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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Working Party on Civil Protection

Subject: Work programme of the Portuguese Presidency in the field of civil protection

Delegations will find in the Annex the work programme of the Portuguese Presidency in the field of civil protection.

Work Programme
of the Portuguese Presidency in the field of Civil Protection
January-June 2021

A Presidency trio ensures that some specific, relevant topics receive continuous attention over an 18-month period, allowing a wider set of shared priorities to be accomplished. Other important topics identified by each Presidency enrich and complement the joint Presidency Programme undertaken by the Council during each six-month period.

Portugal will therefore take forward the work started by the German Presidency, and, with the active participation of Slovenia, will further develop the core work of the Civil Protection Working Party in direct collaboration with all other EU Members States.

The main direction of the Trio Programme in the area of civil protection is guided by the following statement:

In light of the recent emergencies, the EU needs to further streamline coordination efforts between Member States and strengthen the resilience of our societies. The three Presidencies are determined to take full account of the challenges presented to the EU by the coronavirus pandemic, including in the framework of European civil protection. Taking into consideration current developments and in the light of experience gained, the Presidencies will aim to further enhance the EU's crisis response capacity and strengthen the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, including through the further development of rescEU and other capacities, and continue the lessons-learnt process through the setting-up and launching of the EU Knowledge Network, which is to be systematically taken forward on the basis of a pandemic scenario.

Portugal, recognising the significance of the COVID-19 outbreak in the context of civil protection both at national and EU level, has emphasised this relevant topic in its Presidency Programme.

It is well known that the COVID-19 outbreak presented extra challenges for civil protection (CP) services. In addition to the daily, routine activities connected with the many risks and emergencies that CP faces on a permanent basis, CP also had to manage the impacts of an overwhelming public health event.

The situation became even more complex as many professionals and volunteers dedicated to emergency operations became infected with COVID-19 or were obliged to self-isolate as a means of preventing potential contaminations. In addition, several local-level community activities normally performed by CP services (such as carrying out exercises, executing direct awareness activities or carrying out training actions) ended up being restricted or even cancelled due to the need to maintain social distance.

As a result, CP services had to develop or reinforce contingency plans in order to be able to continue providing emergency management in a context of greater demands but with fewer human resources. The complexity of this task was amplified by the uncertainty around how the situation would evolve and the need to keep a number of workers available to perform their daily tasks remotely using communication technologies, thus increasing the exposure of critical systems to cyber attacks.

The COVID-19 outbreak has therefore shown that: (1) national cross-sectorial resilience is something which we all must promote; (2) cascading effects identified through a scenario-based approach must be considered when assessing all risks; and (3) the scale of emergencies and the global dimension of their effects call for a collective and coordinated EU response.

In addition, building on the first lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Commission has presented a proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision [No 1313/2013/EU](#) on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Due to the urgency of its adoption, the UCPM legislation will be a major priority of the Portuguese Presidency.

1. UCPM legislation

On 2 June 2020 the Commission submitted to the Council a proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Acknowledging the need to quickly conclude negotiations, a mandate for negotiations with the European Parliament was achieved during the German Presidency.

The Portuguese Presidency will therefore conduct negotiations with the European Parliament (trilogues) on the basis of the mandate approved on 30 November 2020, which amends and complements the partial mandate approved on 7 October 2020.

2. Civil protection services business continuity – lessons learned from the coronavirus pandemic

The COVID-19 outbreak has shown that CP services must adapt in order to avoid disruption, and be able to guarantee an appropriate response when dealing, simultaneously and on a daily basis, with other types of emergencies. Taking into account that the most relevant asset (people) can be affected, a decrease in the human resources available to perform CP activities is of major importance.

The Portuguese Presidency will seek to analyse, through a seminar, the experiences and good practices of CP services in adapting to this complex outbreak scenario, maintaining high levels of operational response to multiple emergencies. Special attention will be given to the lessons identified in relation to business continuity plans for CP services, an aspect that is particularly important for the improvement of resilience, taking into account the possibility of future new waves of outbreaks, which will almost certainly occur at the same time as other relevant emergencies resulting from major risks such as floods, fires or earthquakes.

3. Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network

The Portuguese Presidency will follow up on the work pursued under the German Presidency on this topic and further support the establishment and initial functioning of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network.

4. Resilient entities legislation

On 16 December 2020, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the resilience of critical entities (this Directive will repeal Directive 2008/114/EC from the date of its entry into force).

The PROCIV Working Party, with the participation of critical infrastructure protection experts (PROCIV WP / CIP formation), will start discussing this proposal in the first quarter of 2021.

Other issues

5. European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction

During the Presidency trio period, Portugal will host the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR), in November 2021. The EFDRR will build on the outcomes of the 2018 EFDRR held in Rome and on the 2019 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction held in Geneva. The Portuguese Presidency will contribute to a common EU position on the Plan of Action 2020-2030, which is to be adopted during the event.

Timetable of events during the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU



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