

Layman's Report

RESPONSEE Full Scale Exercise

UCPM

Union Civil Protection Mechanism

What is it?

In October 2001, the European Commission established the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The Mechanism aims to strengthen cooperation between the EU countries and 6 Participating States on civil protection to improve prevention, preparedness, and response to disasters.

When an emergency overwhelms the response capabilities of a country in Europe and beyond, it can request assistance through the Mechanism.

The European Commission plays a key role in coordinating the disaster response worldwide, contributing to at least 75% of the transport and/or operational costs of deployments.

Full-scale exercises such as **ResponSEE** provide a perfect opportunity to test and improve local, national, regional and EU procedures and mechanisms related to the response to a major earthquake. Close to real-life conditions during exercises enable an excellent learning experience on all decision-making and operational levels.



ResponSEE Earthquake exercise: Urban Search and Rescue Teams from Bosnia and Herzegovina working together, moving concrete blocks

Full Scale Exercise Project funded by DG ECHO

ResponSEE

Disaster Response Exercise South Easter Europe - ResponSEE

The countries of the Western Balkans have a long history of devastating earthquakes that have incurred significant economic and human losses and influenced the development efforts of the countries.

In 1963 massive earthquake struck the capital city of Skopje in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (6.9 Richter scale) killing more than 1,070 citizens and 80 percent of the city was destroyed. Six years later, in 1969 another massive earthquake (6,0 Richter scale) hit the region but this time it struck the city of Banja Luka in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Earthquake totally devastated the city. And finally, this disaster thread ended in 1979 with another destructive earthquake (7,0 Richter scale) that hit the coastal part of Montenegro. In September and November 2019, Albania was struck by earthquakes killing 51 people and leaving thousands injured.

On 22 March 2020, the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) was again activated, offering in kind assistance to Croatia due to a 5.4M earthquake.

The aim of the ResponSEE project is to strengthen disaster preparedness in the Western Balkans by increasing interoperability, enabling, and supporting cooperation for international disaster response to bring Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina closer to UCPM.

This will be ensured by an in-depth analysis of the civil protection situation and exercise capacities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, joint exercise planning, development of an exercise planning guide and creating a joint testbed by executing three different exercises (a table-top exercise, a command post exercise and a Full-Scale Exercise).



ReponSEE project logo

TTX Table Top Exercise

is played out, as the name implies, around a table, with participants responding to the facilitator's prompts and description of a scenario with suggestions drawn from their organization's emergency plans.

CPX Command Post Exercise

is an exercise in which a group of people, usually representing a command/control center team and/or a decision-making team, that is reacting to a simulated incident happening somewhere.



Funded by
European Union

Background

Why exercising earthquake response?

Seismic risk in Europe

Europe has a long history of destructive earthquakes, and seismic risk can severely affect our modern society, as shown by events like the 2009 L'Aquila, 2016 central Italy, 2019 Albania and 2020 Zagreb and Petrinja events.

Especially countries of the Western Balkans have experienced devastating earthquakes that have incurred significant economic and human losses and influenced the development efforts of the countries.

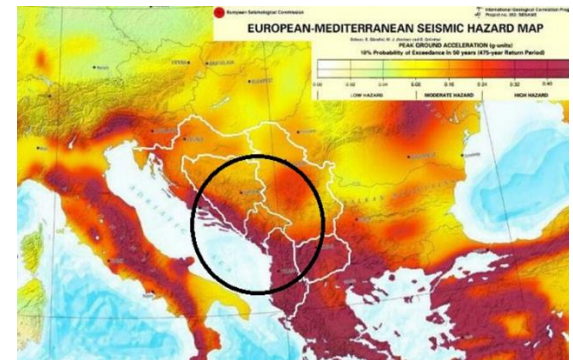
Particularly sensitive and earthquake-prone territories are located within Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Therefore, it is important that on the broader EU level we understand the earthquake risks and try to mitigate them by effectively preparing and responding when earthquakes occur.

According to the updated version of the Threat Assessment from Natural and Other Disasters in 2019, the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the seismically more active parts of the Balkan Peninsula, which is part of the Mediterranean-Trans-Asian Seismic Belt.

In 2016 an Earthquake Hazard Map was produced in cooperation with UNISDR (see picture) which is based on the analysis of the earthquake events from 1950 to 2015. According to the map the most hazardous areas are in the central and southeast part of the country.

An Earthquake that would affect southeast Bosnia and Herzegovina is considered as a high risk due to its size of potential impacts which relate to the high density of the population, high number of daily commuters, large number of state and

economic institutions, traffic intersections (roads, railways) and energy infrastructures (pipelines, transmission lines) present in this area.



Source: European-Mediterranean Seismic Hazard Map, NATO (2021)



Aim of the project

The overall expected result is to enable the response to a large-scale disaster in the region by creating interoperability between all involved actors, and enable support to vulnerable groups by:

- # Analyze the CP situation in ALB, BiH and MNE.
- # Develop and finalize after the FSX an exercise-planning guide.
- # Conduct joint exercise planning.
- # Prepare and conduct one joint TTX, CPX and FSX.
- # Conduct evaluation, conclude with a lesson-learned procedure, and recommend a way ahead for the region.

Full Scale Exercise

Exercise Objectives

The latest updates

- # Analyze and discuss the procedures in place in the different EOCs (ALB, BiH, MNE) from alert to deployment of a team
- # Analyze and discuss procedures in place for transiting and incoming international teams
- # Analyze and discuss how the EOCs (ALB, BiH, MNE) are linked in the region and internationally
- # Analyze and discuss how the EOCs are linked to ERCC of UN and EU, or how it can be done in the future
- # Confront EOCs with challenges that might occur during emergency operation



Fire Fighting team from Albania in response to the earthquake during full scale exercise

Project Deliverables

Expected Results

Activities



Rescue work from Cable Car in Sarajevo

To prepare for the *FSX*, a *TTX* and a *CPX* will be jointly planned to include EU Host Nation Support guidelines, their national disaster response plan, and procedures of the UCPM. The results will then be evaluated and implemented in the planning of the *FSX*.

Joint planning with partners:

To increase planning and training capabilities in the countries, a joint planning of all exercises is foreseen. The planning process will be done for *TTX* according to the *FSX* scenario, for *CPX* on coordination between UN, EU, affected states and supporting states and for a joint *FSX* after three planning conferences with all partners and some additional experts from UCPM Participating States.

Development of an exercise planning guide:

After the first planning conference the joint development of an exercise planning guide will start and should at the end strengthen the countries in their training/planning departments as e.g. ALB is setting up such a department/program now. Before the *TTX* in July 2021 a first draft of such a guide should be ready and after *TTX*, *CPX* and *FSX* adapted accordingly to have a sustainable, forward-looking guide for them.

ResponSEE

Facts & Figures

Project Data

Proposal Number: UCPM-EXT-AG 101017985

Project Start: 01.01.2021

Duration: 18 months

Description: Planning, development, and conduct of a EUCP capacity development project to improve the response to an earthquake in South-Eastern Europe



USAR team from Montenegro in response to the earthquake during full scale exercise



ReponSEE project team

Department of Civil Protection of the Office of the Government of Styria (Coordinator)

The Office of the Government of Styria with its Department for Civil Protection provides knowledge and expertise in prevention and preparedness. The subdivision for civil protection is responsible for preparedness. Its tasks are drafting laws, regulations and directives for civil protection and all related matters as well as their execution, funding and supporting the rescue organizations, supervising the fire service organizations, monitoring services for the population, and training and exercises.

Department for Emergency Situation – Ministry of Internal Affairs Romania

The Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs is the public service in charge of, among other duties: establishing, by law measures, to protect the rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as public and private property. The Department for Emergency Situations, Pursuant to Art. I of Government Emergency Ordinance 1/2014, is an operational structure without legal personality of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in charge of the permanent national coordination of emergency prevention and management actions, the provision and coordination of human, material, financial and other resources needed to restore normality, including specialist first aid and emergency medical care in Emergency Care Units and Centres.

Protection and Rescue Sector, Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina has competence over the protection of international borders, inner border crossings, traffic regulation at BiH border crossings, prevention and detection of perpetrators of criminal acts of terrorism, narcotics trafficking, falsifying domestic and foreign currency, trafficking in human beings and other criminal acts with international or inter-entity elements. It is also competent for international co-operation in all fields falling within the scope of competence of the Ministry.

GET reliefgoods.org GmbH

Reliefgoods is a limited company, based in Vienna with the primary objective to prepare for humanitarian emergencies and disaster events all around the world. Their experts, who have been working in disaster management and response for years, plan everything from product procurement and supply chains to transportation routes. They set up risk and vulnerability assessments and define the profound demand for projects. Efficiently providing high-quality products, while keeping the costs down. Solutions are based on a modular approach which enables Reliefgoods to offer sets of individual items and know-how depending on needs.



Final Scenario of the ResponSEE Full Scale Exercise at Mount Igman, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Project Conclusions

Evaluation, Lessons Learned and Way Ahead



The whole project has been evaluated in order to adapt and get the best possible outcome of the project targeting the overall aim. A lesson learned report has been designed and discussed with all partners, the beneficiaries, and the ERCC.

From this initial information, the situation escalated further and required several teams to conduct urban search and rescue operations, CBRN operations, sheltering, water purification, firefighting, dog searches and mountain rescue operations. The specific urban environment with cascading effects and a large displacement situation challenged the teams further.

As the results of the projects will have significance for the whole region, the DPPI SEE network will be invited to present and discuss the outcomes and lessons with the CP organizations of the overall region.

Summary of activities

A high number of participants from national and international teams took part in this exercise, hailing from: Albania; Austria; Czech Republic; Germany; Latvia; Montenegro; Netherlands; Romania; Slovenia; Sweden; the Federation of BiH; Republika Srpska; and Breko District. Other countries such as Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Jordan, Moldova and Slovenia, expressed their desire to be involved as observers. In addition, organisations offering assistance in real-time emergencies were also present and took part in the exercise. These included: World Vision International; Save the Children; Delegation of the EU to BiH; OSCE Mission to BiH; UNDP BiH; UN Resident Coordinator; Unesco NATO HQ Sarajevo; Unicef; and Blue Shield International.

The chosen scenario for was an earthquake strike involving the following synopsis: “On April 26, 2022 at 06:29 hrs, a massive earthquake hits the Western Balkans with its epicentre located close to the municipality of Ilidža, BiH. The quake has a strength of 6.4 on the Richter scale with a depth of 21 km. The population centre of Sarajevo, as well as the residential areas around Ilidža, are heavily affected with major damage to buildings and critical infrastructure. According to first estimates, the quake generated the need for immediate search and rescue operations, as well as a high demand in sheltering support.”

“A well prepared full-scale exercise is the closest we can bring to a real-life situation.”

- Geir Ellingsen, DG ECHO

The UCPM was activated, and a United Nations Disaster Assessment and Co-ordination (UNDAC) team was embedded into a European Union Civil Protection Team (UCPT). The UCPT conducted several assessments on different sites, with one specific cultural heritage assessment in Sarajevo Old City, together with Unesco and Blue Shield International. This required the co-ordination of multiple meetings and co-operation with all involved organisations.

Given the short timeframe of the exercise, it was set up to be host nation and participant-driven. Once again, owing to the importance of bringing BiH closer to the UCPM, the Commissioner of DG ECHO, Janez Lenarcic, personally visited the exercise on site as a guest of honour.