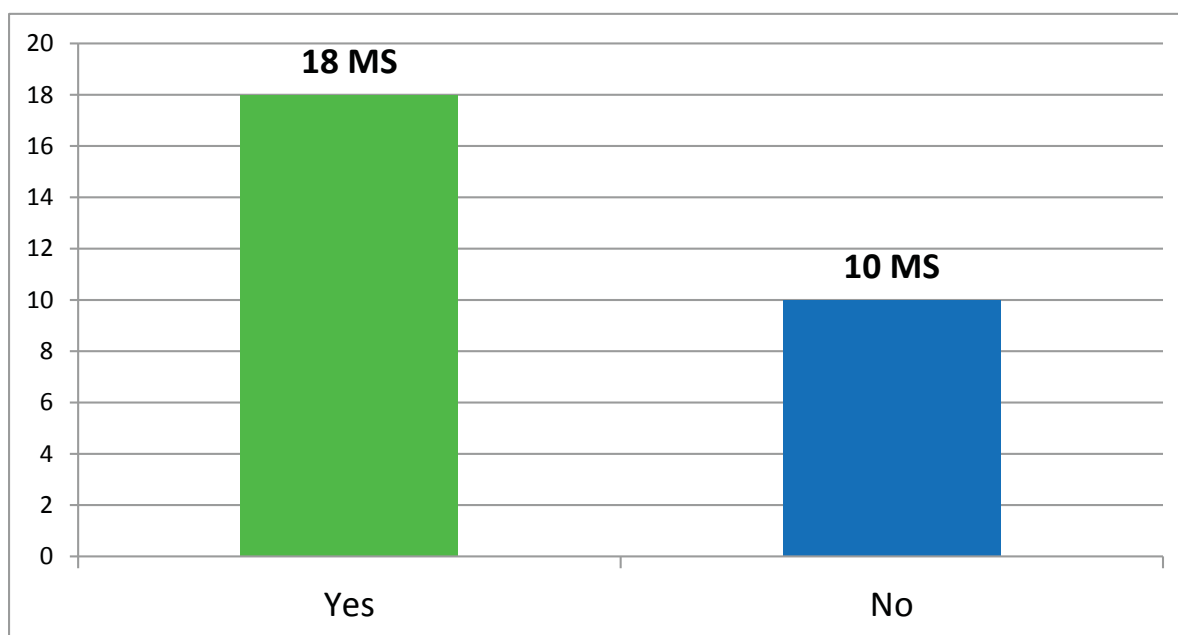


Figure 1. The number of the MSs that have criteria to prioritise contingency planning. Yes – Member State has criteria to prioritise contingency planning; No – Member State does not have criteria to prioritise contingency planning.

MSs listed pests for which they have the contingency plan(s) in place. Contingency plans for *Bursaphelenchus xylophilus*³ and *Xylella fastidiosa*⁴ are obligatory according to Commission Implementing Decisions. However, not all MSs indicated the existence of contingency plans for those pests.

Figure 2 illustrates that six (6) MSs have drawn up contingency plans for ring rot and brown rot, four (4) MSs for Grapevine flavescence dorée and four (4) MSs for *Anoplophora glabripennis*. Also, a number of protected zone pests are mentioned. One (1) MS has a contingency plan for the EU non-regulated pest (*Tecia solanivora*). One (1) MS has a contingency plan for specific production sites (tomato) and one (1) for generic forestry.

³ Commission Impelmenting Desicion (EU) 2012/535

⁴ Comission Implementig Desicion (EU) 2015/789

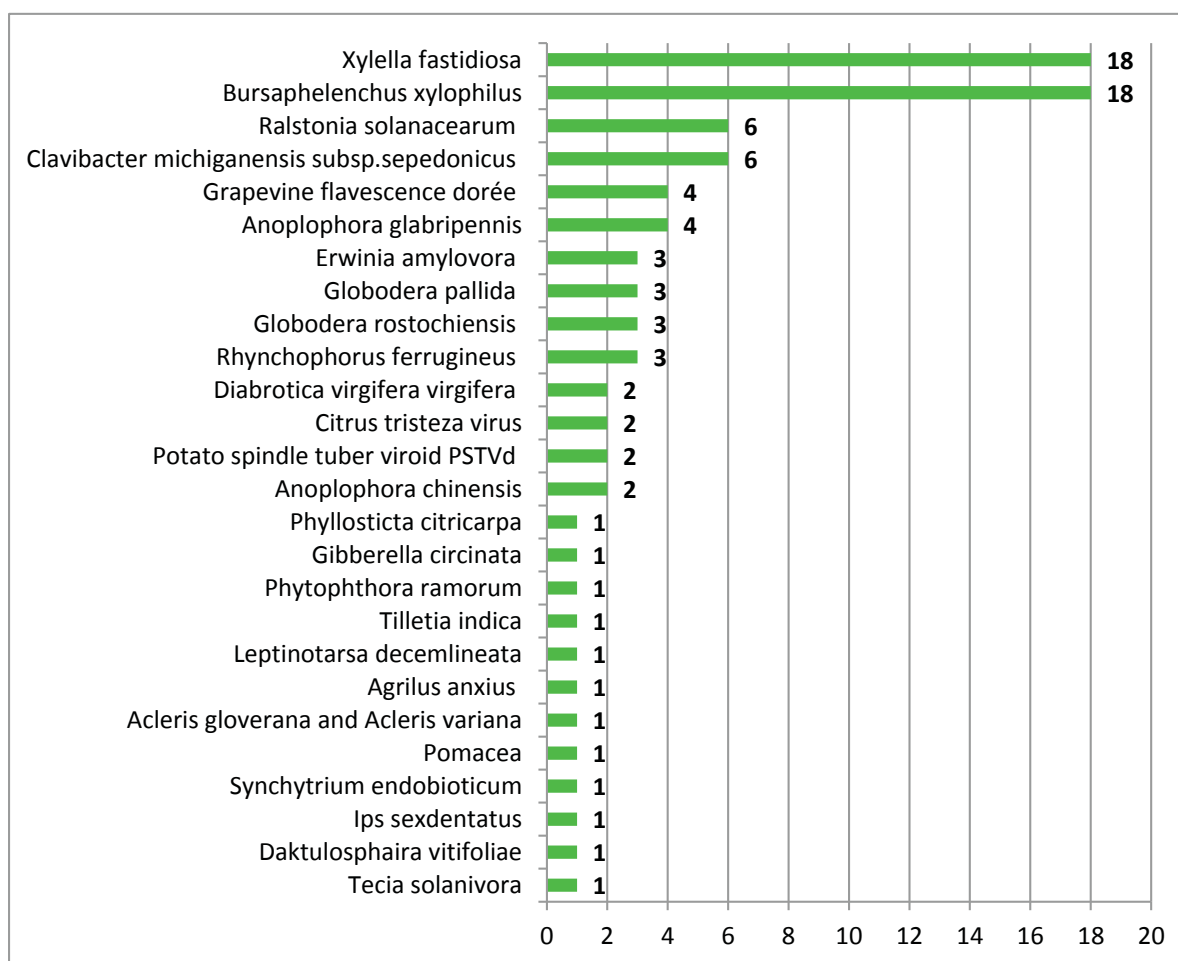


Figure 2. Pests for which Member States have contingency plans in place.

1.1.3. 5.1.3 Stakeholders' Involvement and Awareness Raising

Figure 3 illustrates that most MSs involve stakeholders in the drawing up of contingency plan(s). Mainly these are other governmental institutions (e.g. forestry agencies, environmental agencies, etc.), laboratories, academic institutions (e.g. universities, scientific institutes, etc.), forestry and producers' organisations. Other ministries, local governmental institutions (e.g. municipalities), experts in specific areas (e.g. arborists) and National Rescue Service are involved less frequently.

Contingency plans are publicly available in twenty (20) MSs. It was clarified that contingency plans are available on the official page of the national competent authority or responsible authority, the official legislation source (journal, webpage, etc.), a special webpage or that contingency plans are available only on request.

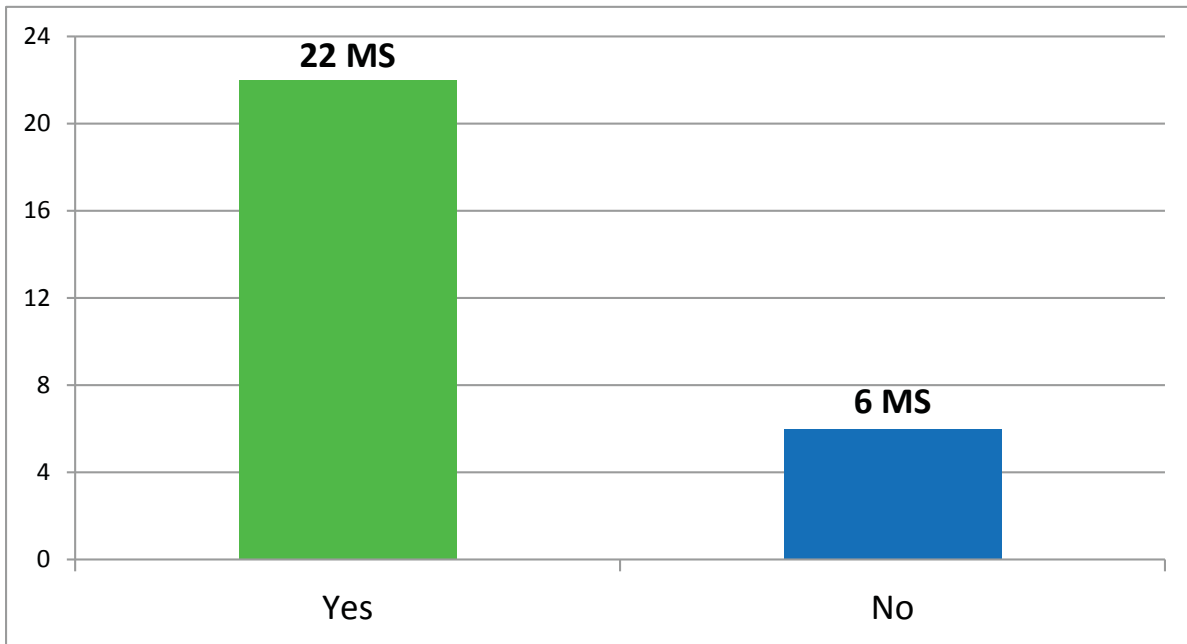


Figure 3. Overview of the number of Member States that involve stakeholders in the drawing up of the contingency plan(s). Yes – Member State involves stakeholders in the drawing up of the contingency plan(s); No – Member State does not involve stakeholders in the drawing up of the contingency plan(s)

1.1.4. 5.1.4 Difficulties

MSs indicated that they encountered difficulties with contingency planning. However, four (4) MSs have not encountered significant problems with it. (Figure 4)

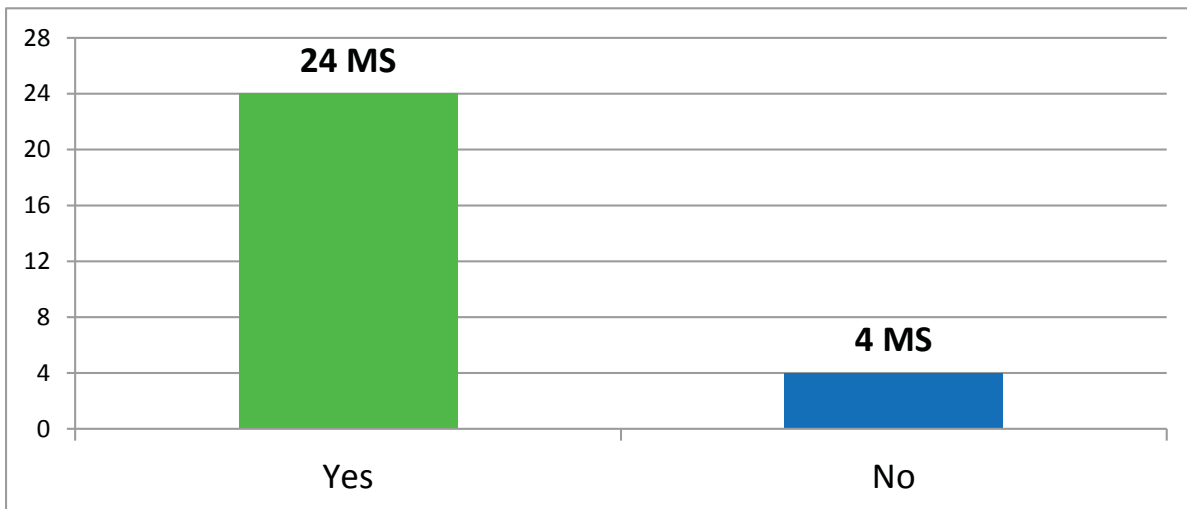


Figure 4. Overview of the number of Member States that have encountered difficulties with contingency planning. Yes – Member State has encountered difficulties with contingency planning; No – Member State has not encountered difficulties with contingency planning.

Most MSs indicated they have sufficient legal basis to take the necessary timely actions in emergency situations. However, nine (9) MSs do not have sufficient legislation in place. It was also highlighted that collaboration between different entities and authorities lacks an efficient legislative framework, which would be needed in order to implement and enforce the various components of a national plant health policy, and to regulate the activities of the different parties in both public and private sectors.

The difficulties that MSs have encountered with contingency planning were shortage of personnel, insufficient funding and limited knowledge on contingency planning. MSs also highlighted that it is a challenge to draw up a contingency plan which is useful, has optimal length, and which at the same time is practical and simple.

It was pointed out that the problem related to premises identification, entry into premises, identification of landowners, and implementation of eradication measures on behalf of the landowners is a very sensitive topic. Often an opposition by stakeholders to prescribed measures prevents the application of timely eradication actions.

Several MSs mentioned a range of difficulties that might occur while applying emergency measures to national conservation areas (national parks, biosphere reserves, etc.). Listed obstacles:

- Conflicts between nature conservation and plant health policy as both competences have the same hierarchical level;
- Different interpretation of the legislation during the oversight of the measures. For example, in the national legislation there is no reference to quarantine measures which are imposed regardless of the status of the protected area;
- Specific flora and fauna legislation prohibits applying certain phytosanitary measures in areas where endangered species are located. The need for a special permit issued by the national conservation area competent authority for eradication measures in protected areas delays an application of emergency measures;
- Delays while responding to outbreaks of harmful organisms in national conservation areas;
- Conflict can take place with national management plans of certain protected sites and special conservation areas, which prohibit or limit pesticide/insecticide application, felling of trees, preventive felling or uprooting of trees;
- Eradication measures (felling of plants or procedures for replanting) are not welcomed by the public, local authorities, environmental organisations, etc.;
- A system to protect trees of cultural and / or environmental importance can cause problems when those trees get infested;
- Plant health contingency plan should meet the definition of an 'imperative reason of overriding public interest'.

1.2. 5.2 Practical Experience

The aim of the second section of the questionnaire was to get an overview and analyse MSs' current situation regarding practical experiences – implementation of contingency plans, carrying out and organising simulation exercises.

1.2.1. 5.2.1 General information

Eighteen (18) MSs answered that they have implemented contingency plans in practice and eight (8) MSs answered that they have carried out simulation exercises to test their contingency plan(s)(Figure 5).

The simulation exercise is a new element in the EU Plant Health Regulation and a challenging one for MSs. However, eight (8) MSs have tested their contingency plans and carried out simulation exercises. Some MSs explained that there is no urgent need to carry out simulation exercises as real-life outbreaks have partly served as exercises. Also, some MSs include analyses of the actual cases and sharing of best practices into inspectors training sessions. One (1) MS carried out the simulation exercise at the Federal States level, but not at the National level.

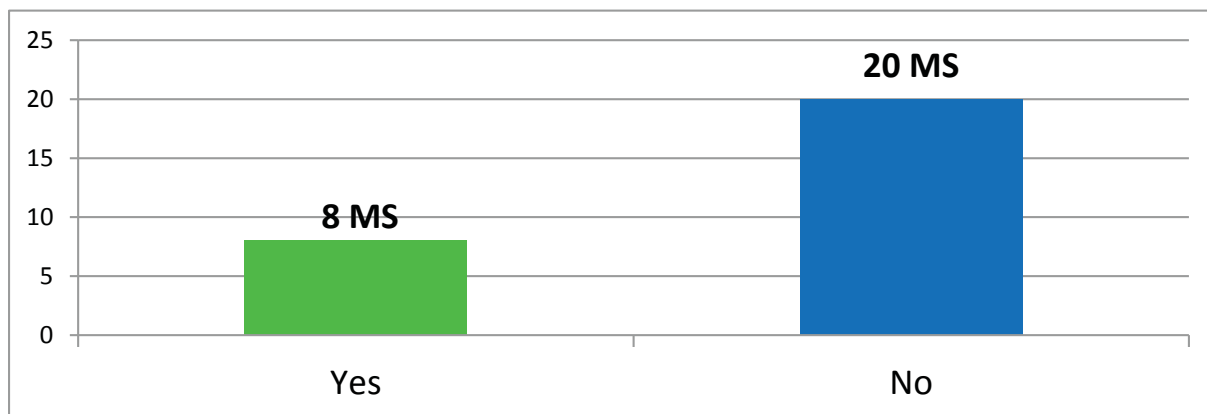


Figure 5. Overview of the number of Member States that have carried out simulation exercises to test the contingency plan(s). Yes – Member State has carried out simulation exercise(s); No – Member State has not carried out any simulation exercise(s).

The most common type of simulation exercise that has been carried out among the eight (8) MSs is table-top exercise - carried out by six (6) MSs. Discussion based exercise has been carried out by five (5) MSs and two (2) MSs have carried out live (real-time) exercise. There was also an EFSA workshop in which several southern MSs and the Commission participated (Figure 6).

The majority of MSs that had carried out simulation exercises updated their contingency plan after assessment of the outcome of the simulation exercise.

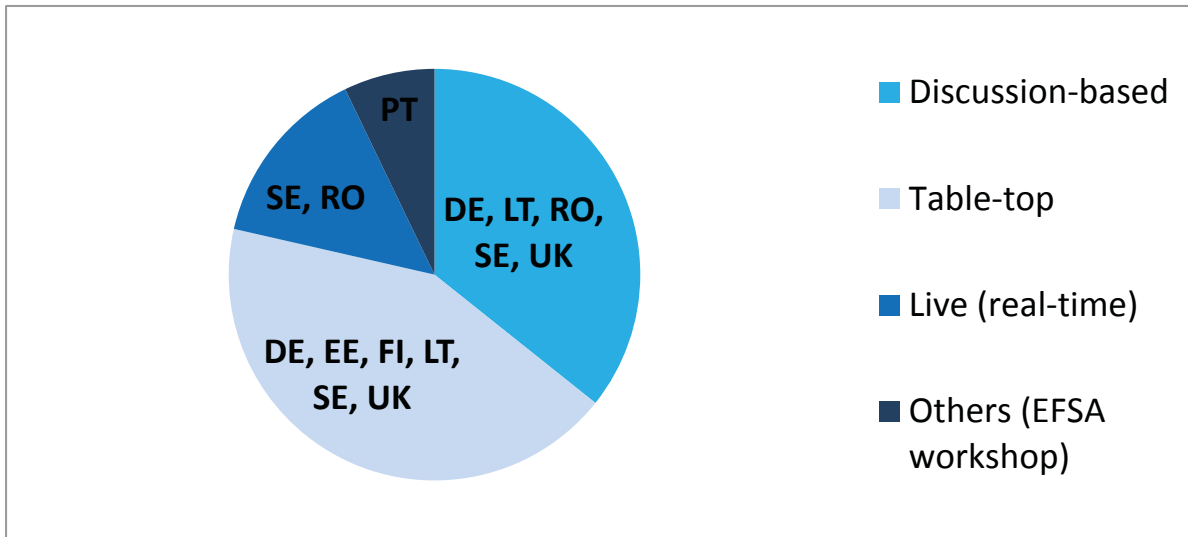


Figure 6. Types of simulation exercises Member States have carried out.

1.2.2. 5.2.2 Involvement

MSs who carried out simulation exercises responded that other governmental institutions (e.g., forestry agencies, environmental agencies, etc.) were involved. Also, it was mentioned that laboratories, local governmental bodies (e.g., municipality) and other ministries were involved, as well as forestry organisations, producers' organisations, experts in specific areas (e.g., arborists), National Rescue Service or Academic institutions (e.g., universities, scientific institutes, etc.). Some other NPPOs' representatives, representatives from EFSA, EPPO, EC and professional representation of farmers (in the context of *Diabrotica virgifera*) were mentioned too.

Five (5) MSs invited neighbouring countries to participate in their simulation exercise to share an experience and find some common points.

Latvia and Finland were invited to participate in the simulation exercise carried out by Estonia.

Estonia participated in a simulation exercise carried out by Finland regarding pine wood nematode.

Sweden has carried out several simulation exercises and invited Norway to participate in simulation exercise regarding pine wood nematode.

Spain, Italy, Greece, France, Cyprus and Malta participated in a simulation exercise carried out by Portugal.

In a simulation exercise held in the United Kingdom representatives of the United Kingdom's Devolved Administrations (i.e., Wales and Scotland) were involved. Also, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (UK) cooperates with the Republic of Ireland in developing and revising contingency plans.

1.2.3. 5.2.3 Positive outcomes

As it was previously mentioned eighteen (18) MSs have implemented contingency plans in practice. These MSs were asked if it was useful to have a contingency plan and whether it helped to cope with the tasks. The MSs brought out several positive aspects:

- Implementation actions described step by step facilitate the application of measures without delay;
- Clarified responsibilities of different authorities and stakeholders involved;
- Necessary financial resources made available at short notice;
- Legal provisions were issued immediately;
- Being publicly available enhances the transparency of contingency measures;
- Contingency plans helped in showing the NPPO's strategy on how to prevent the spread of the pests in areas without outbreaks;
- Practical experiences have been utilized when completing the contingency plan;
- General plan outlines the creation of the organisational structure, identifies personnel and collaborators involved, explains the fundamental principles of crisis organisation, and details the content and logic of the sequence of activities;
- Pest-specific plans investigate and describe the particular pest's epidemiology, survey and eradication methodologies, legislation, stakeholders and communicative messages.

MSs who carried out simulation exercises outlined the main positive experiences regarding the drawing up of the contingency plan:

- Clear and general view of the problem and risk;
- Helps to organise work and chain of command to carry out more reliable and effective actions, as well as preparedness for quick response and implementation of emergency measures without delay after the official confirmation of the pest presence;
- Identification of problems at an early stage;
- Helps to identify gaps in preparedness and in the relevant national legislation;
- Listing of relevant parties and their responsibilities, as well as expertise and equipment that is needed in the case of an outbreak of a specific pest;
- Prediction of financial and material aspects;
- Involvement of several entities (private and public) that allows a greater relationship and preparation to face an outbreak;
- Awareness raising of the employees, all concerned authorities, stakeholders and general public;
- A good means of positive communication to public;
- Putting existing expertise into one document;
- During consultations with stakeholders the relevant stakeholders could see that the NPPO had a strategy to manage the outbreak and prevent further spread and not only to act upon a single infected field;

- Possibility of taking some action in advance, which allows for a relentless action in the event of a crisis, e.g. agreements, contracts, contact details to different authorities, laboratories and other actors, a communication plan to follow.

1.2.4. 5.2.4 Difficulties

MSs identified main difficulties they faced while implementing contingency plans and simulation exercises in practice:

- Territorial scope of application;
- Survey radius;
- Demarcated zones;
- Conflicts with landowners affected by the eradication measures;
- Regional legislation to be adopted;
- Lack of experience and information about the pest, which lead to errors / omissions in prioritising the tasks;
- Time management;
- Need to take into account the current situation and make sure the contingency plan is up to date;
- Internal controversies as to the distribution of responsibilities, how to run procedures and which methodologies to use;
- A prepared contingency plan do not fully reflect real life cases and did not give answers to difficult situations;
- Lack of awareness of growers and stakeholders, although dissemination of information was included as part of a contingency measure;
- Absence of a definitive scientific research.

As only eight (8) MSs have carried out a simulation exercises to test the contingency plans, the rest were asked why haven't they carried out any simulation exercises. The reasons included: no legal obligation, organisation and communication difficulties between local and central NPPO/ministry and lack of resources (personnel, funding, time). A number of MSs responded that a simulation exercise is planned for the near future.

From those eight (8) MSs who carried out simulation exercises four (4) MSs responded that they had encountered difficulties when organising or carrying out simulation exercises. The main difficulty was limited knowledge to practically implement the simulation exercise. One (1) MSs brought out insufficient collaboration with other authorities and parties involved.

Only two (2) MSs that have carried out simulation exercises said that the contingency plan tested was not fit for purpose. They indicated that some parts were missing (e.g. which actions should be taken in case of pest suspicion) or were not fit for purpose and stressed that crisis communication part was a challenging one.

After assessment of the outcome of the simulation exercise three (3) MSs did not update their contingency plan. The reasons behind this were lack of resources and collaboration or no need for an update.

1.3. 5.3 Resources

The goal of the third section of the questionnaire was to get an overview of the resources available to MSs for contingency planning and simulation exercises.

1.3.1. 5.3.1 Coordination

Almost half the MSs do not have an inter-institutional task force for contingency planning, meaning a group of experts from different authorities. Only nine (9) MSs have such a task force and two (2) MSs are of the opinion that it is not appropriate because it is more effective to define task force groups on a case-by-case basis (relevant experts are selected to participate in the task force group) or different responsible administrations on federal and regional level and scientific institutions also work together when drawing up contingency plans.

MSs who have an inter-institutional task force were asked to specify the members of such a task force. Representatives come usually from the NPPO, ministries, National Phytosanitary Committee, scientific organisation, relevant producer associations (e.g. Plant Protection Chamber, National Agricultural Chamber, Producers boards, etc.) or experts. One (1) MS also specified that some Federal States created a dedicated group of people from the Ministry, the regional Plant Protection Service, the Forestry Service and the Agricultural Chamber, where appropriate.

Coordination in crisis situation is a key element. Sixteen (16) MSs responded that they have an appointed crisis manager at their organisation. Those MSs where a crisis manager is missing use very different single command lines depending on different administrative levels. For example:

- A high level phytosanitary official (e.g. Chief Inspector, CHOPS, Head of Plant Health Sector, etc.) is responsible for the implementation of plant health contingency plans and for giving orders;
- In UK on a case by case basis, by an order of BFSAs Executive Director's a Management Team is set up headed by the Deputy CEO, responsible for Plant Health issues. The Management team also includes the Director of the Plant Health Directorate and the Director of the Central Laboratory of Plant Quarantine. The team includes phytosanitary experts, laboratory specialists, financial specialists, jurists, and researchers;
- Coordination of the different levels of administration is the responsibility of the federal and regional governments;
- The National Phytosanitary Committee proposes and approves the contingency plan; The Central Phytosanitary Service drafts the plan with the advice of the National scientific Committee; The Regional Phytosanitary Services implements the contingency plan;

- Rights for decision making are written down in the Rules of Procedures of our organisation and responsibilities in job descriptions;
- Crises will be managed by the general manager (single command line) of the authority;
- The Ministry of Agriculture (national NPPO) is the central and competent authority responsible for all activities in relation to plant quarantine;
- Crisis managers are appointed only in some Federal States.

1.3.2. 5.3.2 Budget and Staff

Most MSs responded that a separate budget for contingency planning is not allocated and almost all MSs responded that a separate budget for a simulation exercise is not allocated. Some MSs said that contingency planning is covered from the common budget and this is an integral part of the tasks of the NPPO. Some MSs said that simulation exercises will be covered from the common budget.

Regarding the availability of staff for contingency planning fifteen (15) MSs mentioned they face difficulties with insufficient number of staff. Thirteen (13) MSs have available personnel for contingency planning (Figure 6).

The majority of respondents answered that the available staff for contingency planning have sufficient qualification. Nevertheless all MSs indicated the urgent need for specific training for contingency planning (Figure 7).

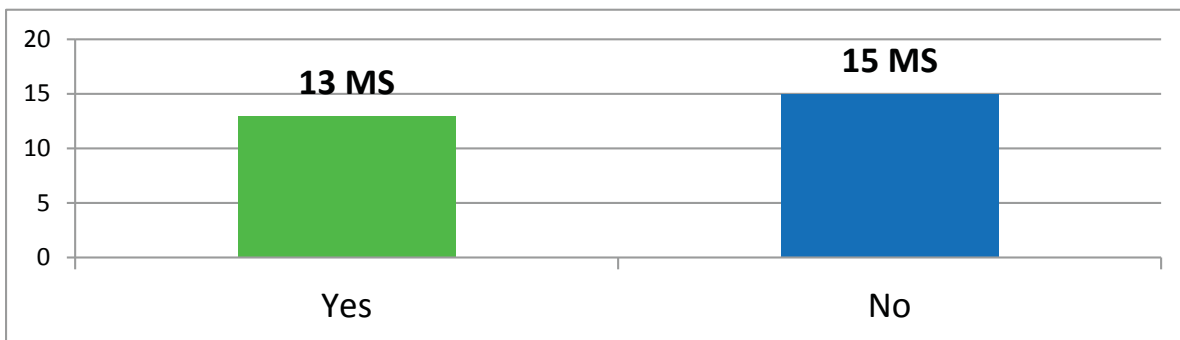


Figure 6. Overview of the number of Member States that have sufficient number of staff available for contingency planning. Yes – Member State has sufficient number of staff available for contingency planning; No – Member State does not have sufficient number of staff available for contingency planning.

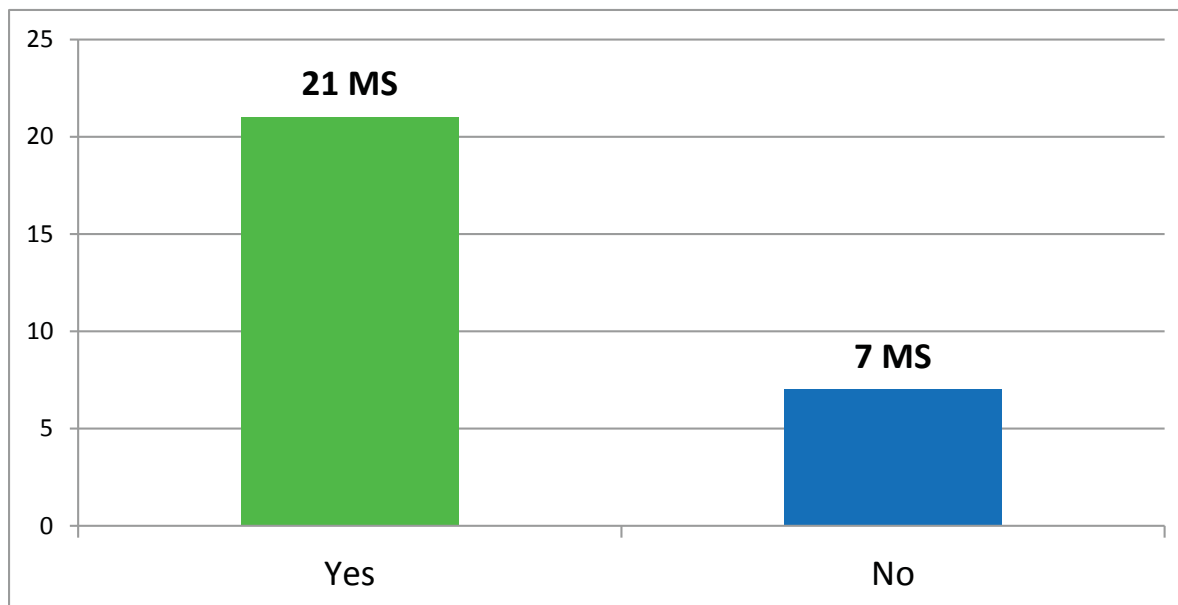


Figure 7. Overview of the number of Member States whose staff have sufficient qualifications for contingency planning. Yes – Member State staff has sufficient qualifications for contingency planning; No – Member State staff does not have sufficient qualifications for contingency planning.

1.3.3. 5.3.3 Difficulties

Most MSs said there is no separate budget allocated for contingency planning. For this reason there are insufficient recourses for:

- Taking samples, diagnostic and carrying out of imposed plant health measures;
- Additional surveys (visual inspections with sampling) in nurseries, parks, orchards and other public places;
- Emergency measures, public awareness, education, etc.;
- Researching best international practice and then robustly revising generic contingency plans or permitting the development of pest specific contingency plans.

The main shortcomings related to staff number and qualification for contingency planning are:

- NPPO in general has had insufficient number of staff;
- Lack of skilled and experienced staff, the task must be implemented as an additional (new) obligation by the current staff;
- Lack of human resources, especially with regard to the phytosanitary inspection body;
- Available staff is not specifically trained;
- The main burden is represented by the block of recruitment and career;
- In case of severe outbreaks, there is a shortage of staff for plant health checks and ordering measures in the demarcated areas and of laboratory capacities;
- Limited training on the subject;

- Lack of skilled staff and training instruments;
- Available staff does not have experience in contingency planning and organising of simulation exercises;
- Lack of personnel for crisis management;
- Insufficient knowledge in communication with public and the media, as well as awareness raising;
- Insufficient knowledge of methods of treatment and disposal of infested plants and plant products.

MSs also highlighted that they needed assistance in trainings on crisis management and on contingency planning and simulation exercises.

6. EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

During the Commission Working Group for Chief Officers on Plant Health (11-13 October, 2017, Tallinn, Estonia) plant health experts from Finland, Austria and Estonia gave presentations on their practical experience in drawing up contingency plans and carrying out simulation exercises. The lessons learned were highlighted and shared with the COPHS. Lessons learned combine knowledge from real life experience as well as from simulation exercises.

Lessons learned:

Organisational – it is essential to ensure that the responsibilities, qualifications, rights and roles of each party are defined and recognized.

- Defining the “single authority” responsible for contingency planning in the MS;
- We have to clarify the roles and responsibilities of different authorities and also workers who are involved in the case;
- Define crisis management group;
- Keep the contingency plan simple – you don't know who will read and implement the plan when it's needed. Use clear, plain language. Keep it practical and relevant – don't just create a document. Make sure you don't plan too much and you can respond quickly and effectively to a crisis situation;
- It is important to start contingency planning as early as possible. Having a plan you secure beforehand and may save your organisation from failure in the event of pest finding;
- Write down all the steps of crisis handling - keep log data!

Communication – good crisis management cannot exist without good communication. Crisis communication planning can help you deal effectively in case of unexpected emergencies. The public figure of the crisis manager would be helpful because for clarity reasons information should come from a single source.

- Awareness raising is an important tool for contingency planning;

- Good communication between the different administrative bodies and with public is essential, rules about communication with operators and the public are needed, division of tasks between different authorities and other parties;
- Crisis communication needs also a leader;
- Define main messages and communication policy.

Legal – a legislative framework is needed in order to implement and enforce the various components of a national plant health policy, and to regulate the activities of the different parties in both the public and private sectors.

- Legal guidance throughout the drafting process. Many countries defined that the main challenge is the legal framework (in some countries there are differences between Federal and Provincial level);
- We have to plan eradication measures beforehand as much as possible and at a level as practical as possible.

Resources – depending on the situation, we need to carry out certain actions and resources are needed for each of them. Good preparedness means ensuring beforehand that resources are available on time when needed.

- Contingency planning requires an investment of time and resources – it takes time to involve all relevant bodies and prepare a good plan;
- We should estimate resources and costs needed for eradication measures beforehand, in order to know what we need at least for handling the crisis;
- In case of some harmful organism (e.g. Pine Wood Nematode) the magnitude of eradication measures is massive;
- We also have to estimate beforehand the magnitude of compensations for forest owners;
- Simulation exercising tests procedures, not people.

7. THE MSS SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE CONTINGENCY PLANNING IN THE EU

Training

- More practical trainings and workshops for exchange of experiences and best practices (successful eradication stories) between MSs on contingency planning and simulation exercises organised by BTSF, EFSA (EFSA crisis preparedness event in Portugal for plant health was a good initiative), EPPO, EUPHRESKO, etc.;
- Training of communicators.

MSs activities and cooperation

- Simulation exercises between MSs or participation in simulation exercise(s) of other MSs as an observer;
- A strong import inspection regime and regular phytosanitary inspections of EU internal transports of high risk commodities should be part of effective contingency planning;
- Risk assessments at national levels.

European Commission coordination

- Contingency plans available for use (MSs contingency plans publicly available on NPPO website or on CIRCA or good examples available on CIRCA);
- Creation of a list/group of experts at EU level with specific expertise and experiences in crisis situations and contingency planning to assist MSs;
- A draft of common guidelines and/or specific emergency measures to be applied at European level; have an up to date EU database on pest categorisation of regulated harmful pests and diseases since factors of dispersal influence greatly the efficiency of the contingency plan (preparation of demarcated zone) and MSs to have access to this information;
- MS to have access to up to date information on presence/spread of harmful organisms; some kind of generic template for contingency plans, could also help ensure a common approach to contingency planning across all MSs;
- Discussion with MSs experts at EU level on guidance and sharing of experiences in order to have better cooperation, enable better identification of appropriate actions and possible EU harmonisation;
- Networking between MSs and laboratories;
- Monitoring and evaluation in order to identify priorities for successive reviews;
- Risk assessments at EU level.

Communication

- Guidelines for interaction with neighbouring (including third) countries in conducting simulation exercises;
- Experts from third countries where the pests are present could be invited to share their experiences with control and monitoring;
- Political support is needed to raise the awareness and reinforce controls as it is too late to react when the pests has been found in the MS;
- Engagement with target groups;
- Development of awareness raising strategies including toolkits and awareness raising materials;
- Improve the communication between Public-Private sectors in case of crisis management.