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Rome, 13 June 2016

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IPA FLOODS editorial by Biljana Zuber

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Floods represent one of the most significant risks in the region of Western Balkans and Turkey. After devastating floods in the Balkans in 2014, the objective of the EU was enhancing the capacity of the Western Balkans in flood risk management and flood prevention and to ensure compliance with the relevant European Union legislation, in particular the EU Floods Directive.

As natural disasters often have cross-border impacts, they are best addressed through regional cooperation. IPA FLOODS is the regional programme which will help countries in the region increase their capacity for flood risk management. The Programme has a twofold mission, to increase response capacity and to strengthen prevention for flood risk in Western Balkans and Turkey. IPA FLOODS is the first ECHO funded Programme that besides capacity building includes financing of the equipment for flood modules.

The aim is to register developed modules into Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS) of the Commission and to include them into Voluntary pool in the future. Therefore the results of the programme would go much beyond the regional dimension and will be part of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

Second part of the Programme focuses on flood prevention by helping countries to deal with the requirements of the EU Floods Directive. Some of the beneficiary countries have the EU candidate status and will have to transpose the EU legislation. IPA FLOODS will assist them on their way to the EU membership by providing initial tools for transposition of the EU Floods Directive.

It is worth mentioning the completion of the two previous regional IPA Programmes for Civil Protection for Western Balkans and Turkey through which the beneficiary countries got closer to and effectively interact with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. These two programmes contributed to Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey becoming participating states to the Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

Last but not least, IPA FLOODS is an important regional initiative as it ensures continuity with previously conducted IPA projects in the region and will also feed into the upcoming IPA risk assessment and mapping programme.

As desk officer in the European Commission following IPA FLOODS Programme, I am happy to work and interact with very motivated Consortium and the beneficiary countries who actively participate. Looking forward to seeing concrete results of the programme and being part of it!



IPA FLOODS Lot 1: delivery of rescue boats and equipment

While you are reading this newsletter, the rescue boats and equipment for the development of multinational Civil Protection Modules (CPMs) of the type *Flood Rescue Using Boats* are being delivered to the programme beneficiaries as a result of the first IPA FLOODS call for tender closed in October 2015. Each country will receive two boats (inflatable and aluminium boats, according to their specific requests) and a range of protective equipment for rescue operations and logistic materials.



Starting from April 2015, all Consortium members and beneficiaries contributed to the achievement of this important milestone: while Studiare Sviluppo has taken over the administrative aspects of the procurement, the experts from the Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief (URSZR) and the Italian Civil Protection Department (DPC), jointly with the representatives from the beneficiaries, have developed the technical specifications for the flood response equipment and conducted the operational tests of the purchased materials. Moreover, the beneficiaries contributed also to the development of the service and maintenance plans and to the

identification of the stocking areas. The equipment will be entrusted either to the national civil protection authorities or to other organizations identified as “end-users” who will be in charge of its storage and regular well maintenance. The equipment will be used during the operational trainings organised for each module (including 11 staff per country team) in Struga (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) on 18-23 September 2016 for the national teams of Albania, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey and on 25-30 September in Podgorica (Montenegro) for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia.



The donations will contribute, in combination with the trainings organized both at operational and team management level, to the development of the two multinational CPMs. For the future, the CPMs - will be able to operate together, possibly be registered into the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS) of the European Commission and be included into the Voluntary Pool of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, thus contributing to a more efficient and rapid response in case of major floods in the region.



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Host Nation Support (HNS) and Border-crossing Procedures (BCPs): the way forward

A contribution by Arabela Vahtarić



Host Nation Support (HNS) that includes facilitated border-crossing procedures is a vital element of every international disaster assistance mission. The ability to reach the desired destination in a disaster stricken country in a timely

and efficient manner means the difference between rescuing lives and simply helping with the losses. This was recognised at EU level and to this end a set of HNS guidelines were adopted.

The role of HNS procedures is especially significant in the case of multinational civil protection modules that need to travel and work as one. The IPA FLOODS programme aims to create multinational modules to provide assistance to countries that have been stricken with floods. In order to foresee and remove as many obstacles as possible when deploying the modules in an international mission, we plan to draft a set of guidelines and checklists that will allow the national teams to be better prepared and to have at hand a common set of baseline rules according to the case.

Our first step was to get together representatives from all relevant governmental bodies of the beneficiary countries such as the customs authorities, the border police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of course the civil protection

authorities, to jointly make a first draft of the document that will set the scene for HNS and BCPs. We did this at the regional conference held in Budva, Montenegro in January 2016. The document included important information, such as the meeting points for each country of the module, the border crossing requirements among the countries of the module, contact points in the capitals, etc.

The produced document was considered to be very well composed but to be sure it was decided to test it through a table top exercise. In May we met again in Portorož, Slovenia, and through a day and a half exercise we simulated the deployment to Poland of two flood rescue with boats modules. The exercise proved to be extremely useful and the feedback from the participating countries was invaluable. The initial document, although it contained the most relevant steps and information, showed many shortcomings. One of the most commonly mentioned was the lack of input from teams themselves, in particular it was necessary to create a checklist of responsibilities for the leading country of the modules. It was also highlighted that the document should not be binding in a legal sense but should rather be included in the Standard Operating Procedure as an Annex. The final document will be tested in the field exercise that will be held next October in Croatia.

This will undoubtedly be an excellent opportunity to recheck the document and if necessary make additional improvements. Since the aim of every rescue operation is to save as many lives and as much property as possible, getting to the location in time and safely is immensely important, drafting guidelines that will enable this will contribute to the success of every rescue mission.

**Arabela Vahtaric is the Head of International Relations at the Croatian National Protection and Rescue Directorate.*

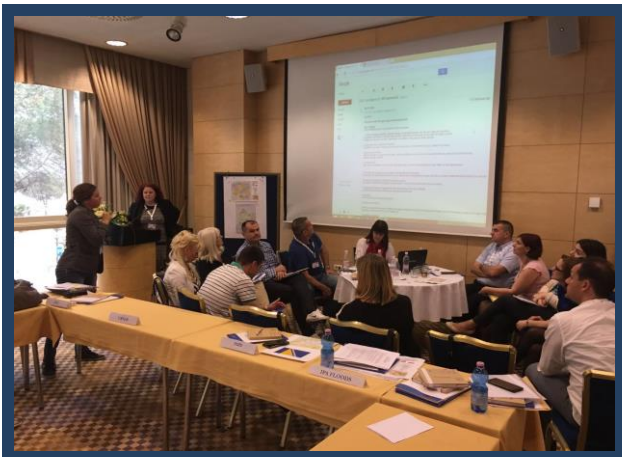
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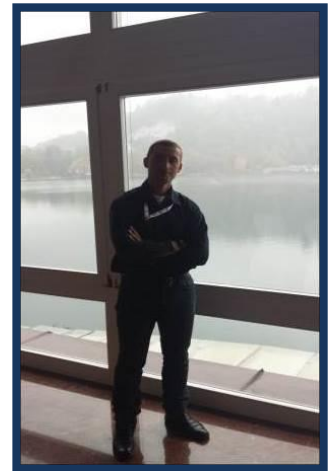


Here below some pictures of the table top exercise (TTX) held in Portorož (Slovenia), last 10-12 May



Preparing national teams for international interventions

On 4-8 April 2016, the training for the *Management Staff of Multinational Civil Protection Modules for Flood Rescue using Boats* was organized in Bled (Slovenia) under the auspices of the the Slovenian Administration of Civil Protection and Disaster Relief (URSZR). An event attended by 24 representatives from Western Balkans and Turkey. The course included an in depth-discussion of the roles and functions of international actors in disaster relief and covered such subjects as team deployment procedures, field security and the Union Civil Protection Mechanisms. The training was also an opportunity to improve participants' capabilities to lead and coordinate respective units in a multi-task and multi-stakeholder context and to integrate them into the existing national and international coordination arrangements in a disaster-affected country. To test the information and knowledge given during the course, the trainers organized a Table-top Exercise (TTX). The simulation was built on a scenario where a serious disaster caused by floods had occurred on the territory of Slovenia.



Vilson Toka, as attendee of this training and representative of the Albanian team, gives us in this interview his valuable feed-back and outlines to what extent IPA FLOODS is giving support to the beneficiaries.

Q: Mr Toka, what's your profile and where do you work ?

A: I was a member of the military forces for 5 years, now I have been working for almost one year as a Police officer at the Reparti N.SH. Shkoder, the Albanian Quick Reaction Forces.



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Q: Is it the first time you participated in a training for the development of Flood Rescue Boats (FRB) module?

A: Yes, indeed. It was the first time for me to participate to a training of this kind even if I might say I am joining, as Albanian team member, the workshops and activities that IPA FLOODS organizes on FRB module.

Q: What did you learn at the training and what did you bring back home?

A: Given the fact that it was my first time to be involved in the multinational development of the module, I understood how trainings involving other nations work and what you need to be prepared for an intervention. The most important things are coordination, team work and a good knowledge of the rules and regulations concerning the deployment of multinational modules, in this specific case Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) helps a lot. Back home, I shared this experience with my colleagues explaining them how important these get-togethers are. The opportunity to be prepared well in advance for any calamity that may occur it's the key to cope well with disaster's management.

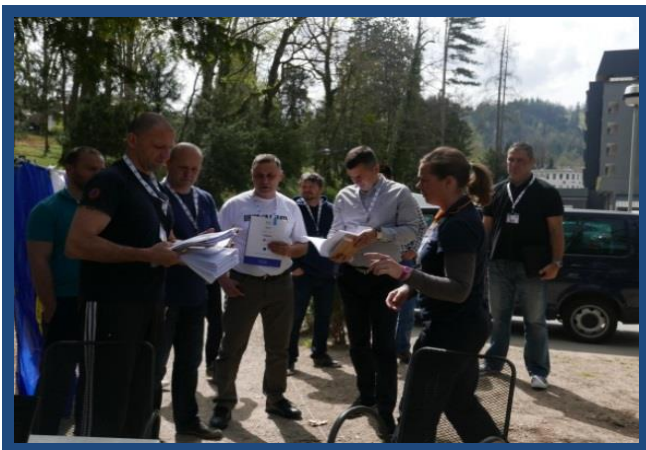
A: The scenario was very well organised by the trainers and was extremely useful because it gave us the chance to put in practice our information. I learned how important are readiness and timing when responding to the request of any type of Floods in other countries, how we have to alert and to mobilize the national teams of the multinational module. Moreover, it was particularly fruitful for me to test how to deal with media and journalists, because, as "technical experts", we are not always prepared on how to manage media relations in emergency situations.

Q: Indeed, Albania is vulnerable to a number of natural and man-made hazards and risks being the floods the most recurrent disasters. Have you ever experienced to participate to a disaster's response? If so, is there something you think it is important to consider in those kind of situations?

A: In west-north of Albania in 2010-2011 some intense and dangerous floods took place and in that period I was involved into the disaster response. Here in Albania we have an expression "The Unit does the Strength", so the most important thing is to work together for facing the difficulties for better responding to the disaster and rescue as much lives as possible. Moreover, I work within a team of very experienced people who have been involved in the emergency operations during the floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina 3 years ago.

Q: Was the training an opportunity to meet other colleagues from neighbor countries?

A: Yes sure, it was an opportunity to meet other colleagues and exchange experiences with them. These occasions are useful for us because we learn how to work together with other national teams by using SOPs, a set of rules that help us cooperate efficiently.



the TTX organised in Bled during the training

Q: The training was also an opportunity to simulate a disaster's scenario through a Table Top Exercise, was it useful? What did you learn about that?



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Data sharing essential to better cope with floods events

Data are key to monitor and prevent natural hazards. This statement was strongly highlighted at the launch of the new platform MyDEWETRA|IPA FLOODS during the last IPA FLOODS steering group meeting on 9th March. MyDEWETRA|IPA FLOODS is a web-based and open source Flood Risk Information System aiming at sharing timely and reliable geospatial data within IPA FLOODS' beneficiaries. The on-line system is based on the existing DEWETRA platform, an integrated system for real-time hydro-meteorological and wildfire risk forecasting, monitoring and prevention of natural hazards that has been developed by CIMA Research Foundation on behalf of the Italian Civil Protection Department. The platform, whose features are in line with the relevant international standards (e.g. *EU INSPIRE Directive*), will allow the beneficiaries to share information, especially regarding data and maps needed for "Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment" and "Flood Hazard and Flood Risk Mapping" important for the implementation of the EU Floods Directive. The data have been provided by the national institutions in charge of civil protection and water management. Moreover, this application allows easy accessibility and high interoperability with existing web-based services as well as with the *EU Water Information System (WISE)*.

How does it work and what are its advantages:

MyDEWETRA|IPA FLOODS is based on a federated and distributed data infrastructure composed of multiple servers that are directly managed by data owners and producers. At the same time the platform gives access to several applications, that are: DEWETRA (a web-GIS platform aimed at multi-risk mapping and hydrological forecasting and monitoring of natural disasters worldwide); FLOODCAT (an open source operational system for collecting and storing data on floods events); GeoNode (a virtual library for geospatial data and map that supports the upload and file of geospatial



information); Kumalè (a blog for experts wishing to exchange information and provide remote service assistance to the IPA FLOODS Programme); See.KMS - Knowledge Management System for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the Western Balkans and Turkey (a virtual library supported by the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe).

MyDEWETRA|IPA FLOODS will be soon populated with data and from September a set of trainings for the users of the platforms will be organized. For more in-depth information, follow the link to the portal: <http://ipafloods.mydewetra.org>.

IPA FLOODS Steering Group adopts work-plan for 2016-2017 in Sarajevo

Thanks to the kind hospitality of the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Protection and Rescue Sector, the IPA FLOODS Steering Group members gathered in Sarajevo last 9 March to discuss the programme implementation progress and the way forward.

After the welcome speech given by Mr Agic, Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Security, who underlined the relevance of the programme for the Western Balkans and Turkey especially after the severe and damaging floods that hit the region during May 2014, Mr D'Angelo, IPA FLOODS Programme Director, and Ms Zuber, Programme Officer at DG ECHO, opened the meeting by expressing their appreciation for the proactive attitude of all the involved stakeholders who are strongly contributing to the growth of IPA FLOODS. Ms Zuber also suggested that the candidates to the Mechanism should consider to join the next modules' training cycle of the Union CP Mechanism next June 2016. Both speakers stressed the fact that developing tailor-made measures on the basis of the beneficiaries' regional context is a successful principle that has guided the Programme throughout its mid-term implementation.

In this occasion, the Steering Group members reviewed the actions already taken and endorsed the work-plan for 2016-2017. In particular, the Consortium members illustrated the preparatory activities for the IPA FLOODS CRO 2016 field-exercise planned in October 2016 and the capacity building activities for flood response preparedness that are being organised under Lot 1 and Lot 2.

The next meeting has been scheduled in December in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

For more information, you can access all relevant documentation at <http://ipafloods.ipacivilprotection.eu/index.php/test-page?layout=edit&id=45>

LOT 2: Gearing up for the 2nd call for tender: Specifications ready for the HCP and FC Modules

As you may know, IPA FLOODS Lot 2 is focused on the development and equipment of civil protection modules of the type *High Capacity Pumping* (HCP) and *Flood Containment* (FC). At this stage the assessment for the provision of the equipment has been finalized and the beneficiaries have just approved the lists of technical specifications necessary to put in place the second IPA FLOODS call for tender. This result has been achieved on one side through the field work conducted by IPA FLOODS partners, especially the German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), in charge of the work package of activities related to HCP, and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), responsible for FC. Moreover, the discussions and decisions among trainers and beneficiaries' representatives, during the two working group meetings on the development of HCP and FC national teams in Bonn and Split last January and April respectively, have contributed to the draft of the lists of materials according to the specific needs of each beneficiary.



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Preparing for IPA FLOODS – CRO 2016

The regional full-scale field exercise “IPA FLOODS – CRO 2016” is planned from 17th to 21st October 2016 in Zagreb, Croatia. The simulation will test the regional cooperation, readiness and response capabilities of the newly established and trained multinational CPMs for *Flood Rescue Using Boats*. The preparatory work has already started by the “Exercise Planning Team” (EPT). A pool of National Exercise Coordinators who will be in charge of the whole organisation and smooth-running of the field exercise, has met during the Initial and Main Planning Conferences, taken place last February and last May respectively, to jointly develop the scenario and the main requirements for the exercise. The event will overall involve a broad number of representatives, including staff and experts from the beneficiaries, consortium members and delegates, as well as representatives

from the EU countries, according to the Observers’ Programme.



Next Activities and Events

- 13-17 June 2016** 1st Training Management Course, HPC-FC in Podgorica (Montenegro)
- 7 September** Exercise Final Planning Conference, Zagreb (Croatia)
- 18- 23 September** 1st Operational Training FRB Ohrid Lake (the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia)
- 25-30 September** 2nd Operational training FRB Podgorica (Montenegro)

IPA FLOODS implementation has been assigned to the Consortium established by the Italian Civil Protection Department (DPC), as leader, jointly with the Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief (URSZR), the German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), the National Protection and Rescue Directorate of the Republic of Croatia (DUZS), the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agencies (MSB), CIMA Research Foundation (only for Lot 1) and *Studiare Sviluppo* (Italy).

The goal of IPA FLOODS is to increase **flood risk management** capacities at national, regional and EU levels in the Beneficiaries of **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia** (only for Lot 1), the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia** and **Turkey**. To this purpose, the Programme supports capacity building for **flood preparedness and response** and **approximation to the EU Floods Directive** in the Beneficiaries.

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