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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

**Capacity Progress Report on the Response Capacities of the Union Civil Protection
Mechanism**

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1. Executive Summary

This capacity progress report represents the forward-looking portion of the Article 34.2 reporting obligation on the response capacities of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) as established by Decision No 1313/2013/EU. It outlines a series of recommendations to further increase the effectiveness of the UCPM's response capacities. The recommendations are based on the analysis of the current state of the UCPM response capacities as set out in the corresponding Staff Working Document 'Union Civil Protection Mechanism capacity development and gaps overview'.

With the Preparedness Union Strategy, Europe is pivoting towards a Union-wide preparedness across all relevant sectors and stakeholders. As part of the response to changes in the risk and hazard landscape, the response capacities of the UCPM can provide a concrete and operational contribution to a more proactive, better coordinated and upscaled European crisis management approach.

Requests for assistance are not only being addressed to the UCPM for typical civil protection emergencies such as wildfires, earthquakes and floods, but also increasingly to assist in more complex emergencies where multiple hazards and vulnerabilities often interact to create protracted crises. To maintain its ability to support Member States and participating States (MS/PS) in times of need, the UCPM must continue to develop its internal structures and processes, as well as its cooperation with external partners. The 15 key recommendations outlined in this report aim to guide the evolution of the UCPM's response capacities, focusing on developing its abilities to meet the emerging challenges and advancing its preparedness efforts.

Recommendations for the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP):

- i. Work towards closing the ECPP capacity gaps identified in this report (e.g. in the areas of wildfire extinction, emergency medical capacity, maritime, coastal and inland water pollution incidents, bridges, electricity generation, and transport and logistics).
- ii. Strengthen coordination with and between MS/PS in pursuit of capacity goals.
- iii. Reinforce financing for adaptation grants.
- iv. Incentivising for ECPP registrations by increasing financing during deployments.

Recommendations for rescEU:

- i. Focus future capacity development primarily on multi-purpose and multi-use capacities (e.g. for shelter, electricity, telecommunication, medical care, and transport and logistics) and, where necessary, complementary specialised support capacities (e.g. in CBRN-related areas or specialised medical expertise for specific hazards).
- ii. Enable predictable budget reinforcement for replenishment post-deployment, pursuing a more proactive approach to capacity development.
- iii. Increase the effectiveness of rescEU deployments through quicker deployment decisions and pre-positioning options.
- iv. Simplify co-financing rates for deployments of rescEU capacities and streamline the process of procurement.

Broader considerations for response capacity development:

- i. Pursue the use of performance-based goals for future UCPM capacity development.
- ii. Consider better information exchange on the availability of specific national capacities to increase the overall efficiency of the UCPM.
- iii. Improve understanding of the needs of vulnerable groups during emergency operations.
- iv. Further enhance cross-sectoral situational awareness of the ERCC.
- v. Consider conflict/war scenarios in further capacity development.
- vi. Expand private-sector partnerships where appropriate, including the development of donation hubs into a broader UCPM capability.
- vii. Consider the stockpiling of a wider range of emergency response items.

Overall, the UCPM's response will need to go beyond traditional emergency response capacities, supporting sector stakeholders to contribute their specific expertise to preparedness, in line with the Preparedness Union Strategy.

List of acronyms

CBRN - Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear

CEMS - Copernicus Emergency Management Service

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease 2019

DRG - Disaster Resilience Goal

ECPP - European Civil Protection Pool

ERCC - Emergency Response Coordination Centre

EU - European Union

GSS - Global Situation System

MEDEVAC - Medical Evacuation

MFF - Multiannual Financial Framework

MS - Member States

PPE - Personal Protective Equipment

PS - Participating States

RfA – Request for Assistance

SWD - Staff Working Document

UCPM - Union Civil Protection Mechanism

2. Introduction

Under Article 34(2) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, the Commission is required to report on progress made towards disaster resilience goals, capacity goals and remaining gaps in the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP, 'the Pool') taking into account the establishment of rescEU capacities. This should also include an overview of the budgetary and cost developments relating to response capacities, and an assessment of the need for further capacity developments at EU level.

By means of this report and its accompanying Staff Working Document (SWD) entitled 'Union Civil Protection Mechanism capacity development and gaps overview', the Commission provides an analysis of the significant response capacity developments under the UCPM from 2017 to 2024, as well as forward-looking recommendations on further capacity and capability needs. The objective is to ensure that the UCPM continues to evolve and remains an efficient resource that national authorities can rely on in emergencies, while, in a broader context, contributing to the implementation of the Preparedness Union Strategy.

The dynamic risk and threat landscape Europe is exposed to is already forcing the UCPM to adapt the tools at its disposal to unforeseen circumstances, assisting Member States and UCPM participating States (MS/PS) in ways that were considered unthinkable just a decade ago. Within the broader strategic framework of a Preparedness Union, the UCPM and, for the specific purpose of this report, the response capacities at its disposal, can make a concrete and operational contribution to a more proactive, better coordinated and upscaled European crisis management approach.

To that end, this report lays out a series of recommendations for further progress on UCPM response capacities. The recommendations are based on the annexed SWD and its analysis of the current risk and threat landscape; agreed planning assumptions under the Union-wide disaster scenarios developed; lessons learnt from recent UCPM deployments; and operational response capacity developments over recent years.

3. Recommendations for UCPM response capacities

The first set of recommendations in this report covers the ECPP, the second set addresses response capacities under rescEU, and the third set looks at broader recommendations that help to strengthen the UCPM's capacity to respond to disasters. Combined, these recommendations aim to further develop UCPM response capacities, contributing to the enhancement of the EU's crisis response capability. The report's conclusions contain a summary of its recommendations.

a. Recommendations for the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP)

i. Closing of capacity gaps

The ECPP is based on two pillars: i) quality assurance, through a certification scheme, to ensure compliance with UCPM standards in response operations; ii) more predictability as regards the availability of response capacities when the UCPM is activated. The ECPP consists of modules, other response capacities (including relief items) and categories of experts. They are all national capacities that are committed for one or more years and on a voluntary basis by Member States and UCPM

participating States to be deployed in the event of a UCPM activation. As one of the central pillars of the UCPM response capacity, the Pool represents MS commitment to solidarity in the event of disasters. On average, **ECPP deployments make up about 1/4 of the capacities deployed during UCPM activations** (see Figure 10 in SWD, page 32). A stronger ECPP would ensure that in times of crisis, solidarity between MS/PS remains a source of strength for the EU. The recommendations below are intended to foster a coordinated approach to the pursuit of the newly revised ECPP capacity goals, by further incentivising the commitment of MS capacities to the ECPP.

A comparison of the capacities registered in the ECPP with the newly revised capacity goals presented in the accompanying SWD (see Annex 1 in the SWD, page 45) reveals several gaps. **Aerial forest firefighting capacities** are still underrepresented in terms of registered ECPP capacities, with helicopter-based modules being completely absent. Certain types of **medical capacities** also present a challenge for the Pool. Mobile biosafety laboratories are particularly needed, as are specialised care teams, with only one capacity undergoing certification against the eight capacities stipulated in the goal. While two medical evacuation capacities (MEDEVAC) are undergoing certification to meet the ECPP capacity goal, MEDEVAC and MEDEVAC of highly infectious patients continues to represent a consistent gap for the UCPM, as a combination of existing rescEU and planned ECPP capacities still fall short of the MEDEVAC capacity outlined in the broader Disaster Resilience Goal 4 'Respond – To enhance the EU Civil Protection Mechanism response capacity', which sets performance targets for UCPM response capabilities (SWD, pages 26-28).

The most recent ECPP capacity goals have also added a series of unrepresented capacities to the ECPP. More response capacities should be committed to the ECPP to respond to **maritime, coastal and inland waters pollution incidents**. These new gaps are in line with the generally more complex disasters the UCPM is expected to respond to. They include response capacities such as **bridges and electricity generation, and there is a clear need for logistics and transport capacities**. Further voluntary commitments from MS/PS should prioritise these identified gaps.

ii. Strengthening coordination between MS/PS to actively pursue capacity goals

The decision to offer and register capacities in the ECPP is still left entirely to MS/PS to take internally. This voluntary process is inherent to the ECPP and should be maintained. However, **coordinated efforts to increase capacity goal coverage through ECPP resources would strengthen the UCPM response capacity**, while making the most efficient use of MS/PS and Commission resources that are required to offer, certify and register a capacity in the ECPP.

As a result of the ambitious new capacity goals for the ECPP set in Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/704, the current attainment level for the capacity goals has dropped to ~15% from ~31% of the stated capacity goals. This is largely due to an overall quantitative increase in the ECPP configuration as outlined in the new goals. The desired capacity goal has increased by an average of 160% per existing capacity category. The number of different capacity types listed in the goals has also increased significantly, from 37 to 50 different capacity types. This gap should be viewed as temporary while MS/PS align their offers to the ECPP goals, and the capacities offered undergo the certification process.

Coordination between and with MS/PS in the pursuit of these goals could yield significant benefits, by enabling MS/PS to make more informed decisions on which capacities to prioritise in their offers to the Pool. Regional discussions about planned ECPP offers may provide opportunities for cost-sharing

through the **development of multinational modules and promote a more balanced geographical distribution across the UCPM area** of relevant capacity types, depending on the local/regional risk profile.

The Commission can also actively support the more coordinated pursuit of the UCPM capacity goals through a variety of measures, such as incentivising the registration of the capacity types needed and using existing fora to foster coordination among MS/PS. The Commission could organise discussions in existing fora such as the Commission Expert Group on Capacities and other technical settings, as well as the Civil Protection Committee, in order to **foster exchanges on the ECPP offers planned**. These discussions could be structured either by capacity category or by hazard. They could be based on existing policy objectives such as Union Disaster Resilience Goal (DRG) No 4, 'Respond - enhancing the Union Civil Protection Mechanism response capacity', which defines critical capacity categories, and the disaster scenarios developed, which provide valuable capacity-related insights (an overview of the current DRG No 4 coverage is provided in the SWD, Section 3.b, page 23).

Discussions at regional level on possible ECPP registrations would also enable national authorities to pursue the sensible geographical distribution of Pool capacities, while identifying opportunities to form multinational modules that divide the burden of maintaining the capacity among more stakeholders. Kickstarting and furthering the discussions would be a low-cost way for the Commission to support a more coordinated approach to achieving the capacity goals set out in Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/704¹.

Coordination regarding ECPP registrations would also help to identify the limits of the ECPP approach. Goals that cannot be covered through the ECPP despite MS/PS coordination could be directly addressed using rescEU or other instruments, such as cooperation with the private sector or third countries.

iii. Reinforcement of adaptation grants

A **reinforced adaptation grant scheme for the ECPP** could help to achieve unmet capacity goals.

MS/PS offering national capacities to the ECPP are eligible to apply for ECPP adaptation grants that provide financial support for repairs and upgrades, improving the readiness and performance of the capacity offered during UCPM deployments. Since their introduction, an average of EUR 4-5 million in adaptation grants have been awarded per year. While national authorities remain responsible for the cost of establishing and maintaining the national capacity they register in the Pool, the EU ensures that registered capacities can effectively be deployed and operate in international contexts.

The current evaluation criteria for the award of ECPP adaptation grants take into consideration whether a proposal for an **adaptation grant works toward achieving an unmet UCPM capacity goal**. Increasing the emphasis on this criterion during the evaluation process would provide an incentive for MS seeking adaptation grants to prioritise unmet capacity goals in their offers to the ECPP.

¹[Commission Recommendation of 8 February 2023 on Union disaster resilience goals 2023/C 56/01](#)
[C/2023/400](#)

A **budgetary reinforcement of the adaptation grant programme** would enable the Commission to continue supporting MS/PS that are making national capacities available for UCPM deployments.

iv. Incentivising ECPP offers and deployments

In the event of a UCPM activation, deployed ECPP capacities are eligible for a 75% co-funding rate for eligible costs related to the transport and the operation of the capacity. While this co-funding rate is advantageous compared to non-registered capacities, which only benefit from a 75% co-funding rate for the transport of the capacity (and not the operational costs) during a UCPM deployment, ECPP co-funding rates could be adapted to further incentivise the registration of capacities. **Increasing the funding for the transport and operation of ECPP capacities to up to 100%** would strengthen MS/PS confidence to offer additional capacities to the ECPP by removing uncertainties related to the costs of future deployments of their committed capacities through the UCPM. This adaptation of the co-funding conditions would incentivise future Pool offers and deployments, encouraging MS to make more of their national capacities available to the Pool and to deploy them.

b. Recommendations for rescEU

rescEU is the other pillar of the UCPM response capacity. It has quickly established itself as an operational asset, with 231 deployments between 2019 and 2024 (see Figure 18 in SWD, page 40). It provided life-saving support in a wide range of disaster scenarios, from stockpile releases related to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, to the 2023 earthquake in Türkiye and Syria and COVID-19, as well as regular deployments of aerial forest fire capacities during European wildfire seasons.

i. Multi-purpose and multi-use capacities and specialised support

As analysed in the accompanying SWD (pages 8-15), rescEU can be expected to be called upon for increasing types and numbers of emergencies in the future. While it may not be realistic to pursue the establishment of rescEU capacities for the quantities stipulated in the disaster scenarios developed under the UCPM, this scenario analysis, combined with operational experience of recent UCPM activations, can serve to guide a **two-pronged strategy for future rescEU development** specifically aimed at complementing registered ECPP capacities.

First, while bearing in mind the strategic importance of capacities tailored for specific emergencies, attention **should be paid to multi-purpose and multi-use capacities** that can provide support in a wide variety of scenarios. Where feasible, capacities that can be loaned and returned to serve for other emergencies would be a preferable option. Capacities that provide affected populations with essential services that are disrupted due to an emergency consistently offer a higher degree of operational versatility, as they focus on providing the affected population with a relatively fixed set of needs, rather than capacities that focus on a particular hazard. Floods, conflict scenarios, forest fires, earthquakes, large-scale population displacement and other emergencies all result in large numbers of people needing **shelter, energy, telecommunications and adequate medical care**, as well as **transport related capacities** for the movement of those goods or of the affected people themselves. Investing heavily in EU-level response capacities that meet these needs provides an assured value.

Large-scale emergencies, such as a major earthquake, can quickly exhaust national capacities and deplete the relevant stockpiles. Experience of smaller-scale emergencies such as floods also demonstrates that markets in surrounding areas can quickly become exhausted, complicating the

provision of the items needed to the population affected. Well positioned strategic reserve of widely needed capacities at continental level can help leverage Europe's size against national-scale disasters, allowing MS/PS to focus more of their resources on developing capacities specific to their particular risk profile.

These measures ensure that a larger proportion of the affected population quickly receives assistance, and free up coordination capacity during an emergency. Freed coordination capacity at EU and MS level could be better focused on deploying specialist capacities specific to the type of emergency, which may be more difficult to identify and deploy from within national systems.

Second, the scenarios developed under the UCPM also indicate a need to **simultaneously pursue the identification and development of key specialised capacities** which are not cost-effective to develop in the necessary quantities at national level. Aerial forest firefighting capacities and CBRN-related capacity developments being the most notable examples that have been successfully pursued according to this approach in recent years, in close coordination between MS/PS and the Commission. The potential future development of such capacities will continue to make use of that close coordination. The UCPM scenario-building initiative provides various indications of potential future needs in further **CBRN-related areas** or in **specialised medical expertise** for specific hazards, including the treatment of war wounds and/or mass casualty events.

ii. Proactive reinforcement

The UCPM has invested a significant portion of its budget (EUR 3.2 billion in 2019-2024) on developing capacities that were considered by MS/PS and the Commission to be sufficiently critical to warrant EU-level reinforcement beyond individual MS preparedness. In light of the evolving risk and hazard landscape, these **investments in rescEU should continue and be reinforced** where possible in order for the UCPM to be able to support MS/PS during large-scale emergencies that overwhelm national capacities in the future.

Current grants to establish and maintain rescEU capacities are set to expire by 2027, when the current 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) period ends. If funding to sustain the existing rescEU capacities is not made available, the established capacities would expire or be discontinued, and the significant investments made during their development would be lost. This includes strategic stockpiles for shelter, emergency power generation and CBRN and medical items, as well as the aerial firefighting capacities made available each year since 2019.

Forest firefighting aircraft made available under the transition rescEU capacity are particularly dependent on predictable funding as these aircraft made available annually for the wildfire season until the permanent fleet of rescEU firefighting aircraft becomes available.

The capacities in the current line-up have been established in a largely reactive manner, to deal with ongoing or imminent emergencies in one or several MS/PS. Consequently, they have mostly been drawn upon either straight away, at the time of their establishment, or within a one-year period thereafter. The UCPM's capacity to quickly adopt implementing acts, award grants, and then procure material and equipment for MS to establish rescEU capacities, demonstrates the system's adaptability. While adaptability is key to a functioning disaster management system, a reactive approach needs to be complemented by better forward-thinking and a culture of proactive preparedness to meet the challenges of Europe's new risk and threat landscape.

While the UCPM and its stakeholders understood the need for EU-level response capacities beyond those provided by national systems, a consensus on the concept of strategic EU-level response capacities was only reached after the tragic forest fires in Portugal in 2017 and the 2018 forest fire season affecting northern Europe. For additional capacities such as medical/CBRN and shelter stockpiles, the pattern was repeated twice, with additional funding from the European Union Recovery Instrument becoming available during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and after the return of war in Europe in 2022 to enable legal acts to be adopted reactively, allowing for the development of rescEU capacities to cover urgent needs. This approach is costly and less effective as it requires materials and expertise to be procured under time pressure or during a period of high global demand, as was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Proactively strengthening rescEU as an EU-level reserve of response capacity is directly in line with key action 26 of the Preparedness Union Strategy, which calls for the boosting of the existing rescEU capacities in combination with the identification of additional key capacities for possible development at EU level. To effectively boost the rescEU capacities, development should occur in a complementary manner with the development of other initiatives such as the ECPP, leveraging respective advantages for the most effective use of resources.

The challenges ahead in terms of climate change and geopolitical developments require the UCPM to learn from the experiences gained in establishing rescEU. To live up to its potential as a strategic response capacity, **rescEU needs to be developed before emergencies unfold**. As highlighted in the accompanying SWD, through the output provided by the scenario-building initiative in consultation with MS, the UCPM has provided an informed overview of the capacities needed to respond to the 16 most pressing hazards analysed.

iii. Replenishment post-deployment

A significant portion of rescEU stockpiles have already been deployed in the context of COVID-19, the 2023 earthquake in Türkiye and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. While the high demand underscores the importance of EU-level rescEU capacities, a lack of funding and of streamlined mechanisms to replenish exhausted stockpiles diminish the future reliability of the stockpiling endeavour under rescEU.

With the high rate of deployment of stockpiles illustrated in the SWD (page 39-41), several of the key stockpiles created in response to needs arising from COVID-19 or Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine do not have sufficient funding to restore them to their full operational value. The total number of generators still available under the established 'emergency energy supply capacities' in rescEU shows that, as of February 2025, 2 564 generators are still in stock out of a total 5 630 initially procured. Despite the significant number of rescEU generators still available, further analysis reveals that 98% of those are of small capacity, able to provide electricity to individual households. There is currently no stock of medium-sized generators able to provide sufficient energy to critical infrastructure such as hospitals. Until further funds are made available, and generator stocks are replenished, deployments of rescEU energy capacity to support relevant infrastructure are virtually impossible.

The temporary shelter capacity stocks under rescEU face similar challenges. The capacities currently available and those still under procurement have the capacity to house 9 000 persons, which is one

order of magnitude smaller than the lower end of the necessary shelter capacity range stipulated by the scenario-building initiative.

Despite having recognised the importance of keeping strategic stockpiles of critical items ready to support MS/PS during large emergencies, budget limitations are impacting the availability of these stockpiles. Due to previous deployments, the status of the emergency power generators and shelter stockpiles would be of limited benefit to a MS/PS requiring assistance in the next big emergency.

If stockpiles, and rescEU capacities more broadly, are expected to provide fast relief when called upon, their **operational readiness should be quickly restored after their deployment**. This includes the budgetary commitment to regularly restore damaged equipment and the replenishment of exhausted stockpiles. This would strengthen the strategic role of rescEU as a pillar of UCPM preparedness and avoid the risk of reactive ad hoc EU-level purchases.

iv. Temporary pre-positioning for effective deployment

Member States may request assistance in the form of temporary pre-positioning of response capacities. This possibility is all the more important given the challenges posed by the dynamic risk and threat landscape Europe is obliged to confront. Increased flexibility around the pre-positioning of response capacities would strengthen the preparedness efforts of the UCPM.

While it may not always be possible to accurately predict capacity deployments due to the inherently unpredictable nature of the emergencies they are established for, there are capacities for which a more agile use of **pre-deployment arrangements may significantly increase the effectiveness of assets**.

Among others, wildfires offer a particular opportunity to combine UCPM capacities and capabilities to the benefit of the MS/PS, before a disaster occurs. The UCPM possesses the response capacities to support an MS/PS battling forest fires, and the corresponding situational awareness and analytical capacity to predict which regions in Europe are most likely to experience wildfires on a regular basis. When needed, the MS/PS could pursue, through the UCPM, a more proactive use of temporary prepositioning to improve the effectiveness of capacity deployments. The pre-deployment of capacities would be in close coordination with the relevant civil protection authorities and based on a request for assistance. This could also take into account the proportionality of the associated operational costs.

v. Increase the effectiveness of rescEU deployments

rescEU was conceived to assist an affected MS/PS when national capacities are unable to offer sufficient or effective assistance. The main principle applied is that the primary mechanism for action under the UCPM remains the national expression of solidarity. rescEU provides assistance where overall existing capacities at national level and those pre-committed by Member States to the ECPP are not able to ensure an effective response.

In practice, this means that the availability of MS/PS national capacities to respond to a request for assistance needs to be determined before available rescEU capacities are considered. This can lead to unnecessary delays in providing assistance to affected populations. In the aftermath of storm Éowyn in January 2025, an estimated 710 000 households were affected by power outages, with over 133 000 premises in the country still affected by blackouts five days after the storm. While Denmark and Luxembourg were able to respond to the request for assistance with five generators, the eventual

mobilisation of available generators from rescEU stockpiles to match the needs did not occur until after the MS/PS declared a deficit of expendable national capacities to meet Ireland's request.

In pursuit of a more efficient UCPM, the ERCC should therefore be able to **choose the fastest available and most effective response capacity**. The simplification of processes saves time, in particular for capacity types that respond to disasters that evolve rapidly, such as CBRN scenarios or wildfires.

vi. Simplification of co-financing rates for rescEU

Current co-funding rates for rescEU deployments differentiate between transport costs and operational costs, with 100% of transport costs being recoverable through EU funding and 75% of the operational costs of aerial extinction capacities being eligible for rescEU. The remaining 25% of operational costs for the deployment of aerial forest fire extinction capacities within the EU are to be covered by the hosting or requesting MS/PS. In two cases, up to 100% of the operational costs are eligible for EU funding. These include the costs for capacities established to respond to 'low probability risks with a high impact' (Lo-Hi) and cases in which rescEU is deployed outside of the EU.

In practice, the differentiation of co-funding rates according to the type of emergency makes the administrative procedures behind an emergency unnecessarily complex when compared to the costs in question. A review of rescEU grants shows that the hiring of an aerial forest firefighting (AFF) rescEU capacity for the 2024 fire season is in the range of EUR 1-1.5 million, with the grants for establishing a proper corresponding rescEU capacity estimated to be EUR 100 million. The costs of deploying and operating an AFF capacity during the 2024 fire season can be estimated at EUR 400 000 per week of operation. Applying the respective co-funding rates for transport and operation means leaving an average of EUR 64 000 (16%) in deployment costs for the hosting or requesting country to cover on their own. The bulk of the cost of making a capacity available at EU level lies in the initial provision of the capacity, not its operation.

In practice, the differing funding rates for operational costs do not impact the decision to activate the UCPM and rescEU. In the context of an ongoing emergency that threatens to overwhelm national capacities, the focus is on quickly limiting the impact of the hazard by activating available resources, regardless of funding rates. Compared to the initial cost of establishing a capacity and the total cost of deploying the capacity in an emergency, the non-co-funded portion of the operational costs is marginal and serves no practical purpose.

Consolidating the eligible funding rates for the transport and operation of rescEU capacities to 100%, and eliminating different rules for Lo-Hi capacities, would simplify the administrative burden on all parties involved in the emergency, streamlining the support the UCPM provides to MS/PS.

vii. Simplification of procurement

Article 12(3b) of Decision No 1313² enables the Commission to directly acquire, rent, lease or otherwise contract capacity directly, if necessary, but requires the adoption of a corresponding implementing act to lay down the capacity and quantity to be procured. Despite being able to pass an implementing act under an urgency procedure, this administrative step has the potential to significantly delay procurement by several weeks, with operational consequences.

² [Decision - 2013/1313 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

During large-scale emergencies, such as Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, or the COVID-19 pandemic, the UCPM offers the opportunity for MS/PS to combine their procurement needs for critical capacities into larger lots that can be purchased faster than individual MS/PS would be able to do alone. This serves to insulate MS/PS from global shortages and dynamic price fluctuations by combining purchasing power and avoiding inter-MS/PS competition. The shortages of large-scale generators and personal protective equipment (PPE) during the initial stages of Russia's war against Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate the dynamic nature of the global marketplace during large-scale emergencies. Removing the requirement for an implementing act during direct procurement would enable the Commission to act quickly to secure the capacity needed before global demand outstrips supply or prices increase dramatically. **A simplification of the direct procurement procedure would allow this UCPM tool to be utilised to its full potential.**

The Commission could also make use of the broader joint procurement possibilities afforded under paragraph 3 of Article 168³ of the revised EU Financial Regulation adopted in September 2024. Under the new Regulation, the Commission could support multiple MS by acting as a central purchasing body for MS wishing to procure similar equipment, thereby leveraging the economy of scale to obtain better pricing for MS, while supporting the procurement of compatible equipment.

c. Broader considerations for response capacity development

While the above-mentioned recommendations are specific to either the ECPP or rescEU capacities, these recommendations cut across response capacity instruments and aim to foster the development of UCPM response capacities from a systemic perspective. This includes a focus on changes relevant to both rescEU and the ECPP, as well as a closer connection with stakeholders currently on the periphery of UCPM activities or beyond.

i. Performance-based approach to capacity development

As the capacity instruments available for deployment under the UCPM have expanded, the UCPM has begun to measure its progress in meeting capacity needs through performance-based targets. While the capacity-based goals of the ECPP continue to be a relevant tool for shaping the configuration of the ECPP, the Disaster Resilience Goals under DRG No 4 ('Respond – To enhance the EU Civil Protection Mechanism response capacity') introduced performance targets that encompass all the deployment possibilities under the mechanism. This provides a more holistic overview of the UCPM's overall level of preparedness in key domains. An approach measuring capacity development progress through performance indicators should be continued and expanded. Future efforts to cover capacity gaps should focus on the combined effect of all UCPM instruments, including the ECPP, rescEU, the private market and, where necessary, direct procurement in a given preparedness domain. Continuously monitoring and **analysing the capabilities of the UCPM as a whole** and comparing them to the context the UCPM finds itself in, will ensure that it leverages the most appropriate response capacity to effectively support MS/PS during emergencies.

³ [Regulation \(EU, Euratom\) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union \(recast\)](#)

ii. UCPM capacities to complement national capacities across Europe

The capacities and gaps discussed in this report are limited solely to capacities under the ECPP and rescEU. There is no EU overview of other existing national capacities across the MS and PS. The lack of an EU-wide overview of national capacities is inherent to a domain in which the EU only has a supporting competence. Large-scale emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic have shown that, **in specific instances, an overview of specific national capacities can play a significant role in increasing the overall efficiency of the UCPM** (such as for intensive care beds or burn ward availability). While respecting the primary role of national authorities in disaster management, the UCPM's ability to quickly support MS/PS when needed could benefit from increased information-sharing on the availability of key national capacities, including stockpiles. An EU-wide awareness of key stockpiles is particularly important for the implementation of an EU-wide Stockpiling Strategy, as foreseen by key action No 9 under Section 2 - Resilience of Vital Societal Functions - of the Preparedness Union Strategy. While the information-sharing could be limited to specific circumstances, methodologies and processes for this data-sharing prepared ahead of time would enable the UCPM to quickly upscale data-sharing when necessary and respond accordingly.

iii. Vulnerable groups

The DRGs, supported by one of the key horizontal recommendations from the scenario-building initiative under the UCPM, emphasise the need for an inclusive approach to civil protection, ensuring that no one is left behind in an emergency. Capacities rendering services to affected populations must systematically consider how the needs of vulnerable populations, such as specific age groups or people with disabilities, will be met. Capacities deployed in the context of a UCPM activation are by definition acting in a large-scale emergency that is affecting a large number of people, including those with special needs. Meeting these needs should continue to be addressed when developing response capacities, including in their SOPs and in training and exercises, in an appropriate manner. The UCPM has an obligation and is committed to **considering the needs of vulnerable groups during emergency operations**, ensuring that capacities are adapted to cater for the diverse needs of affected populations, including people with disabilities.

iv. Cross-sectoral situational awareness of the ERCC

The UCPM has a wide array of situational awareness tools at its disposal to monitor and anticipate global developments and to generate information products for its stakeholders during emergencies. One of the most recent developments is the creation of the Global Situation System (GSS), which compiles multiple information sources into one interactive GIS-based dashboard. Combined with the Copernicus Emergency Management Service (CEMS) and its hazard-specific monitoring platforms which can monitor, for example, floods, wildfires and droughts, the ERCC already harnesses a considerable amount of information. These capabilities provide helpful resources for UCPM stakeholders and contribute to its operational efficiency.

While sector-specific monitoring takes place at EU or national level for critical services such as energy and transport, there is **currently no common situational awareness that combines multiple sectoral overviews with hazards in real time to help assess potential impacts at European level**. News of a major infrastructure-related disruption only reaches the ERCC through the civil protection authorities of the affected country or through public media reports. The ERCC should continue and further upscale support to Member States in managing the cross-sectoral consequences of crises, based on reinforced

planning and more comprehensive analysis and situational awareness. This would be in direct support of the Preparedness Union Strategy key action 3 - Strengthen the ERCC - and key action 25 - Set up an EU crisis coordination hub. A first step towards a more integrated approach would be embedding non-classified, up-to-date data from the national civil protection authorities into the GSS. This integration would mutually benefit ERCC and national civil protection authorities alike, and provide the UCPM with a common situational picture at European level. As a result, a strengthened ERCC would be systematically plugged into existing sectoral monitoring systems, to increase its situational awareness, while it could provide information on potential disruptions in critical services to MS/PS.

v. Consideration of conflict/war scenarios

The primary purpose of the UCPM has been to mitigate the effects of natural or accidental hazards on human populations and the environment. However, the risk and threat landscape has been fundamentally altered by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. While the frequency of traditional UCPM activations is expected to continue due to increasing climate change impacts, as discussed in the accompanying SWD, there is also a need for the UCPM to further develop its role in protecting the citizens in Europe during conflict and defence scenarios.

There is a need to strengthen civil and military coordination, **beyond coordination of separate activities in an emergency and towards a holistic approach establishing comprehensive civil-military preparedness arrangements as foreseen under key action 22 under the Civil-military cooperation section of the Preparedness Union Strategy**. The scenario initiative underlined the importance of developing this relationship and tackling the remaining coordination challenges to ensure that separate strands of government work to keep the population out of harm's way, particularly in conflict scenarios.

The consideration of conflict and war scenarios to foster closer civil-military coordination in crisis management can serve as a starting point for the broader development of dual-use standards in technologies, providing a return on investment for both sectors where feasible.

The UCPM should systematically draw lessons from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including through its UCPM 'lessons learnt' process. It could support preparatory actions within national disaster management systems for potential similar future scenarios. This includes lessons identified by the Ukrainian disaster management and civil protection authorities on how to best prepare a national system and the UCPM for a conflict scenario.

Existing response capacities and their **deployment options need to be re-examined** and reviewed to determine their potential contributions **to supporting civilian populations during conflicts or war**. Capacities relying on military staff or equipment may have to contend with deployment restrictions or key capacity elements not being available. Many capacities aimed at supporting affected persons (e.g. search and rescue, shelter, emergency power, logistics and wildfire extinction) will continue to play an important role in their capabilities, possibly benefiting from additional conflict awareness training or personal protective or other supplementary equipment relevant to the particular conflict scenario. **EU crisis response and preparedness exercises**, as well as scenario-based exchanges, are essential to strengthening the UCPM capacity in a situation of conflict or war.

vi. Private sector partnerships

As one of society's main stakeholder groups, the private sector should be viewed as a strong potential partner for the UCPM and EU preparedness in a broader sense. The adopted EU Preparedness Union

Strategy underlines the need to include private stakeholders in preparedness across all relevant sectors. For the UCPM and civil protection actions in particular, the relevance of this sector was already recognised by DRG No 5 'Secure – To ensure a robust civil protection system', which calls for **fostering partnerships with private sector stakeholders at EU and national levels**. Entities belonging to the private sector intersect with the activities of governmental emergency management during every phase in the disaster management cycle.

The diverse spectrum of stakeholders grouped into 'the private sector' translates into a nearly endless number of mutually beneficial relationships at operational and strategic levels. The exploration and development of these relationships into a permanent feature of EU-wide preparedness cannot be left to ad hoc solutions developed during an emergency. Several initiatives that could be explored to broaden the interface between public disaster management and the private sector include:

- **Formalisation and expansion of the possibilities afforded by private donation hubs hosted and managed by MS that will undertake the quality check of donated items**, as a UCPM capacity to channel privately donated assistance to the authorities of an affected country, developed to include donation agreements for pre-defined goods and quantities, reducing reaction time and pre-empting administrative work ahead of an actual donation during an emergency.
- **Development of emergency arrangements with relevant industrial partners** for large-scale emergencies such as pandemics or conflict scenarios, but also in cases of atypical needs, such as requests for the use of excavators, containers or dump trucks, in support of Preparedness Union key action 19 in Section 4 - Develop public-private emergency protocols
- **Increased two-way information sharing on hazards and risks between institutions, academia and private businesses**, including the insurance sector, to support analysis in disaster management and increase risk awareness among the civilian population and the private sector, in alignment with Preparedness Union key action 21 in Section 4 - Establish a European centre of expertise on research security.
- **Improved access to technical experts** from the private sector to support preparedness and response initiatives, including the UCPMs training and exercise programme.

The increased integration of private sector stakeholders into disaster management activities does not mean a diminished role for government. The purpose of working closer with the private sector is to avoid the establishment of parallel preparedness and response activities and to harness all available resources to work together in preventing disasters and mitigating their consequences when they occur.

vii. Donation hubs

Donation hubs that enable the channelling of private or third-country in-kind assistance to an affected population via the UCPM pipeline have **proven effective in increasing the added value of the UCPM**, while keeping the extra costs to a minimum and providing administrative relief to the authorities of the recipient country. Between the start of the war against Ukraine and April 2025, the UCPM was able to channel nearly EUR 15 million in goods from private companies and third countries to Ukraine and the region affected by the war. This was achieved through the involvement of Belgium and Poland as hub host countries and grants for the operation of the hubs, totalling EUR 3.5 million.

To better leverage the UCPM logistics and administrative operations and procedures pipelines and the potential of external donations in the future, obstacles to the current hub approach should be removed, increasing operational flexibility. By forming hubs under the rescEU framework, established hubs must

currently be thematically tied to existing rescEU capacities. For the response to Ukraine, this restricts the items channelled through the hubs to capacities defined under rescEU, despite the much broader needs of the Ukrainian authorities being known. The established sector-specific hubs represent successful pilot projects. **Developing the hubs initiative into a broader capacity that establishes generic hubs would allow the UCPM to better meet the needs of an affected country**, while also opening the door to new ways of collaborating with the private sector and like-minded partners during future emergencies.

It is important that MS/PS hosting and managing the hubs carry out quality checks of donations and manage their delivery, and carry out quality checks of donated items, thereby ensuring governmental oversight of donations, which is a cornerstone of the UCPM.

viii. Stockpiling

Stockpiling ensures immediate access to critical goods in the event of an emergency. This approach can be particularly beneficial for items that are subject to spiking global demand, as in the case for PPE and therapeutics during a global pandemic. The same can be true for larger items with long lead times and a limited selection of suppliers, such as large generators. Since its establishment, rescEU stockpiles have benefited MS/PS in a variety of contexts, providing essential items in quantities that exceed what is typically available at national level.

The versatility of current rescEU stockpiles further underlines their value in the face of an uncertain future, with past activations showing that even a limited selection of stockpile categories can contribute to response operations during natural disasters, epidemics and conflict scenarios.

Current rescEU stockpiles are limited to essential items for medical and CBRN responses, emergency electricity generation and shelter capabilities, and **their extension to include other items that can help disaster management actors/authorities provide immediate relief during emergencies should be considered**. Ideally, stockpiling should focus on non-perishable items that can be loaned and used in various emergencies.

The stockpiling efforts of the UCPM represent the crisis management sector's contribution to the broader EU stockpiling strategy currently being developed for adoption in June 2025.

4. Conclusion

The UCPM represents the EU-level response capacity of Europe's disaster management sector. Since its inception, its response capacities have grown and adapted to the needs of the MS/PS it is designed to support. This continuous evolution requires commitment from the Commission and national civil protection authorities to a UCPM that is based on solidarity between the participating countries.

The implications of the dynamic risk and threat landscape, set out in various risk overviews and the UCPM's scenario-building initiative, confirm a trend that is already being experienced during UCPM activations. In addition to the single hazard activations with short response times that traditionally occupied civil protection authorities, the UCPM is being called upon to provide support in more complex emergencies. Constellations of hazards and vulnerabilities result in protracted emergencies that are significantly more complex and often have far-reaching effects.

By combining an understanding of the challenges that lie ahead for the UCPM and an analysis of the existing response capacities available to the Mechanism, this document provides a series of recommendations aimed at further developing the UCPM's response capacity.

The 15 recommendations in this report are grouped into ECPP- and rescEU-specific recommendations, as the two pillars of the UCPM's response capacity, with a third category encompassing recommendations that are not directly tied to a capacity type and instead support response capacity development in a broader sense.

Recommendations for the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP):

- i. Work towards closing the ECPP capacity gaps identified in this report (e.g. in the areas of wildfire extinction, emergency medical capacity, maritime, coastal and inland water pollution incidents, bridges, electricity generation, and transport and logistics).
- ii. Strengthen coordination with and between MS/PS in pursuit of capacity goals.
- iii. Reinforce financing for adaptation grants.
- iv. Incentivising for ECPP registrations by increasing financing during deployments.

Recommendations for rescEU:

- i. Focus future capacity development primarily on multi-purpose and multi-use capacities (e.g. for shelter, electricity, telecommunication, medical care, and transport and logistics) and, where necessary, complementary specialised support capacities (e.g. in CBRN-related areas or specialised medical expertise for specific hazards).
- ii. Enable predictable budget reinforcement for replenishment post-deployment, pursuing a more proactive approach to capacity development.
- iii. Increase the effectiveness of rescEU deployments through quicker deployment decisions and pre-positioning options.
- iv. Simplify co-financing rates for deployments of rescEU capacities and streamline the process of procurement.

Broader considerations for response capacity development:

- i. Pursue the use of performance-based goals for future UCPM capacity development.
- ii. Consider better information exchange on the availability of specific national capacities to increase the overall efficiency of the UCPM.
- iii. Improve understanding of the needs of vulnerable groups during emergency operations.
- iv. Further enhance cross-sectoral situational awareness of the ERCC.
- v. Consider conflict/war scenarios in further capacity development.
- vi. Expand private-sector partnerships where appropriate, including the development of donation hubs into a broader UCPM capability.
- vii. Consider the stockpiling of a wider range of emergency response items.

Beyond these recommendations, as preparedness moves from being solely the responsibility of disaster management actors/authorities to becoming **a cross-cutting societal matter**, the UCPM can encourage this evolution towards an all-of-society approach by contributing its expertise on preparedness to

sectors that have begun to engage with the topic more recently. To cope with the increasing complexity of the challenges ahead, the UCPM's response will need to go beyond traditional emergency response capacities, in line with the objectives of the EU Preparedness Union Strategy.