



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL HUMANITARIAN AID AND CIVIL PROTECTION - ECHO

ECHO.B - Humanitarian and Civil Protection Operations  
**B/1 - Emergency Response**

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### **Subject: Outcomes of Technical and Operational Level Lessons Learnt Meeting on 27 November 2014**

*Note: This document is a draft and amendments can be proposed by participants of the Technical level meeting.*

This document highlights outputs from respective country and Commission presentations and discussions on the technical lessons, implementing rules on Lessons Learnt programme and introduces the Annual report on Lessons Learnt 2013 and Matrix.

#### **1.) Background**

The technical level lessons learnt meeting that took place on 27 November was well attended, with 34 delegates from 24 countries present. 4 EU Civil Protection (CP) experts that had participated in recent EU CP missions also attended.

The core elements of the meeting were:

- Countries (both inside and outside of EU) that had received international assistance in 2014 via Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) were invited to share their views, successes and challenges on requesting, receiving and leveraging assistance;
- Presentations and discussions revealed that during the different emergencies the use of Host Nation Principles was really valued and appreciated. In general it was agreed that Host Nation Support elements and principles should be continuously leveraged at preparedness projects and programs;
- Information on Mechanism activations since February 2014 and background information on major emergencies was shared and discussed with participants. However, due to large scale on-going response operations to crisis in Iraq, EBOLA and Ukraine, the Commission suggested to look at these specific emergencies and other topics at the next Operational and Technical Level meeting in spring 2015;
- Commission provided and highlighted the new CP legislation (Implementing Rules for lessons learnt) and proposed ways how and what to improve in this regard;

- The role of the Lessons Learned Matrix was stressed and an update of the foreseen implementation provided. It was reminded that this is also a tool for PS as it contains lessons that can be addressed both at Commission's and national level;
- As subjects of concern have been raised on CP and Humanitarian Aid (HA) interaction and role of EUCPT in situations when UN is not present;
- Open Space Discussions on specific emergencies were organized to provide opportunity for the participants to discuss in more detail the specific emergencies– floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, forest fires in Sweden and in Greece, and severe weather in Slovenia. Particular interest was towards the UCPM simultaneous activation for two emergencies in three countries – Western Balkans floods – Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, and Georgia landslide.

## **2.) Overview Presentations on the Disaster Situation held by the affected countries**

### **Republic of Serbia - Flooding:**

Serbia experienced most catastrophic floods unprecedented in its history and requested 3 times assistance through the UCPM. In total 1.6 million people were affected. Assistance was provided by 14 countries – resulting with 22 teams composed by team 563 members:

- Flood Rescue Teams
- Helicopters
- High Capacity Water Pumping
- Water Purification Teams

An innovation for the EUCPT and UCPM was the fact that all EUCP teams were provided with a local Liaison Officer. This was beneficial to the overall coordination and was one of the success factors apart from engaging with HNS structures and coordination.

Republic of Serbia has showed interest in participation within the UCPM and has started its internal procedures for entering.

- **Proposed Actions**

Serbia will further develop international and regional cooperation in order to be as efficient as possible in response to all types of disasters, through:

- Bilateral and multilateral agreements;
- Regional initiatives and International organizations.
- Joint programs and projects;
- Develop HNS procedure.

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina - Flooding:**

- An average of four months of rain fell in just three days, thousands of landslides were triggered, landmines were uncovered and landmine warning signs were sometimes washed away. Some roads became 8m deep rivers, boats or helicopters provided the only possible evacuation methods;
- Legislation was adopted to make CP and firefighting equipment import duty-free, but there were still issues with medical supplies/equipment and duty exemption—albeit that these are covered under the legislation;
- EUCP teams were very well received and appreciated, especially as BiH did not have an UNDAC team in the country, so the EUCPT had to accept additional tasks to its normal mandate;
- Much easier for the UNDAC teams to play their role for coordination of Humanitarian Aid issues, while EUCP teams can to work and focus on Civil Protection matters;
- EUCP Team by mandate cannot handle incoming Humanitarian Aid from NGOs meaning operationally it was difficult to manage in the given situation;
- Trained local personnel for Host Nation Support were essential to support the incoming assistance;
- The identified needs and lessons (particularly on HNS) could well reflect in other Participating States as well as a number of Lessons Identified by the respective response authorities could well be applied to number of sectors that are vital to the receiving state during the coordinated response phase.

### **Proposed Actions**

- Emergency communications network needs reviving (emergency communication - radio network/SAT);
- Coordination Authority for the Host Nation Support should be determined in the National Legislation;
- Pre-identified humanitarian aid stocking and distribution and transportation capacities, mechanisms and personnel;
- HNS and CIMIC training is crucial at operational level;
- Look into the amendment of legislation for exemptions of duties of humanitarian aid;
- To avoid situations when EUCPT is dealing with tasks that normally UN agencies would perform, in the future more emphasis on promoting UCPM is needed, communication with EU DEL and other actors prior to emergencies is crucial.

### **Slovenia – Sleet emergency:**

For this severe weather emergency no EUCPT was requested, however assistance in terms of electrical power generators through the UCPM was requested and received. This

was the first time Slovenia requested assistance through the Mechanism. The most difficulties in this operation were the logistics and transport planning and tracking of these generators. Another set of difficulties and obstacles were related to reaching the locations. In total over 3000 km of electrical grid affected, 51 % of forests in Slovenia damaged (7 million m<sup>3</sup>) and it will take decades to mitigate damage in the forests. Road and railway infrastructure combined estimated damage is over 430 million €

- Neighbouring Austria and Croatia proactively arranged toll road exemptions for incoming aid – an excellent example of solidarity and cooperation; SI did not know if generators were available anywhere in Europe so this was an unknown factor and should be looked through the prism of pre-identified resources for respective emergency; stock-piling as such should be addressed at a wider context – resources planning according to the risks mapping;
- Each generator that was sent to SI was accompanied by four persons, which was unexpected and suddenly other logistical issues arose and had to be addressed;
- No pre-alert of the situation in the country and in CECIS was done as it was unknown when to put on an alert, and as the meteorological picture of the previous day was not so severe, and knowing when to close the emergency was difficult, however the great support from the ERCC was noted;
- Limitation in having accurate prediction led to use of generic plans and solutions were used to cope with the situation;
- Joint projects were noted as a very helpful tool for preparation and international response,
- Cooperation with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and embassies needs to be emphasized as they are helping and are promoting Mechanism;
- In order to effectively receive and coordinate international assistance SI HNS was established in line with the draft national Manual on HNS;

Upon arrival to Slovenia (every team was met at border) international units were provided with a liaison officer for each foreign team, accommodation and food for all units (Base of Operations and several other locations), fuel and spare parts for the power generators, transport of relief personnel and escort and tolls exemption where appropriate. These success factors should be maintained and improved in next missions, and also developed and trained in UCPM training courses.

### **Proposed Actions**

- More emphasis on mechanism training focusing on HNS is recommended, as it proves to be a valuable tool and mechanism for coordinating different stakeholders and in organizing the receiving state in supporting the incoming international assistance;
- Mark and label incoming in-kind assistance (generators this time) from the very beginning to aid in monitoring their location;
- Pre-identified resources important, as no information on availability of power generators in other countries, no data in CECIS, no previous experiences;

- When it is necessary to send personnel to operate the technical in-kind assistance, it has to be communicated in advance;
- Good cooperation with ERCC – support with maps, dissemination; however room for improvement: use of CECIS, dissemination of daily reports;
- Differences between Union Mechanism trained – not trained personnel (both international units and domestic-local coordination, liaison officers): list of personnel, equipment, daily coordination, final reports Room for improvement: more participants at EU CPM training (also specialised national courses on EU CPM focused on HNS);
- Exchange of experiences and knowing each other from previous joint trainings through the EU CPM Training programme, as well as IPA programmes and other projects must be continued as they provide the forum of knowledge and make impact in preparedness for different emergencies;
- Language barriers are areas for improvement therefore foreign language training is needed;
- A good relation with neighbouring countries during the emergency and provision of HNS for transiting teams and assistance was noted. This should be sustained and developed;
- Cooperation with MFA, foreign embassies is of great added value as it raises continued awareness and provides information about the Mechanism activities;
- The importance of the Mechanism and cooperation within EU has been recognized by many stakeholders in Slovenia and therefore it is important to further train together in order to be ready for next emergencies.

#### **Sweden – Forest fires:**

- There were concerns about letting too many airborne vehicles in the fire's airspace, so the Spanish offer was put on hold, further consideration on the their offer only after accepting planes from IT & FR. The IT offer came in first but they had a difficult flight due to weather conditions and the flights needed to be redirected to another air corridor, FR airplanes arrived first;
- Fire extinguishing agents used frequently in this type of disasters could not be used during water bombing as many of the aquifers used for resource by the planes are drinking water aquifers for the population living in that area;

#### **Proposed Actions**

- Regional level knowledge of the Mechanism could be improved and there is a need to continue developing our HNS capacity, and improve how countries (based on SE example) request and receive assistance, including:
  - Need to involve the regional level in this effort and enhance their knowledge;
  - Need to continue the development of the Swedish HNS-cell.
- Need to continue identifying the responsibilities in HNS between different actors.

## **Greece – Forest fires:**

- A good communication of information through CECIS, good coordination, common training (Pilots and Liaison Officers trained in the Mechanism) was noted during the response phase to the Greek FF;
- Another example of engaging local LO into the response by attaching 2 LO from GR CP to the FR unit;
- FR investigation plane + GR LO made the initial assessment in order to have the picture for the action plan; joint efforts with the ground fire fighting forces made this mission a success;
- Previous experience from common exercises was very useful and much appreciated
- Common ICAO flight rules also important to note.

## **Proposed Actions**

- Common evaluation criteria should be developed and introduced, trained and exercised.

## **3) Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection cooperation during missions in Western Balkans**

- Rapid deployment of EUCPT and ECHO TAs;
- ECHO CP and ECHO HA shared office space and worked in partnership;
- Joint daily reports HA/EUCPT and assessment report also done jointly with CP

## **Proposed Actions**

- Improved information sharing: no information and data available immediately after the disaster;
- Elaboration of exit strategies as EUCPT leaves the country but the TA remains in the country/field as contact person for ongoing CP issues. Continuity and follow up should be ensured and SOP could be elaborated;
- Prior knowledge of CP/HA from both arms of the DG ECHO – common training and exercising.

## **4) Implementing Rules of the Lessons Learnt (Alex Kopke – DhoU A5)**

- Legal framework – decision 1313/2013 of the EP and the Council and Commission Implementing decision 2014/762/;
- LL process is targeting the entire emergency management cycle; Exploit the synergies with humanitarian response; integration of new technologies; COM guidance on the implementation;
- Mechanism Decision Art.13 to be reviewed by all the interested parties;

## **5) Presentation by the Commission on the Annual Lessons Learnt Report and the 2013 Matrix for the Lessons Learnt program.**

- Annual LL report and Matrix were shared and explained, with emphasis on implementing part of the Lessons Identified in order to bring the Lessons Learnt cycle into full implementation;
- Matrix lacks "Actions taken / implementation" part and that should be filled in by respective parties;
- Annual report and Matrix is shared with Member States prior to the CPC, December 3-4.

### **E) Summary from the open space discussions & conclusions**

#### **1. SLOVENIA**

- Creating a European training program for the HNS as a basic element for promoting the HNS principles;
- Develop the field of transport & logistic – more trainings on national level and between National authority and the Commission.

#### **2. SERBIA**

- Solidarity between the humanitarian actors, civil protection teams and the EU Delegation;
- Clarifying EU/UN roles and responsibilities in particular when the EUCPT is deployed;
- An active promotional work on Mechanism activities is necessary with the EU External Action Service in order to deliver information what Union Civil Protection Mechanism is and does;
- LO from Serbia were trained quickly to join each module deployed in the affected country – added value thanks to this activity;
- Consider deploying ECHO TA with the EUCP team;
- The Sector of Emergency management very effectively applied HNS principles. These HNS principles were initially provided via PPRD training;
- Consideration should be given to the involvement of EEAS and ECHO TAs in EUCP training courses;
- Consideration should be given to clarifying EU/UN roles and responsibilities in either pre accession or candidate countries prior to mission (preparedness);
- Increasing the EUCP team visibility in the field should be increased i.e. magnetic car signs and increasing visibility of EU flag-EUCP logos on EU modules;
- ERCC related:
  - The ERCC should have a surge capacity;

- The ERCC should consider deploying an expert, to act as a team support officer within the ERCC;
- Consider training for EUCP experts for understanding of the transition from immediate to mid and long term needs;
- In some mapping products incorrect info have been inserted;
- Mission continuity – shift rotation between teams; ERCC LO to assist as focal point for mission in the ERCC;
- EUCPT has to adjust to the need of the HNS and add value to the affected country activities;

### **3. GREECE & SWEDEN**

- Three phases identified: pre-disaster, request for assistance and post disaster;
- Pre-disaster: two perspectives in the HNS – from the affected country point of view and from the in-coming team point of view; Training for the affected countries and the incoming teams;
- For the Request of Assistance an early assessment of the situation is vital. Then sharing this information with ERCC adds value from using services like EFFIS and Copernicus. Social Media, if not trained and informed, brings challenge (it is a two way communications, valuable for prevention and preparedness, but different approaches during the operations);
- Post disaster – two dimensions of feedback – for the affected country and also for the UCPM; joining the weekly VC on FF during summer time (not a closed club only for the fire prone countries but an open invitation for all the other PS to join the VC ).

### **4. BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA**

- Hands-on mission for the EUCPT;
- The size of the disaster from the beginning was underestimated, lack of analytical capability in the ERCC;
- Lack of needs assessment from the national authorities;
- ERCC had additional workload and successfully facilitated the transport of the incoming teams in the affecting country;
- Massive presence of the UN in the affected country – early recovery and lifesaving activities were taken by the EU and UN;
- Communication frequency between the teams deployed and the BiH military forces operating the helicopters;
- Security assessment to be disseminated by the ERCC (danger of land mines due to uncertainty of locations);
- Better links with EUFOR and EU Delegation;

- Social media to collect data from the population – lightly used;
- HNS guidelines – contact details of the incoming teams, packing list, location, etc.;
- Lack of information at the EU Delegation in the affected country about the CP activities;
- No open communication platform available for the teams such as VOSOCC;
- Not clear picture on how Humanitarian Aid personnel could interact and be of most help for CP experts;
- A more structured approach was put in place after 3-4 days, after arrival on ground; information sharing from/to ERCC sometimes was not efficient;
- Recovery needs and assessment, looking at damage and loss assessment; ECHO – HA/TA remained in the country until October 2014;
- IPA programme trained people could have been engaged, but due to the dynamic of the emergency this was not possible;