



European Union



Union pour la Méditerranée
Union for the Mediterranean
الإتحاد من أجل المتوسط



The Hashemite
Kingdom of
Jordan

Working group

“Preparing for efficient mutual assistance in the Euro Mediterranean area”

26 November 2019 - Brussels

Subject: Discussion paper as follow up of the Third meeting of Civil Protection Directors-General of the Partner Countries of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

Objective: To facilitate the identification of priorities for an action plan for efficient mutual assistance in the Mediterranean area.

This paper serves as basis for discussion during the meeting and focuses on the following areas: host nation support, preparedness for response, risk assessment and situational analysis to support rapid response in case of natural and man-made disasters.

The actions proposed under this working group will be complementary to the work carried out under the two other working groups that will meet at a later stage: engaging citizens in disaster risk management and civil protection volunteers.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 10 years, joint activities have considerably increased in the Mediterranean as part of multilateral¹ or bilateral initiatives especially among countries sharing similar risks. A number of initiatives in both the Western Balkans and the Southern Neighbourhood of the EU² have provided a useful technical platform for exchange.

At the Barcelona meeting, the Directors General identified preparedness for efficient mutual assistance as one of the areas of interest.

Recent emergencies³ demonstrate that disasters continue to hit the region. New types of risks have been identified, exacerbated also by climate change. From flash floods and storms, to forest fires, earthquakes and chemical incidents at sea all Mediterranean countries are at risk. Effective disaster risk management requires multi-sectoral cooperation and effective coordination to protect people, environment and infrastructure. It also requires the establishment of strong legal frameworks enabling governments to be prepared and to effectively respond to disasters. A risk-based approach to disaster management (analysis of hazards, exposure and vulnerability) is essential for reducing

¹ e.g. The Sub regional Marine Oil Pollution Contingency Plans of the North, South West and East Mediterranean Countries

² The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) regional programme and Programmes for Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and Man-made Disasters in the Eastern Partnership Countries (PPRD South).

³ e.g. flash floods in Tunisia, in Jordan in 2017, Greece, Portugal and Israel forest fire in 2018-2019, marine pollution France 2019.

risks, and facilitates informed decisions by decision-makers when preparing for rapid and needs based response.

The UfM working group will discuss the challenges and concrete actions to be taken to support efficient mutual assistance. These actions will be proposed to the Senior Officials meeting for possible implementation at national, sub-regional, and/or regional levels.

1. HOST NATION SUPPORT (HNS)⁴

Laws, policies and institutional arrangements have a crucial role to play in supporting all aspects of disaster risk management including disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response. They also facilitate international assistance when the scale of a disaster exceeds national capacities.

The EU Commission Host Nation Support Guidelines⁵ developed by the European Commission and EU Member States are used as a reference that complements similar initiatives available under international disaster response law (e.g. International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies).

International assistance is provided both via the UCPM, bilaterally and via the Mediterranean Assistance Unit (MAU)⁶ in case of marine pollution. In recent emergencies, countries from the Southern Neighbourhood (e.g. Morocco and Israel) provided bilateral assistance to Member States/Participating States of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (e.g. Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Montenegro and Portugal). In addition, cross-regional assistance in the Mediterranean area is becoming more frequent (e.g. Algeria, Palestine, Israel). Channelling assistance through regional response mechanisms allows a better coordination and overview of the offers.

International assistance requires institutional, legal operational and logistical preparedness to support a timely and efficient response as well as the identification and implementation of lessons and good practices. Such efforts might imply inter-institutional and inter-agency coordination procedures and mechanisms that should be developed through the necessary legal instruments and policies.

In this regard, past exercises in the Middle East (2017) and Algeria (2018), IPA Floods Programme exercises⁷ represented a good testing opportunity to simulate the activation of multi-level and multi-sectoral coordination for disaster management at sub-regional level.

Proposed priority actions

⁴ Host Nation Support is a concept developed in the EU on international disaster assistance in line with other internationally recognised initiatives in the area of disaster response law and best practice. The Guidelines (as non-binding document published in 2012), provide institutional and operational elements for facilitating the request, the offer, the transit and on site coordination of international response capacities (teams, experts and equipment) as well as in-kind assistance.

⁵ Commission staff working document, EU Host Nation Support Guidelines, SWD (2012) 169 final.

⁶ It is an expert advice capability that can be mobilized upon request of a Contracting Party to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean. situation.

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/budget/euprojects/ipa-floods_en

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage use of the same language in operations, based on internationally recognised response standards (e.g. UN, EU), starting already during preparedness for response at national, regional and international levels. - Promote institutional and operational arrangements (including through the review and adoption of international disaster response legislation and policy) for facilitating operational coordination in partner countries, in line with internationally recognised standards and the EU Host Nation Support Guidelines. - Possible use of a checklist on the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance) to ensure that States count with the relevant national laws, policies, plans and procedures necessary to manage international disaster assistance at the domestic level. Include HNS and coordination of international assistance into national emergency plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structured exchange of information on responsible institutions and 24/7 focal points for activating the UCPM to ensure a better communication among operational/crisis rooms in the partner countries and the ERCC. - Establish standard guidelines, develop a standard prototype by type of disaster on how to communicate and exchange information also among different national operational centres in emergencies, such as: request/offer for international assistance and analytical products at bilateral and sub-regional, regional levels. Periodical communication tests could be planned.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define and create a specialized national inter-institutional team sitting in crises room trained also on HNS.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set up a common platform available for all crisis management rooms of different countries highlighting the specific means of evaluation, control and rehabilitation that can be mobilized.

2. PREPAREDNESS FOR RESPONSE

Ensuring an efficient emergency preparedness requires adequate analysis and preparedness/contingency planning and coordination mechanisms and operations support. It is necessary to have an overview of training centres, capacities and expertise in the region. Existing capacities shall be reinforced (e.g. through training, exercises, certification).

Common standards, predictability, prepositioning and technical specification for response capacities can be a valuable tool for deployment planning, decision making and on-site cooperation.

As part of the effort to be prepared for international deployments, a number of countries undertook UN led INSARAG classification of their search and rescue teams (Algeria, Israel, Jordan, and Morocco) or emergency medical teams (EMTs) with WHO.

Mediterranean Countries expressed the need to strengthen their level of preparedness for and response to marine chemical pollution (Hazardous and Noxious Substances), through expertise and capacity building. The workshop MEDEXPOL 2018⁸ was organised to upgrade and adapt existing guidance and tools to meet future needs and expectations of the countries.

IPA regional programme on floods in the Western Balkans and Turkey, supported countries to establish multi-national modules that are taking part in simulation exercises with other European teams.

⁸ The Regional Workshop on Response to Spill Incidents involving hazardous and Noxious Substances (MEDEXPOL 2018) Malta, June 2018.

Proposed priority actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase reference to international (INSARAG, EMT) and EU certification standards for developing response capacities develop operational capacities in accordance with the general requirements developed in the UCPM frame (including self-sufficiency and inter-operability).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Further develop risk based mapping to identify the capacities, training needs and capacity gaps (beyond USAR).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promote training facilities and educational programmes for possible linkages with the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network. – Activate a network of international experts to assess risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase participation of the partner countries in regional and international trainings and exercises (e.g. UCPM, Red Cross Movement or national and regional EU-financed programmes). Extend the invitations for the exercises to all key stakeholders when possible. – Encourage partner countries to organise, lead and host exercises. – Propose tailor made international trainings and exercises under the UCPM, based on identified needs (e.g. joint marine pollution emergencies and civil protection response).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consider developing joint inter-regional projects/initiatives, rather than having scattered Hazardous and Noxious Substances related project. – Address identified gaps in the preparedness for response to spill incidents involving Hazardous and Noxious Substances: e.g. improve access to decision-making tools, improve geographical coverage of prediction models and update detailed incident reviews. – Increase capacity-building activities on response to Hazardous and Noxious Substances at national, sub-regional and regional levels, through trainings, e-learning tools and exercises.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthen inter sectoral cooperation (e.g. public, civil, armed security forces, medical).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify and define per country/region/sub-region specific modules for intervention by different risks and their capacity, availability to intervene
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assess the preparedness/contingency planning in the countries (Disaster Law checklist on domestic Law and Disaster Preparedness and response)

3. RISK ASSESSMENT AND SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS FOR RAPID RESPONSE

Better risk awareness, situational analysis detection and alert systems, disaster risk information sharing mechanisms, early situational analysis and hazard-monitoring telecommunication systems enhance national capacities as they provide updated and reliable information on a specific disaster (e.g. floods and wildfires).

Risk information should be taken into account in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity and exposure of persons, communities, countries and assets, as well as hazard characteristics, to develop and implement disaster risk reduction policies.

An example worth mentioning is tsunamis. Although being comparatively rare phenomena, tsunamis rank among the most life threatening of all natural disasters (low probability/high impact). Significant progress was achieved in developing hazard and risk assessment, hazard detection and forecasting as well as communication. UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission initiative represents a good pilot initiative linking scientific community with practitioners in the region.

Proposed priority actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enhance links between detection and alert systems for major risks and decision making for response operations (e.g. early warning systems for floods; awareness raising campaigns for main risks; evacuation plans for touristic and urban areas, etc.). Develop a general GIS exploitable by the different member countries for the disasters and the possible means of fight. Consider emerging threats including CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promote use of international/regionally available information sharing (ERCC portal, vOSOCC, GDACS), detection and alert systems platforms (e.g. EFFIS, EFAS) and other science based services (e.g. Copernicus).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consider improved infrastructure (governance and IT) available for sharing and using risk information (hazard, exposure and vulnerability) before, during and after the disaster. Sensitivity and security aspects in sharing information has to be considered.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encourage innovation and the use of technology, through science applied to situational analysis for rapid response (e.g. modelling for risk-based scenario planning) and preparedness for response (e.g. software to support training).

Cross cutting elements:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Multi-sectoral cooperation and coordination with other responsible authorities in disaster management, such as medical, CBRN, marine pollution and critical infrastructure (e.g. joint response plans, communication tools, pooling/sharing of capacities and expertise)⁹. – Define business continuity plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Disaster and climate change risks are not gender-neutral. The nature and extent of their exposure and vulnerability is different for women, men and children. Build women's engagement in all levels of decision-making related to disaster risk management and through increasing numbers of female first responders targeted by training opportunities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Attention to youth and specific vulnerable groups (i.e. awareness campaigns addressing youth; youth led research in the area of disaster risk management). Provide for an effective mechanism for training and meaningful participation of children.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Attention to linkages with the future development of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network, including the science related component.

⁹ This may include cooperation and coordination with National Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as auxiliary to the public authorities.

