



# 8<sup>th</sup> European **Civil Protection** Forum

Shaping a disaster-resilient Union:  
**Charting a path for the future of European civil protection**

Tour & Taxis, Brussels, 4-5 June 2024

**FINAL REPORT**



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# Introduction

The European Civil Protection Forum continues to be a special moment in the agendas of the Civil Protection Community in Europe. A moment to slow down and reflect, to engage in fascinating discussions, exchange knowledge and good practices, to network and to further strengthen the esprit du corps.

The 8th edition of the Forum took place on 4 and 5 June 2024 in Brussels, on the eve of the European elections and at a critical point for the future of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). Collectively, we reflected on how to build a more disaster-resilient Union, how to address the complex, cross-sectoral, and cross-border nature of challenges that Europe nowadays faces, and how to advance our knowledge for action needed to make our future efforts efficient and sustainable.

Close to 1500 individuals representing civil protection and disaster risk management authorities at different levels of governance, first responders and civil society organisations, private sector, science and academia, EU institutions and partner international organisations joined the event. They followed over 30 different sessions, discussion panels and workshops alike, outdoor demonstrations and networking activities.

The Civil Protection Village showcased innovative solutions and good practices in the field of civil protection. It was also a beating heart of the entire event and a stage for the very first UCPM football tournament, with Luxembourg claiming the historical trophy. During the second ceremony of its kind, Italy, Germany and Norway were awarded medals for their extraordinary contributions to the UCPM.

This Forum would not have been possible without the involvement of many colleagues, in the Commission as well as UCPM Member and Participating States, who organised sessions, presented their work at the Village stands and actively shaped the two days. Thank you for joining us and for making the 8th European Civil Protection Forum a success!

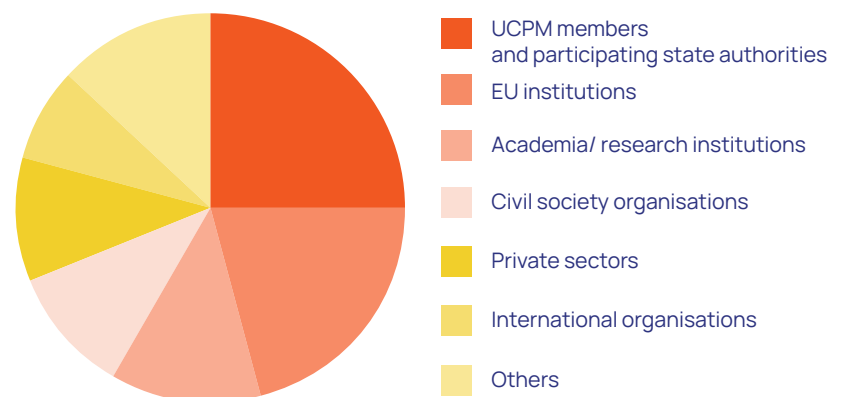
Watch the recordings of selected sessions [here](#) and the highlights of the Forum [here](#) (closing video).

## DG ECHO Organising Team

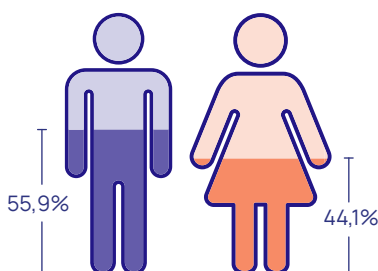
Total number of participants



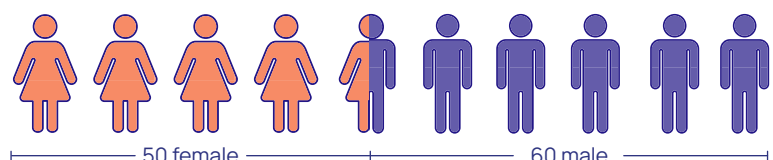
Sectors/ organisations represented



Gender balance






Speakers' gender balance






# Agenda Matrix

Tuesday 4 June 2024

Time	Schedule: Panel Sessions			Schedule: Workshops		
	Plenary 	Studio 1 	Studio 3	Studio 2	Studio 4	Studio 5
08:30 - 09:30	Registration and welcome coffee					
09:30 - 09:45	Opening remarks by Commissioner Janez Lenarčič (Plenary room)					
09:45 - 10:45	High-level plenary session - <i>Turbulent Past, Challenging Present: Has the UCPM Met the Needs and Expectations?</i> (Plenary room)					
10:45 - 11:15	Coffee break					
11:15 - 12:45	Investing in Resilience: From Evidence to Practice	Bridging the Gap between local and EU level Response: Regional Cooperation in Disaster Management	Enhancing Cross-Border Collaboration through the Pre-Positioning Programme	20 years of GDACS: How Science and Technology has supported the Global Disaster Response Community	Behavioural Dimension of Disaster Prevention & Preparedness and Climate Adaptation	How to Support Psychological Recovery and Occupational Mental Health in Fire and Rescue Services?
12:45 - 14:15	 UCPM Foosball Championship (CP Village)	Lunch		Outdoor demonstrations	Intro to the Global Situation System (ECHO stand)	
14:15 - 15:45	rescEU: Five years of Evolution and its Challenges	Embracing Artificial Intelligence and New Technologies for Enhancing Disaster Risk Prevention and Response	Wildfire Risk Awareness and Communication as a Pillar of Disaster Risk Reduction	Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid: Distinctions and Complementarity between the two Instruments	Governance for Disaster Risk Management: Involvement of Civil Protection National Authorities	Knowledge Transfer in Civil Protection Exercises
15:45 - 16:15	Coffee break				Outdoor demonstrations	
16:15 - 17:45	Regional Cooperation as Catalyst for Trust-Building and Improved Collaboration among the European Union and its Neighbours	The Union Disaster Resilience Goals and Early Warning for All Initiative: How do they align?	How to Manage Spontaneous Volunteers during Disaster Response Marine Incidents and Civil Protection: One Incident – One Response	Advancing Integrated Wildfire Management: Priorities for Action	More than just a Roof: How Emergency Shelter Can Reduce Vulnerability	10 Years of the European Civil Protection Pool: Achievements and Future Challenges
17:45 - 18:15	Coffee break					
18:15 - 19:00	UCPM Medals Award Ceremony (Plenary room)					
19:00 - 22:00	Networking dinner and concert (Gare Maritime)				Outdoor demonstrations	

Civil Protection Village

Wednesday 5 June 2024

	Schedule: Panel Sessions			Schedule: Workshops		
Time	Plenary 	Studio 1 	Studio 3	Studio 2	Studio 4	Studio 5
08:30 - 09:00	<b>Registration and welcome coffee</b>					
09:00 - 09:45	<b>Keynote speeches</b> (Plenary room) Sauli Niinistö Gaia Vince					
09:45 - 10:45	<b>High-level plenary session – Enhanced European Resilience: Are Crisis Management Systems Fit for the Future?</b> (Plenary room)					
10:45 - 11:15	Outdoor demonstrations		<b>Coffee break</b>	Q&A Session: Gaia Vince (ECHO stand)		
11:15 - 12:45	Strengthening Disaster Resilience: Joining Civil Protection and Private Sector Efforts	Open Science, Research Data Management and Evidence-based Civil Protection Decision-Making	Bridging the Inclusion Gap: Advancing Equality in European Civil Protection Teams	Reducing Risks Together: Bridging Disaster Resilience and Climate Adaptation Strategies	Risk Communication and Awareness: the preparEU Initiative and Next Steps	Cassandra Complex in Foresight for Civil Protection: If you wait, it will be too late
12:45 - 14:15	 UCPM Foosball Championship (CP Village)	<b>Lunch</b>		Outdoor demonstrations		
14:15 - 15:45	Crisis Management Principles: What is the ERCC's role?	Strengthening Societal Resilience to Disasters: Improving Engagement and Communication among Citizens and Authorities	Risk Reduction Strategies in Cultural Heritage	Satellites, Artificial Intelligence and beyond: the Future of Disaster Management	Expect the Unexpected: Preparing the Union for Large-scale, Cross-sectoral and Complex Disasters	Climate and Security – How Can the UCPM Manage Competing Priorities
15:55 - 16:00	<b>UCPM Foosball Championship Award Ceremony</b> (Plenary room)					
16:00 - 16:15	<b>Closing remarks by Commissioner Janez Lenarčič</b> (Plenary room)					

Civil Protection Village

## Opening remarks by Janez Lenarčič, Commissioner for Crisis Management



Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Crisis Management, opened the 8th edition of the European Civil Protection Forum, by recalling how far European civil protection has come in the last few years. Nevertheless, he also noted that much work still needs to be done. A better prepared and more resilient Europe is possible.

In the summer of 2023, Europe saw heavy floods hitting Italy, Slovenia and Hungary. At the same time a record wildfire season devastated countries like Greece, where an area five times the size of Brussels burned down. The intensity and frequency of these disasters

will only increase as climate breakdown continues. In the meantime, we are witnessing conflict on European soil in Ukraine, and innocent people suffering in Gaza, Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.

Europe, however, is waking up. During last year's wildfires in Greece, through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), the EU launched its largest aerial rescue operation to date, coordinating teams from 11 European countries, with firefighters from Serbia to Sweden working side by side. When Russia invaded Ukraine, the EU launched its largest and most complex operation to date. This mission is ongoing and has delivered roughly 150 000 tons of emergency assistance so far, alongside new, innovative ways to deliver support, including private sector mobilisation and medical evacuations. This is European solidarity at its best.

The Commissioner also noted the efforts to establish a strategic rescue reserve. The aerial firefighting fleet was doubled, emergency medical teams were built, and medical, energy, shelter and CBRN reserves were developed. The European Civil Protection Pool was increased by over 30 %. And this year, 550 firefighters took part in a pre-positioning initiative.

For all this, the Commissioner thanked the European civil protection community for being part of a revolution in Europe's civil protection, for helping to keep Europeans safe and for helping to build a more resilient future.

According to the Commissioner, the UCPM will need to be strengthened in the future. In the last years, the Mechanism operated during several crises, and in a conflict on European territory. It delivered cross-sectoral help. New members have also joined the Mechanism, such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Ukraine.

Knowledge must be shared within the European civil protection community through channels such as the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network and events like the European Civil Protection Forum.

Civil protection efforts need to be scaled up. The challenge ahead is larger than ever, but the Commissioner has faith in the UCPM ability to build a safer, more disaster-resilient Europe.

# Sessions

## High-level plenary session: Turbulent Past, Challenging Present: Has the UCPM Met the Needs and Expectations?

The last five years were characterised by shocks and turbulence that have had global implications and continue to reverberate across the globe. The Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) has been key in responding to a range of crises in Europe and beyond. It coordinated the delivery of aid to Ukraine, the biggest and most complex operation in its history, has helped with efforts to counter COVID-19 and has been activated as part of wildfire response in the South of Europe.

To mark the current Commission's mandate coming to an end, this panel looked at how the UCPM evolved, and how it will need to keep developing in the future.



### SPEAKERS

- **Agnė Bilotaitė**, Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania
- **Fabrizio Curcio**, Head of the Italian Civil Protection Department
- **Hans Das**, Deputy Director-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, European Commission
- **Kamal Kishore**, Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

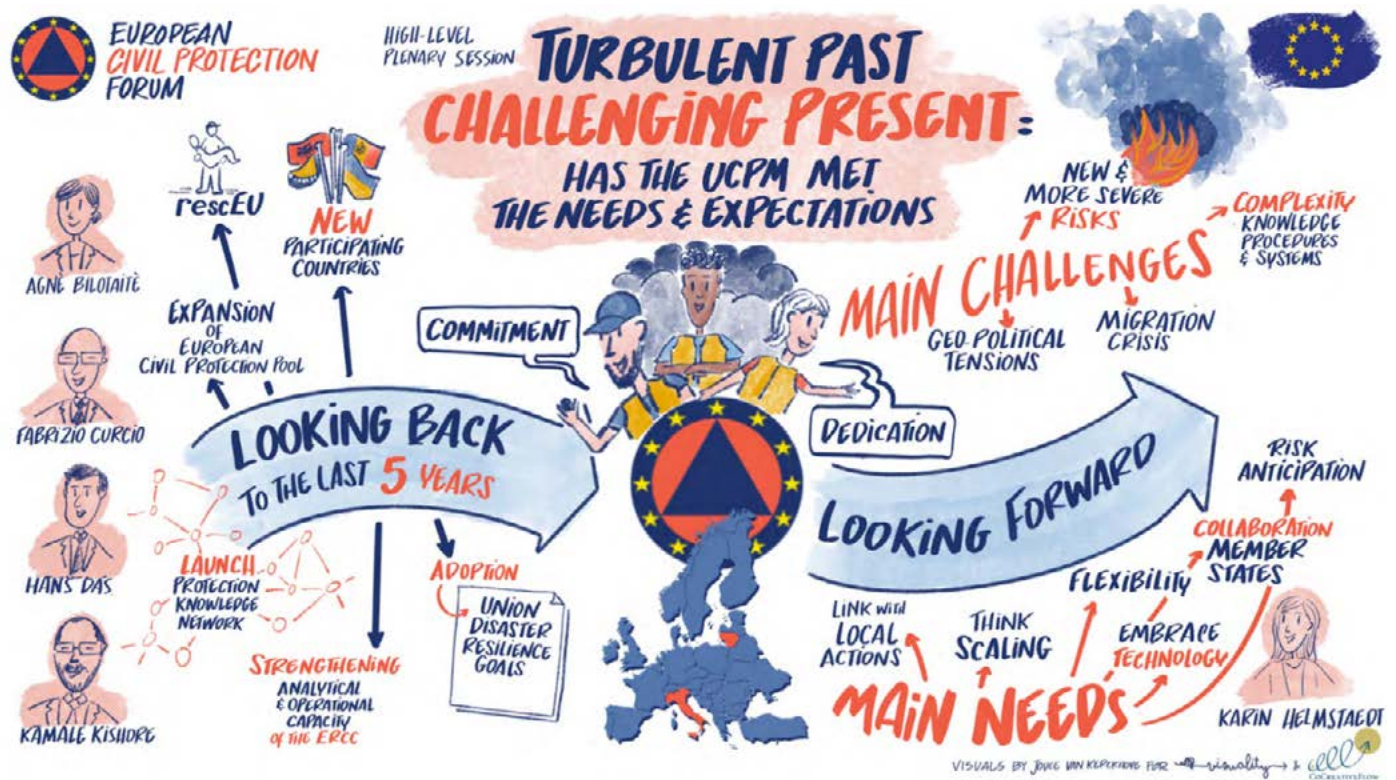
Moderator: **Karin Helmstaedt**





**KEY MESSAGES**

- Since its establishment, the UCPM has promoted the exchange of knowledge among its members, the creation of shared procedures, and flexibility to prepare and respond to a variety of threats. These elements, together with the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, should continue being the driving forces of the UCPM in the future.
- The Disaster Resilience Goals, collectively devised in 2023 by the European Commission and Member States, are a milestone in enhancing European resilience. They aim at connecting policy to local action and at scaling up and adapting our systems to match the speed at which risks are becoming more complex. They well align with the spirit of the Sendai Framework and the Early Warning for All initiative by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).
- The successes and responsiveness of the UCPM were possible thanks to the close cooperation between the European Commission and the Member States. This is the result of 20 years of investment in preparedness, training, and exchange of good practices, which also led to an enormous professionalisation of the civil protection cooperation. Another achievement of the UCPM is its ability to be flexible and innovative, reaching out to new stakeholders and working in a cross-sectoral way.
- The biggest strategic changes of the UCPM over the last years are linked, on the one hand, to the risk and security landscape that has changed drastically and is forcing civil protection systems to prepare for new, more frequent, and intense risks; and on the other hand, to the development of the rescEU strategic reserve – a game-changer for EU preparedness to forest fires and CBRN risks.
- In the future, the UCPM will need to keep scaling up. Key areas for improvement highlighted by the panellists are more resources, improved scientific knowledge exchange, increased awareness and risk communication to citizens, cross-sectoral cooperation, better civil-military cooperation, improved ability to anticipate risks, and the need to embrace new technologies such as artificial intelligence.



## Panel discussion: Investing in Resilience: From Evidence to Practice

Investing in prevention and resilience makes sense. So why doesn't it happen more often? That is what this panel tried to get to the bottom of. It follows up on several reports made by the European Commission and the World Bank on smart investments in prevention and preparedness. Also, success stories in regard to prevention were discussed.

One of those success stories is the PLUTUS project of the Belgian Civil Protection Department which received a UCPM grant (technical assistance for disaster risk management).

The panel opened with a talk by Patricia Gaspar, a civil protection expert from Portugal, who shared her country's experience in streamlining prevention and preparedness investments. She shared a heartbreaking story about how in 2017, 66 people died in a wildfire in Pedrão Grande. This tragedy formed the basis for reform on how to deal with disasters such as forest fires in Portugal. Before, only 20 % of the forest fire budget of Portugal went to prevention, today it is 40%.

Inspirational Speaker: **Patricia Gaspar**, Civil Protection Expert, Portugal

### SPEAKERS

- **Ivars Nakurts**, Deputy Director-General, Deputy Chief of the State Fire and Rescue Service, Ministry of the Interior, Latvia
- **Zuzana Stanton-Geddes**, Senior Disaster Risk Management Specialist, World Bank
- **Arabela Vahtarić**, Head of International Relations and EU Projects, Civil Protection Directorate, Ministry of the Interior, Croatia
- **Gaetano Vivo**, Deputy Head of Unit, Prevention and Preparedness Capacity Building, DG ECHO, European Commission
- **Pieter Wynant**, Deputy Head of the International Relations Department, Directorate-General for Civil Protection, Ministry of Home Affairs, Belgium

Moderator: **Shada Islam**



## KEY MESSAGES

- We need to change the narrative around prevention. Prevention is not a burden on the budget, it actually saves money. That, however, is sometimes hard to prove, which is why the European Commission and World Bank produced several reports showing evidence that investments in prevention pay off by reducing the need for expensive emergency interventions.
- Investments in prevention and resilience need to happen in a smart way. 'Smart investments' are those that maximise the returns on society, environment and the economy and they include civil protection infrastructure, such as hospitals or fire stations. An example of smart investments are parks and green areas, which can, for example, help us deal with floods while at the same time reduce heat island effect in cities and providing leisure to the population. To make these smart investments, risk data and information is crucial.
- There are already very good tools at EU level to drive resilience investments forward, such as financial and technical assistance, science-based concrete tools on prioritising investments, e-learning and training on resilience, Knowledge Network exchanges on strengthening links between research and disaster risk management decision-makers, a brand-new Knowledge library, and peer-to-peer reviews. The increasing demand for such tools recorded in the past few years shows that countries see a clear value for the UCPM to support them with capacity building for more and better investments in resilience.



## Panel discussion:

### Bridging the Gap between local and EU level Response: Regional Cooperation in Disaster Management

Disaster readiness in Europe does not just rely on national capacity and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). A crucial step between the two is regional collaboration, where neighbouring or nearby countries engage in emergency response, but also prevention and preparedness activities.

Inside of Europe there is an entire spectrum of regional cooperation happening, going from local cooperation across borders, to full-fledged partnerships between blocs of countries.

This panel looked at how regional civil protection collaboration is working in Europe, what the lessons learnt are, and how it can evolve in the future.



#### SPEAKERS

- **Zsolt Kelemen**, Budapest Firefighters' Association, EU Strategy for the Danube Region Environmental Risks Priority Area Disaster Management Working Group
- **Simona Pohlova**, Deputy Head of Unit, Interreg, Cross-Border Cooperation, Internal Borders, DG REGIO, European Commission
- **Marie Sattler**, Luxembourg Fire & Rescue Corps (CGDIS)
- **Nejc Smole**, Deputy President of the Central Slovenia region
- **Bengt Sundelius**, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, MSB

Moderator: **Ali Al-Jaberi**

#### KEY MESSAGES

- Civil protection agencies from neighbouring countries can often react faster than the UCPM because of the close proximity and strong relationships between national civil protection agencies. This was proven when, for example, Luxembourg could very quickly respond to the heavy floods that hit Belgium in 2021.
- Regional collaboration and exercises between different civil protection agencies are key for improving regional cooperation. Training together and exchanging information allows regional interventions to take place successfully. Without this, different standards and types of equipment can cause problems. Firefighters in different European countries, for instance, have different systems to pump up water. Which is why having the right equipment before launching an international intervention is important.
- Action from regulatory and government agencies can serve as the bedrock for better regional cooperation. It can fund and incentivise partnerships. But also force the use of shared standards and protocols that make regional interventions easier.

## Panel discussion: Enhancing Cross-Border Collaboration through the Pre-Positioning Programme

Climate change has resulted in an increase in the frequency and intensity of wildfires in large parts of Europe. This puts extra pressure on national civil protection agencies in affected areas. One way in which European countries are fighting back is the pre-positioning programme.

In this programme teams of international firefighters are pre-positioned in wildfire prone countries like Greece, France and Portugal. In this way international response times are reduced and teams of firefighters from areas historically less-vulnerable to forest fires are trained in how to fight them. As climate change affects more northern regions, wildfires will start appearing there too. Which makes the knowledge learnt in other countries highly valuable.

The panel gave first-hand reports on the use of the programme in different countries. Participants shared experiences and discussed the future of the programme.



### SPEAKERS

- **Athanasios Balafas**, Ministry for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection/Hellenic Fire Corps
- **Florin Chirea**, IGSU – Romanian Civil Protection Department
- **Andre Fernandes**, National Commander, Portuguese National Authority for Emergency and Civil Protection
- **Frederic Harrault**, European and International Relations Unit, French Civil Protection Department
- **Eirini Krampi**, Director of International Relations, Ministry for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection, Greece
- **Łukasz Czernomazowicz**, National Headquarters of the Polish State Fire Service

Moderator: **Claire Kowalewski**, DG ECHO, European Commission

### KEY MESSAGES

- The pre-positioning initiative does not just allow forest fire-prone areas to receive international help faster, it is also a learning opportunity. When the teams come from areas that are less affected by forest fires, they learn how to fight them. They learn the procedures, equipment and systems other fire departments use to combat wildfires, so as to be better prepared for these fires which, due to climate change, will impact them in the same way in a few years' time.
- The work of liaison officers is key to having a smooth cooperation. They can help with small challenges, like language barriers, but can also help international delegations navigate key cultural differences and different ways of working between countries. Liaison officers need to receive adequate training to do their job, and need to be selected for their skills in, for example, languages.



## Workshop:

### 20 years of GDACS: How Science and Technology has supported the Global Disaster Response Community



For 20 years, the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS) has been leveraging science and technology to alert humanitarians about sudden-onset disasters, provide a space for information exchange among first responders and optimise satellite mapping acquisitions.

In this session, participants looked at the past and present of GDACS, and outlined its future.

- The Past – Retrospective: The role of GDACS during past disasters that have marked the collective memory. Participants were invited to share their experience of using GDACS.

- The present – Stock-taking: Participants discussed the key results of the 2023 GDACS' survey aimed at better understanding their profiles and expectations, and the possible next steps building on the feedback.
- The Future – Vision: Participants explored ways in which GDACS could provide added value to humanitarians through scientific and technological innovation.

## SPEAKERS

- **Lorena Abalos**, Coordination Platforms Unit, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- **Tom De Groeve**, Head of the Disaster Risk Management Unit, Joint Research Centre, European Commission
- **Luca dell'Oro**, Senior Programme Specialist, UN Institute for Training and Research

## KEY MESSAGES

- GDACS is a valuable tool that has been constantly developing over the past 20 years. It remains open to improvements, especially in the areas of transparency and accessibility of the platform.
- GDACS could benefit from improving its link with field operations by providing a better overview of all its functions through a better interface.
- The three pillars of GDACS (the Multi-Hazard Early Warning System, the Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre and the Satellite Mapping Coordination System) would benefit from being more interlinked, so that information from each is available through the other two.
- The previous points emphasise the need for a new platform design to guide the user to find available information. This is in line with what the partners already decided would be a priority for GDACS in 2024. In that sense, a new version of GDACS website will be available towards the end of 2024, which will address these issues.
- Recognising the importance of GDACS, the UCPM is ensuring the sustainability of GDACS through continuous support.

## Workshop: Behavioural Dimension of Disaster Prevention & Preparedness and Climate Adaptation

The actual behaviour of citizens and decision-makers is what makes or breaks disaster prevention and climate adaptation. If policies and programmes do not change behaviour towards better pre-emptive action, their value can diminish. One of the EU's Disaster Resilience Goals is 'Prepare' – to ensure EU citizens are risk-aware and prepared when disasters strike. This workshop focused on the use and application of behavioural scientific insights to understand relevant behavioural drivers and to improve prevention and preparedness for the future worlds of climatic change and extreme events.



### SPEAKERS

- **Theodoros Chatzivasileiadis**, Assistant Professor, Economics and Finance of Climate Adaptation, TU Delft
- **Juha-Pekka Jäpölä**, Project Officer, DG ECHO, European Commission & Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Antwerp
- **Colin Kuehnhanss**, Policy Analyst, Joint Research Centre, European Commission
- **Hannah Nohlen**, Policy Analyst, Joint Research Centre, European Commission
- **Brigitta Sáfár**, Head of Disaster Management, Hungarian Red Cross

### KEY MESSAGES

- Understanding human behaviour before (cold phase) and during disasters (hot phase) is essential for better preparedness, prevention, and managing disasters effectively.
- There is a need for evidence-based guidelines to promote beneficial disaster preparedness behaviours. It is essential to motivate societal resilience through evidence-based preparedness and reduce ambiguity and uncertainty to empower individuals to react adequately.
- Disasters are characterised by high levels of uncertainty and complexity. These events often have high impact, but low probability, and we often struggle to correctly perceive the risks of such events. These misperceptions can lead to under-preparedness.
- Behavioural elements complement the importance of physical factors that are traditionally decisive for adaptation. These mostly occur in concert based on swift joint information sharing. There is a need to ensure people affected by natural disasters have clear and timely information on how to react.
- Framing the cost of inaction, investing in training of those involved while safeguarding localised risk management are likely to be important elements of prevention and preparedness.



## Workshop: How to Support Psychological Recovery and Occupational Mental Health in Fire and Rescue Services?

Fire and Rescue personnel encounter numerous stressful events and situations during their duties and international missions. Rescuers are involved in many psychologically and physically demanding tasks. While we excel in protecting ourselves against physical threats, mental health is often given less consideration. How do we focus on psychological well-being in the work community, during work shifts and as individuals?

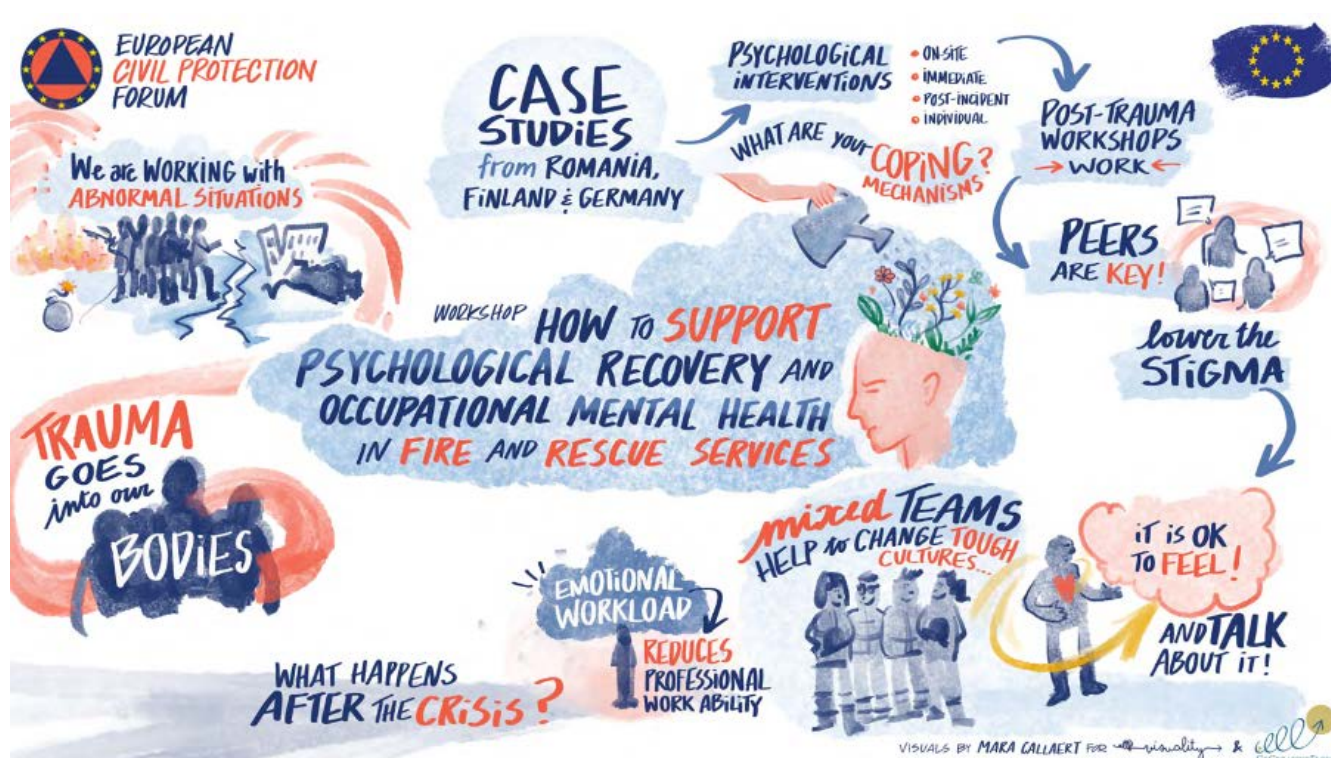
This workshop shared good practices in mental occupational health, psychological wellbeing and trauma recovery for those involved in fire and rescue services. Participants were also invited to share their own experiences of providing psychological support services, and considering what more could be done at the EU level to provide better support in the future.

### SPEAKERS

- **Karsten-Christoph Lindenstromberg**, Co-ordinator of the rescue EMY CIPSS, Johanniter, Germany
- **Saku Sutelainen**, Finnish Association of Fire Officers
- **Irina Vaștag**, Department for Emergency Situations, Romania

### KEY MESSAGES

- We need to deal with the physical and mental health of the first responders (not only that of disaster victims). We need calls/contracts to have psychological trainings, awareness raising, post-incident support programmes (not only for equipment, medical supplies or vehicles).
- Psychological support is needed directly after incidents. It will open the door to the mental health support system afterwards.
- Defusing and debriefings are good tools, but sometimes they are not enough. Long(er)-term post incident follows up of first responders and occupational mental health programmes are key. The effects of trauma do not always show up immediately but weeks/months after an incident in our daily lives (family and work). Early life trauma could also be triggered by a recent incident.





## Panel discussion: RescEU: Five Years of Evolution and its Challenges

As a key pillar of the UCPM, rescEU serves as a European crisis response reserve, providing much needed aid and equipment when countries ask for its assistance. The reserve contains objects like, but not limited to, shelters, medicines, generators, a medical evacuation aeroplane, firefighting aeroplanes and helicopters.

Initially, rescEU was focused on wildfire assets. But the reserve has since expanded heavily, particularly after COVID-19, when medical assets were added. During the Russian War of aggression against Ukraine Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) incidents and energy challenges were also addressed. In total, 3 billion euros have been invested so far in rescEU.



After five years, rescEU is now in the process of being strengthened. During that time, rescEU was deployed in cases like the wildfires in Greece, the earthquake in Türkiye and the war in Ukraine.

The panel debated the impact of rescEU and what its future should be.

### SPEAKERS

- **Raed Arafat**, State Secretary at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Romania
- **Hans Das**, Deputy Director-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, European Commission
- **Mario Di Gennaro**, Head of Competence Centre EU Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance, Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe e.V
- **Mari Rantanen**, Minister of the Interior of Finland

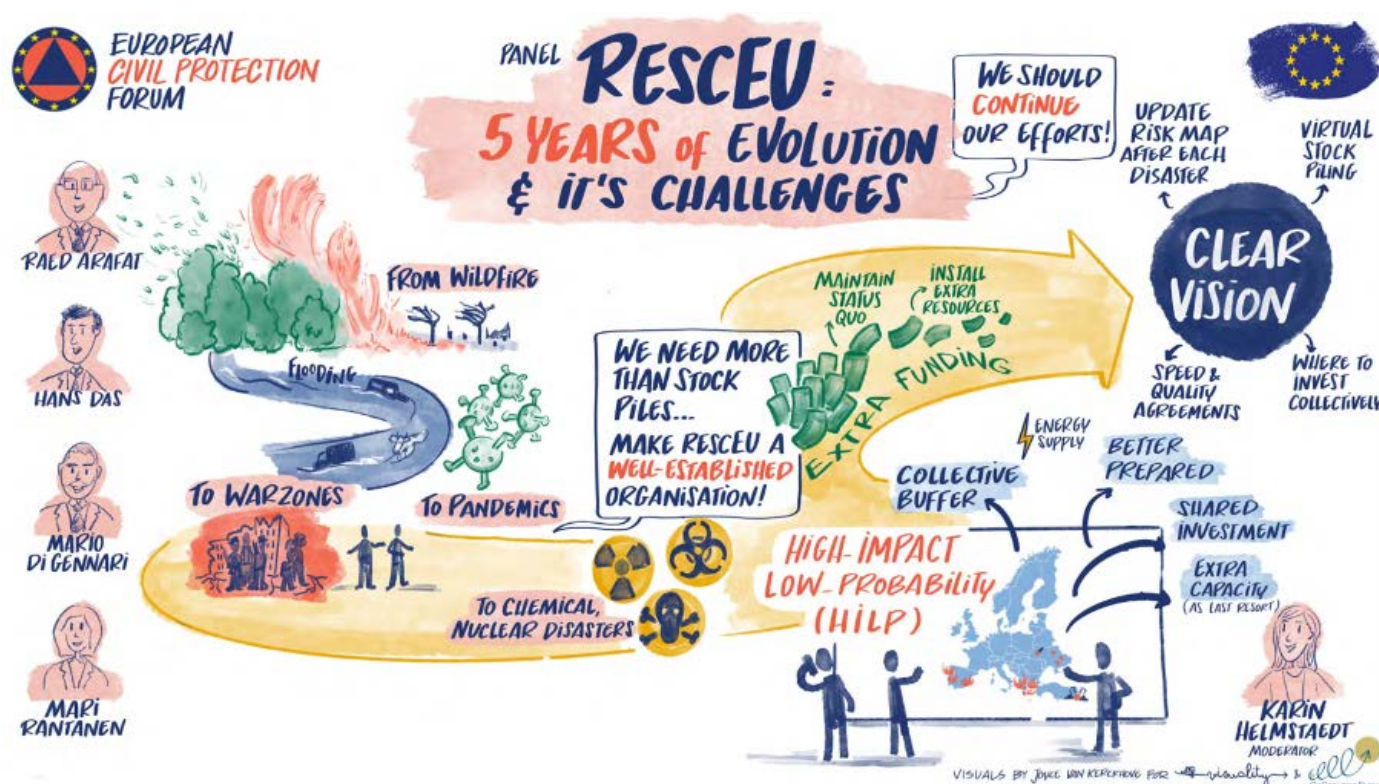
Moderator: **Karin Helmstaedt**

### KEY MESSAGES

- rescEU is a flagship EU initiative and expression of EU solidarity in action. It was created to help with low-probability, high-impact events. It creates a buffer on which national states can rely when their own national response capacities and stockpiles reach their limit. It does not replace the preparedness and response capacities of Member States. The primary responsibility for being prepared to and responding to disasters lies with Member States.
- Despite some resistance at the time of the creation of rescEU in 2019, over the years it has proven its significance, gaining popularity among all Member States.



- The creation of rescEU did not decrease the voluntary nature of the solidarity principle underpinned in UCPM. Over the last years, Member States have continued to offer and have actually increased the number of assistance channelled via the voluntary pool of capacities 'European Civil Protection Pool', and the UCPM as a whole.
- To secure the future of rescEU, sufficient funding will have to be secured under the next Multiannual Financial Framework. Member States first need to invest in their own, national civil protection. But beyond that, rescEU needs more funds as well if we want it to be able to face emerging risks. Previously, rescEU was heavily supported by a one-off fund (Next Generation EU fund), but now the funds allocated to it will need to become more permanent. This future investment needs to at least maintain rescEU in its current state, and if possible, expand it in light of the current security and climate-related threats.
- Engagement with the private sector is key. This includes support and donations from private sector organisations, but also efforts to secure supply chains of critical goods. Manufacturers, for example, need support, so that they can scale up their production in case of an emergency. Having good procurement processes for these cases is key. Virtual stockpiling could also be used.



## Panel discussion: Embracing Artificial Intelligence and New Technologies for Enhancing Disaster Risk Prevention and Response



Artificial intelligence (AI) is a technology that has been in the news heavily for the past few years. However, it has applications that go far beyond use-cases like ChatGPT. AI can offer solutions for disaster response and preparedness. For example, it can revolutionise early warning systems, risk assessments, resource allocation and rapid response strategies.

This panel looked at how AI can be effectively integrated into civil protection. It did so by highlighting cutting-edge research, covering some practical applications for civil protection and how these new technologies can be effectively integrated into policy.

### SPEAKERS

- **Joel Kauppinen**, Finnish Association of Fire Officers
- **Monique Kuglitsch**, Chair of the UN focus group on AI 4 Natural Disaster Management
- **Grażyna Piesiewicz**, Head of Unit, Open Science and Digital Modelling, DG CNECT, European Commission
- **Saeid Vaghefi**, AI and Climate Consultant, World Meteorological Organisation

Moderator: **Andrea Toreti**, Team Leader – Scientific Research, Joint Research Centre European Commission

### KEY MESSAGES

- AI can be used for a variety of use-cases related to civil protection. One of those is to make a digital twin of the earth system. Here scientists use a range of data sources, such as climatological and meteorological information, to construct a digital copy of the Earth's weather systems. This will allow civil protection planners to get more accurate weather forecasts, and better respond to extreme weather events.
- Human-centric design is crucial when developing AI-applications that can be trusted. Biases must be addressed, recognised training methods and algorithms must be used, and explainability is key when black box algorithms are employed. A co-design approach also needs to be used, where different affected groups are included in the design process.
- Standards and a common language are very important when dealing with these technologies. To develop these, designs of AI-applications need to be included, but also regulators and users of AI.



## Panel discussion: Wildfire Risk Awareness and Communication as a Pillar of Disaster Risk Reduction

Wildfires and their impacts are worsening across the globe. That does not just require more disaster response, but also a focus on risk awareness and communication (RA&C) strategies all along the risk management cycle. By engaging different stakeholders in the prevention and wildfire crisis management, RA&C can be a force multiplier.

Because of this, the Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia, the Pau Costa Foundation and other selected experts prepared the publication 'Wildfire Risk Awareness and Communication: Analysis of Good Practices' based on a sample of RA&C practices collected by DG ECHO, which was presented during the panel.

Additionally, the panellists discussed how RA&C can support a more effective wildfire risk management, enhance fire and wildfire risk education and what innovative educational tools can be deployed.



### SPEAKERS

- **Luis Doñas**, Head of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, National Disaster Prevention and Response Service (SENAPRED), Chile
- **Ángela Iglesias**, Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, Spain
- **Eduard Plana**, Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia
- **Cathelijne Stoof**, Assistant Professor, Wageningen University

Moderator: **Bella Nestorova**, Team leader - Disaster risk and resilience, DG ECHO, European Commission

### KEY MESSAGES

- Community engagement is key for dealing with wildfires. Citizens awareness can help prevent the start of wildfires, support long-term actions such as sustainable forest management for reducing wildfire severity and may facilitate the emergency management with safety evacuations or confinements. An example from Chile showed how earlier this year, a village that cleaned out the shrubbery surrounding it prior to a wildfire managed to escape its worst effects.
- The image of managing wildfire risk needs to go further from just firefighters and water planes. It needs to focus on the broader roots of cultural fires and damaging wildfires and how those fit into a landscape. A wider interpretation and discussion of wildfire, and how to live with it, must be promoted and accelerated due to climate change adaptation needs.
- Wildfires are particularly prevalent in European areas with a high influx of tourists during summer. It is important that communication activities also target this group. However, doing so can be a challenge as tourists are not necessarily well-versed in the local language or observant of wildfire communication. In this regard, an EU-wide wildfire RA&C approach has the potential to add value to national efforts.

## Workshop: Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid: Distinctions and Complementarity between the two Instruments

Over time, the landscape of disasters has increased in complexity. Emergencies now draw in a multitude of stakeholders and unfold over extended durations, demanding collective efforts to aid communities in distress. The boundaries between civil protection and humanitarian aid are gradually blurring. Civil protection and humanitarian aid organisations, previously working within their specific mandate, are now compelled to forge tighter collaborations. This paradigm shift aims to streamline aid efforts, minimise redundant actions, and ensure relief reaches those in need swiftly and effectively. It calls for both national and international bodies to re-evaluate their strategies in response to these complex emergencies.



The workshop focused on the overlapping areas and distinctions between civil protection and humanitarian aid. Through discussions participants analysed the new challenges confronting national authorities. Lessons were also shared on how relevant authorities can prepare themselves to confront these evolving challenges head-on.

### SPEAKERS

- **Tom Barnig**, Director of Operations, Luxembourg Fire & Rescue Corps (CGDIS)
- **Eléonore Colin**, Policy Officer, DG ECHO, European Commission

### KEY MESSAGES

- There is an increased focus on complementarity. Both systems (Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection) work on alleviating suffering of victims and should be working with each other, not against each other. Thus, resources need to be shared more intelligently, avoiding doubling up of processes.
- There is an increased complexity in humanitarian crises that requires improved coordination on various levels, such as training, preparedness, funding mechanisms, and, importantly, communication.
- Clearer communication and more awareness are needed on which actors are doing what. As a result, many requests for help or status updates could be avoided. Here, the EU could play an important role as a supranational actor.



## Workshop: Governance for Disaster Risk Management: Involvement of Civil Protection National Authorities

We live in an increasingly complex world where disasters, especially climate-related ones, are becoming more frequent, more severe and more difficult to manage.

In this context, response capacities are not always sufficient and will never be adequate, so a change of approach is needed to try to manage not only the disaster but also the disaster risk, trying to prevent it or at least mitigate its consequences.

So far, civil protection authorities have traditionally focused mainly on response, usually with little influence on investments and coordination in the areas of prevention, mitigation, and preparedness. There is need for a greater involvement of civil protection authorities in DRM.



### SPEAKERS

- **Sofía González López**, Spanish Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Emergencies
- **Cristina Marugán Güemez**, Head of International Affairs, Spanish Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Emergencies
- **Carlos Mendes**, Deputy Director for Prevention and Risk Management, Portuguese National Authority for Emergency and Civil Protection
- **Tessa Schmedding**, Partnerships Specialist, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
- **Cristina Brailescu**, Team Leader, Unit B.3 Prevention and Disaster Risk Management. DG ECHO
- **Ana Isabel Valdés**, Institutional Communication Specialist, Coordination Center for Disaster Prevention in Central America and the Dominican Republic (CEPREDENAC)

### KEY MESSAGES

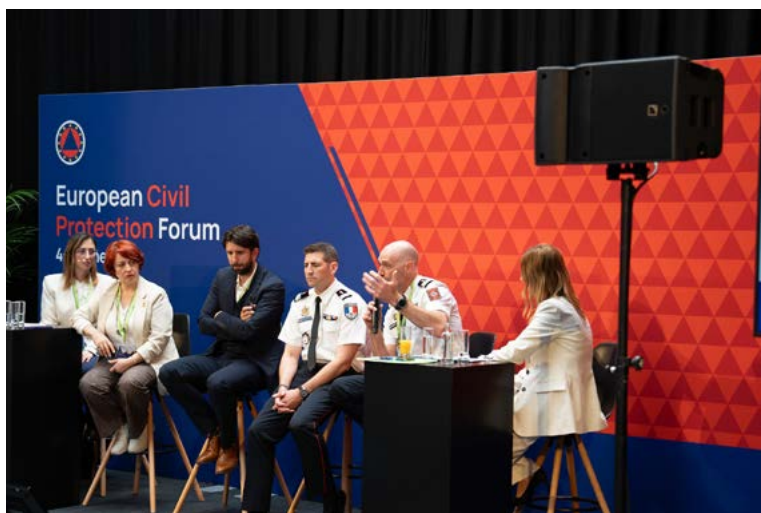
- Civil protection authorities should play a key role in DRM systems, but this implies a leadership and coordination capacity that is not always recognised among the different stakeholders.
- There is need for improved knowledge sharing and information hub for civil protection authorities on disaster risk reduction between Member States and Participating States.
- There is need for a better implementation and mainstreaming of Sendai framework and European disaster resilience goals to regional and local levels.
- Finally, there is need for improved information sharing on available DRM funding instruments and capacity building support that can be mobilised by civil protection authorities.



## Workshop: Knowledge Transfer in Civil Protection Exercises

The workshop delved into the critical aspects of sharing, disseminating, and leveraging knowledge gained through civil protection exercises. In an era of evolving challenges, effective knowledge transfer mechanisms are paramount for enhancing preparedness, response, and disaster resilience, while enabling a large overview of the whole chain of civil protection.

The session explored challenges and opportunities in implementing evaluation and knowledge transfer strategies across diverse civil protection contexts. Key questions centred on prioritising lessons learnt, effective methods for capturing these lessons, and measuring impact and success. The discussion generated insights on improving the learning process, identifying key barriers and challenges in capturing and sharing knowledge, and potential methods for prioritising what is captured and disseminated.



### SPEAKERS

- **Frédéric Harrault**, National Training Coordinator, Ministry of Interior, France
- **Armine Hayrapetyan**, Acting Rector, Crisis Management State Academy, Armenia
- **Mariangela Pelliccia**, Project Officer, DG ECHO, European Commission
- **Christian Resch**, Managing Director, Disaster Competence Network Austria
- **Maxime Rigal**, Executive Officer for European Projects, Departmental-Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Service Lyon
- **Mirnesa Softic**, Expert Advisor at Operational Communication Centre of Bosnia and Herzegovina

### KEY MESSAGES

- Adopting systematic and methodical approaches in exercise planning and evaluation fosters a culture of change, promoting individual, collective, and organisational learning.
- The Knowledge Network, along with local and regional networks, serves as a knowledge broker, transforming various actors, such as exercise planners, into a community of practice for sharing knowledge and lessons learnt .
- There is a need for standardised training modules to ensure cohesive collaboration during exercises and missions. Already existing curricula and concepts should be unified under a common framework.



## Panel discussion:

### Regional Cooperation as Catalyst for Trust-Building and Improved Collaboration among the European Union and its Neighbours

Civil protection is not just a lifesaver when disaster strikes. It can also be a door opener for cooperation between countries inside and outside the European Union because of its non-controversial nature. The regional civil protection programmes can act as a catalyst as they help develop cross-border solidarity and increase operational capacity.

The session began with an inspirational talk from Chef Ebru Baybara Demir from Türkiye. She ran a social initiative in the Southeast of Türkiye when the 2023 earthquake hit. She quickly set up soup kitchens in the affected areas, feeding 300 000 people every day at the height of the crisis. She did so with the help of the EU and the UN.



By bringing speakers from different regions, the panel aimed to delve deeper into the lessons learnt from recent disasters, as well as to provide recommendations for a better policy and programming development for regional programmes.

Inspirational speaker: **Ebru Baybara Demir**, Türkiye

#### SPEAKERS

- **Zahi Chahine**, Head of the National Disaster Management Unit, Lebanon
- **Peter Glerum**, Team Leader IPA CARE, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, MSB
- **Roman Prymush**, Deputy Head of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine
- **Mirnesa Softic**, Expert Advisor at Operational Communication Centre, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Orhan Tatar**, Head of Unit, Earthquake and Risk Reduction, AFAD, Türkiye
- **Owda Younis**, Head of the International Relations, Palestinian Civil Defence

Moderator: **Shada Islam**

#### KEY MESSAGES

- Civil protection cooperation brings people together. This does not just happen at the policy level, but mainly at the operational level. Civil protection experts can work together on the field, learn to interact with each other, and overcome differences. Trust is often built at operational level.
- The benefits of the regional civil protection programmes in the neighbourhood are their ability to create platforms for bringing technical people together and for facilitating networking.
- European civil protection support proved to be key in responding to some disasters in Europe's neighbourhood. It assisted when it was needed, for example, helping Ukraine during Russia's war of aggression and Türkiye during the 2023 earthquake. Cross-border cooperation between Gaza, Jordan, and Israel, facilitated by DG ECHO, was crucial, as the region is very prone to earthquakes, especially in the current security situation.



- Future regional programmes should invest in technologies for prevention and preparedness, sustainability, developing early warning tools, regional trainings and exercises and treating partner countries in the EU neighbourhood as equals and promoting institutionalised and structural cooperation between partners, tailored to their needs.



## Panel discussion: The Union Disaster Resilience Goals and Early Warning for All Initiative: How do they align?

This panel discussed two key resilience-building initiatives: the EU's Disaster Resilience Goals (DRGs) and the UN-led Early Warnings for All (EW4All). The EU's DRGs are a set of objectives for European countries to improve their disaster resilience and preparedness. They incentivise policymakers, stakeholders, and communities to become better prepared for a range of hazards.

The UN's EW4All initiative works in complement to the DRGs, emphasising the need for early warning systems. Ultimately, both initiatives aim to improve disaster preparedness by increasing risk knowledge, improving weather forecasting and monitoring, streamlining the dissemination process of emergency alerts, and preparing communities to react to warnings and manage risks.



This panel discussed how the two initiatives align with and complement each other. The panel also looked at two examples that demonstrated these synergies in practice, namely within the WMO-led regional initiative in South-East Europe for developing early warning services, and the EU-funded Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) Floods and Fires programme, led by the Italian Civil Protection Department.

### SPEAKERS

- **Natalia Alonso Cano**, Chief of Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
- **Agostino Goretti**, Italian Civil Protection Department
- **Daniel Kull**, Director for Development Partnerships, World Meteorological Organisation
- **Michela Matuella**, Director Emergency Response Coordination Centre, DG ECHO, European Commission
- **Kornélia Radics**, Director, Regional Office for Europe, World Meteorological Organisation

Moderator: **Dr Amélie Grangeat**, Disaster Preparedness Specialist, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau

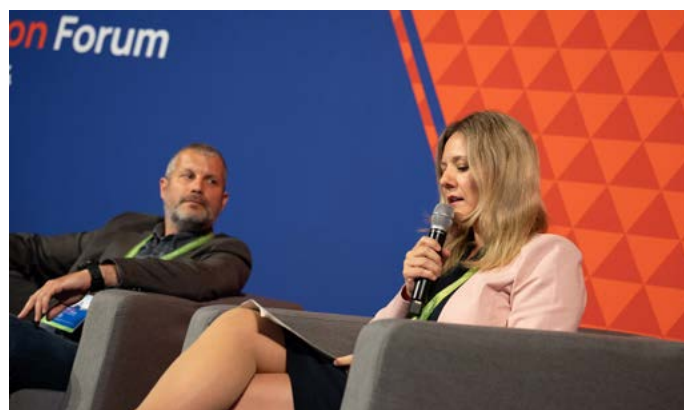
### KEY MESSAGES

- Collaboration, exchange and co-production of data is crucial for improving early warning systems and achieving the DRGs and EW4All's objective. In particular, with disaggregated data, early warning systems could deliver more actionable and localised information allowing a more effective emergency preparedness.
- An early warning system needs to be people-centred to be effective. Both initiatives advocate for the connection of global systems with local actions, ensuring that communities receive timely and actionable messages, and that they are trained and prepared to act upon them.
- Multi-hazard-based forecasting, monitoring and detection systems, enabling a better understanding of the interlinkages amongst hazards, their cascading effects and cumulative impacts, are fundamental for preparedness. Both initiatives promote synergies and the integration of existing systems. In particular, the EW4All initiative puts emphasis on multi-hazard approaches to EWS and provides an opportunity to create a space for discussions on this topic with the EWS community.
- In the face of climate change and intensifying risk of different natural hazards, such as droughts and heatwaves, we need to leverage lessons learnt to improve and enhance the European early warning, for example through the EW4All initiative.
- Once again, partnerships and coordination – at all levels – are key for achieving early warning systems.

## Panel discussion: How to Manage Spontaneous Volunteers during Disaster Response?

When disaster strikes, the first people on the scene are often citizens that serve as ad-hoc volunteers.. These volunteers can administer much needed help before professionals arrive on the scene. Yet they can also offer challenges for civil protection agencies, who are trying to coordinate a response in a way that is as efficient and professional as possible.

This panel discussed good practices for channelling spontaneous volunteer responses. This included the case of how Slovenia during its 2023 floods managed to coordinate an effective volunteer response.



### SPEAKERS

- **Marion Heymel**, Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance, Germany
- **Tomislav Marević**, National Protection and Rescue Directorate, Croatia
- **Romana Naglič**, Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, Slovenia

Moderator: **Danica Ankh**, Permanent Representation of Slovenia to the EU

### KEY MESSAGES

- Spontaneous volunteers offer opportunities, but also challenges to civil protection authorities. They respond fast, have local knowledge, diverse skill sets, and improve community engagement. On the other hand, they might respond in different, suboptimal ways, and can be sources of misinformation provoking difficult relations with official responders.
- Technology can help coordinate a spontaneous response. Slovenia for example set up a web portal in the first 36 hours after the 2023 floods. This allowed them to better select volunteers with key skills, such as civil engineers, and include them in the official response. Through the portal they channelled volunteers towards the activities where they were most needed.
- Good training and management can maximise the benefits of spontaneous volunteers. If managed well, they can perform vital roles during an emergency.

## Panel discussion:

### Marine Incidents and Civil Protection: One Incident – One Response

Emergencies at sea can lead to a range of very specific response challenges. At the same time, marine risk profiles are changing. Countries are investing heavily in offshore sustainable energy; we transport new and old fuels by sea and much of the world's logistics are carried out by boat.

That creates new threats for marine authorities such as coast guards and navies. Yet pollution caused at sea may reach the coast. On-shore civil protection authorities also need to be prepared. Dealing with future marine emergencies in a complex coastal environment with multiple stakeholders, was discussed in this panel.



#### SPEAKERS

- **Sonja Dobo**, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, MSB
- **Heli Haapasaari**, Marine Pollution Response, Finnish Border Guard
- **Hugo Nijkamp**, General Manager, Sea Alarm

Moderator: **Susanna Ekströmer**, Senior Coordinator for EU and Global Affairs, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, MSB

#### KEY MESSAGES

- Maritime crises near to shore create complex situations, involving several different authorities on land and at sea. Pollution caused at sea, such as an oil spill, can easily involve thousands of people to clean the shore. The principle of one incident - one response is key here.
- The best learning event is an actual emergency. Exercises can be very detailed, but they can never completely mimic the experience of actually having to respond to a disaster. Considering that emergencies at sea are relatively rare, but can have major impacts, makes it important to train sufficiently in advance, and have experienced people in multi-sectoral emergency response organisations.
- The barriers between onshore and offshore emergency response authorities need to be broken. Better interaction between the two is needed. More structurally, experts from both groups should have the same training and participating in joint exercises, to explore scenarios and find capability gaps. In this way, key information and expertise can be exchanged, and gaps filled.

## Workshop: Advancing Integrated Wildfire Management: Priorities for Action

Several reports reviewing wildfire events of the past years have been launched recently. However, they differ in geographic focus (from Mediterranean to the whole of Europe), the type of events analysed (large/critical vs extreme events), the temporal scope (annual analysis vs insights over the past seven years) and the type of conclusions and recommendations they draw (from the local, operational context to European investment funds and support mechanisms).

Desk research was conducted, which synthesised the findings and recommendations, and contrasted them with recommendations on integrated governance approaches, such as the Landscape Fire Governance Framework. Building on this analysis, the workshop reviewed the recommendations and defined priorities for action at different temporal, geographic and thematic scales.

### SPEAKERS

- **Miguel Almeida**, Senior researcher, University of Coimbra (ADAI)
- **Claudia Berchtold**, Head of Sustainable Systems Transformation and Risk Reduction, Fraunhofer INT

### KEY MESSAGES

- Strengthen the collaboration between operations (e.g. first-responders) and policymakers and enhance 'inclusivity' in terms of involving all stakeholders (from the communities to the private sector).
- Raise general level of risk awareness through improved communication strategies. Many citizens and tourists are not interested in current information being sent. Creating accessible and memorable messages can help the media to inform and especially non-locals to adhere to the rules. Improved communication can also improve locals' risk awareness, giving them a clearer picture on when it is best to evacuate or to stay in their homes.
- Increase the interoperability across different countries and integrate technologies in all phases of disaster management.
- Northern European countries need to invest more time and money into prevention and preparedness measures. Currently, they lack the proper understanding of the area's needs as well as the appropriate measures needed (e.g. effective forest management during colder winter months).
- Recognise that EU bodies and national agencies are not competing in the area of wildfire risk management. The different platforms and groups on all levels of governance are currently working in silos, not exchanging enough relevant information and considering other groups as a burden or hinderance. A common, jointly developed frame could help unite EU Member States in their work and make WFRM efforts more effective.



## Interactive panel discussion: More than just a Roof: How Emergency Shelter Can Reduce Vulnerability

Emergencies increase vulnerability for many people who already face significant barriers in society. These could be related to, for example, gender, age, disability, ethnic and religious background, or sexual orientation. Such groups are more impacted by immediate effects of crises like flooding, pandemics and conflict, and often have less access to aid and long-term recovery.

Using emergency shelter as an example, the session will show the importance of including people who are most at risk, starting from preparedness through response, while enabling links with long-term planning. The conversation will provide tangible examples of how small changes in ways of working can have an enormous impact.

This session brought together specialists in gender and disability as well as emergency shelter and housing. This combination will give emergency preparedness and response services practical guidance on how to ensure everyone in society is included in their work.



### SPEAKERS

Panel

- **Gordon Rattray**, Programme Coordinator, European Disability Forum
- **Jenny Molin**, Gender Advisor, MSB – Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency
- **Giulia Maci**, Urban and Gender Specialist, Cities Alliance – UNOPS

Moderator: **Elena Giral**, rescEU shelter Programme Manager, European Commission – DG ECHO

### KEY MESSAGES

- Meaningful participation of people with disabilities. Emergency response can create additional barriers that will create new risks for people with disabilities. The only way to ensure that these are minimised is to properly and meaningfully include people with different impairments at planning stages, to ensure their knowledge is embedded in our response capabilities and they are adequately included in the decision-making process. Moreover, it is important to closely monitor the assistance provided after an emergency, so that it can support all people equally.

- From ad-hoc to systematic integration of a gender and Human Rights perspective in operations. It is a shared responsibility to move from commitment to action on the ground, and that with systematic effort, inclusion of the gender perspective is mainstreamed throughout organisations and policies, as well as operations. "People are not just vulnerable; they also hold important capacities".
- Involvement of women in longer term conflict-sensitive planning. Cities more inclusive to women are cities more inclusive to everyone. It is key to support local authorities to increase inclusive planning in the long-term. Adequate participation and engagement with women can ensure access to basic services in crises, otherwise often neglected by security issues.



## Workshop: Ten Years of the European Civil Protection Pool: Achievements and Future Challenges

The workshop celebrated a decade since the launch of the European Civil Protection Pool in 2014, highlighting the achievements of these 10 years. The celebration was also the occasion to think about what orientations the ECPP should take for the coming years.

The participants looked back at the first operations, and compared them with the latest operations (e.g., the earthquake in Türkiye and floods in Italy). They also focused on looking forward at new challenges posed by an evolving disaster landscape, that the ECPP can help to address. Questions such as the benefits of being in the ECPP for the MS/PS and how to involve those that are not yet part of the Pool were discussed, among others.



### SPEAKERS

- **Grzegorz Borowiec**, National Headquarters of the State Fire Service, Poland
- **Giovanni De Siervo**, Policy Adviser, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Civil Protection Department, Italy
- **Catalin Vasile Samsodan**, General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, Romania
- **Henri Schwaiger**, German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW)

### KEY MESSAGES

- With 10 years of the ECPP we celebrate 10 years of EU-wide collaboration and improvements of capacities and systems on issues such as standardisation of language, methods and procedures, the pooling of resources, exchanges of knowledge and experience, and making connections and forming strong relationships between and across national civil protection communities in the spirit of a whole European identity.
- The ECPP has shown its benefits time and again. The continuous development of EU-wide collaboration and improvement of national capacities and systems stands at the heart of the Pool. Through certification together with peers from other countries and knowledge sharing future missions are better prepared. Member and Participating States also benefit from financial support from the Commission and progress while implementing the adaptation grants, for example, by exercising new SOPs or testing new equipment.
- The changing list landscape due to climate change and a complex geopolitical situation gives rise to new challenges and probably an increased number of deployments.



- A number of steps need to be taken to advance the ECPP: simplification of certification, guidelines and mentoring opportunities, ensuring interoperability and the integration of existing capacities (e.g. from the private sector or military), development of new capacities through innovation.
- Scoping new sources of finance as well as increasing existing financial incentives, e.g., by increasing financial support for adaptation grants.



## Keynote address:

### Sauli Niinistö, Special Adviser to the President of the European Commission, former President of Finland

The second day of the 8th European Civil Protection Forum 2024 was opened by President Sauli Niinistö, Special Adviser to the President of the European Commission and former President of Finland. He has been tasked by President Ursula von der Leyen with drafting a report on how to enhance the EU's civilian and defence preparedness and readiness in crisis situations.

The mindset of civil protection, with preparedness at its centre, needs to be exported to the entire EU, according to President Niinistö, as all aspects of our societies can be affected by serious crises. It would be a mistake to define preparedness as some separate policy area or something that concerns only part of EU infrastructure. Instead, preparedness is a task that belongs to all of us. The call of President Niinistö is to make concrete proposals on how to strengthen our preparedness and readiness together.

Even though the EU played a key role in responding to crises like the war in Ukraine and COVID-19, that response was mainly reactive. New threats, such as climate change, hybrid attacks, supply chain shocks and even war on European soil, need to force the EU towards a new approach. The EU needs to transform into a crisis-proof Union that acts proactively instead of reactively to the frequently interconnected crises.

The EU should move to preparedness by design, creating a holistic capability to act together no matter the origin or nature of the crisis. When new EU policies and legislation are being considered, all ideas should be assessed by asking, 'How does this affect our security?' 'How can we use this in a crisis or in preventing one?'

Clear plans and structures must be developed. Exercises need to bring different sectors of the EU together. Legal frameworks must be tested, so bottlenecks are identified in advance of a crisis. Cooperation with the private sector and civil society needs to increase during crisis situations.

Finally, citizens need to realise that security is the fundamental value that unites us. Preparedness begins and ends with individual citizens and their ability to take care of the security of themselves and their families.



**Keynote address:**

**Gaia Vince, award-winning science writer and author**

The second keynote was delivered by Gaia Vince, an award-winning science writer and author. She wrote *Adventures in the Anthropocene* and *The Age of Humans*. Her latest book, *Nomad Century*, takes a candid look at what will happen when global warming makes large swaths of our planet completely uninhabitable.

Vince noted that the Earth is already in a post climate change phase. We have reached a scenario where temperatures have increased more than 1.5 degrees beyond pre-industrial levels, and every single month of the past year has been the hottest month on record. Even if the Earth will recover at some point, humanity is very vulnerable in the face of these changes.

All of this is causing extreme heat, food security issues, floods, and wildfires leading to widespread discontent that is exploited by extremist parties.

The good news is that we are decarbonising and investing heavily in renewable energy seeming to have reached a tipping point there as well. Yet even that is not enough to keep us from approaching a two-degree increase. Humans are now living in a world affected by the four horsemen of the Anthropocene: fire, flood, heat, and drought.

This too impacts human mobility with more and more people moving northwards to escape the effects of climate change.

The solution may lie, according to Vince, in our ability to cooperate. Humans are super-cooperators according to the writer. After the Second World War countries hated each other, cities had been reduced to rubble, there was hunger, there was mass migration and nations were broken. Yet leaders came together and said, 'We can make a better world'. The European Union is an extraordinary example of this necessary cooperation.



## High-level plenary session: Enhanced European Resilience: Are Crisis Management Systems Fit for the Future?

Today the European Union is facing a rapidly evolving risk landscape and is being confronted by various and simultaneous threats of growing complexity, which is a trend that is likely to increase in the future. That is why European crisis management systems need to keep evolving.

This panel discussed how to enhance European resilience, and among other things looked at the role of the UCPM. How the EU can expand further and capitalise on prevention and preparedness measures was also explored.



### SPEAKERS

- **Raed Arafat**, State Secretary at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Romania
- **Adrian Efros**, Minister of the Interior of Moldova
- **Daniela Jacob**, Director of the Climate Service Center, Germany
- **Maciej Popowski**, Director-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, European Commission
- **Annelies Verlinden**, Minister of the Interior, Institutional Reform and Democratic Renewal of Belgium

Moderator: **Ali Al-Jaberi**

### KEY MESSAGES

- A whole-of-society approach is key to facing complex emergencies as well as ensuring that preparation for these events is in place before they happen. The EU is learning the right lessons to be better prepared for the next big crisis. It will get there by establishing a Union of Preparedness, in which security needs to be included in all aspects of the EU's actions as an overarching objective. The EU needs to maintain its ambitious plans and to invest in prevention and preparedness and in its capacity to act.
- The EU should not only be ready for new extreme events but also for a new normal that is being brought by climate change. Climate resilience must be mainstreamed to avoid further damage and prevent extreme weather. The knowledge is available, we now need to take decisions and to act.





- To increase resilience, it will be crucial to focus future planning procedures on shared information and knowledge, permanent preparedness process, continuous assessments of the situation at all levels, and a common understanding of threats. Preparing the population and keeping open communication with the citizens are also central to resilience to disasters: building a common European approach on how to prepare the population is critical.
- Emergency prevention and preparedness take place in a range of different areas, such as agriculture, water and forest management. In the future, the work of civil protection and crisis management should involve these areas to a greater extent.

**EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION FORUM**

**PANEL ENHANCED EUROPEAN RESILIENCE ARE CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FIT FOR THE FUTURE**

**WE ARE NOT ALONE**  
RAED ARAFAT

**INDIVIDUALS ARE THE FIRST RESPONDERS**

**IF YOU HAVE TO PREPARE DURING A CRISIS IT'S TOO LATE!**  
ADRIEN EFROS

**WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO INVEST**

**HOW TO INFORM OUR CITIZENS?**

**SECURITY IS NOT A FREE RIDE**

**CLIMATE CHANGE INDUCED DISASTERS ARE THE NEW NORMAL**  
DANIELA JACOB

**SECURING OUR PEOPLE SHOULD NOT BE POLITICAL!**

**TOP DOWN AND DOWN TO TOP**

**WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO ADAPT AND MITIGATE**

**ATTENTION FOR PREVENTION**

**PERMANENT EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**

**THE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE WAS A WAKE-UP CALL!**  
MACIEJ POPOWSKI

**what can be IMPROVED??**

**WE WORK WITH INDEPENDANT CELLS**  
ANNELIES VERLINDEN

**BUILD RELATIONSHIP!**

**FROM PANIC TO RESPONSABILITY**

VISUALS BY MARA CALLAERT FOR VISUALITY & COOPERATION

## Panel discussion: Strengthening Disaster Resilience: Joining Civil Protection and Private Sector Efforts

Collaboration between private companies and civil protection authorities has proven crucial in times of crisis. Private sector contributions were key in fighting COVID-19, where companies helped secure medical supplies. But they also played a major role in the response to the Russian war of aggression to Ukraine, where rescEU donation hubs facilitated private sector donations.

Cooperation between public and private organisations is key for the entire cycle of disaster management, from prevention, preparedness to disaster response.

Panelists discussed best practices on cooperation with the private sector, indicated possible developments in other areas of disaster management, and identified the potential for new partnerships.



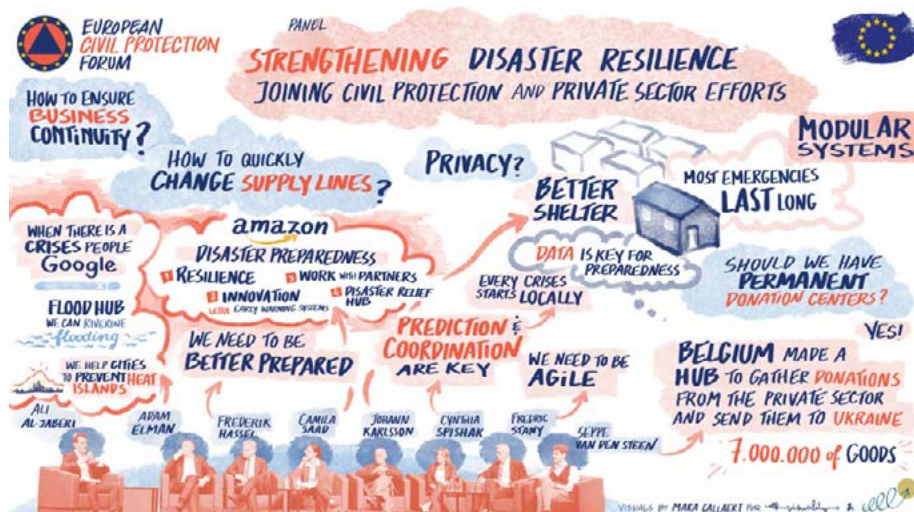
### SPEAKERS

- **Adam Elman**, Head of Sustainability for Europe, Middle East, and Africa, Google Crisis Response
- **Frederik Hassel**, Senior Advisor, Saab
- **Johann Karlsson**, Managing Director, Better Shelter
- **Camila Saad**, Global Leader, Amazon Web Services (AWS) Disaster & Preparedness programme
- **Cynthia Spishak**, Associate Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency, USA
- **Fredric Stany**, Analyst, The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, MSB
- **Seppe Van Den Steen**, Federal Health Department of Belgium

Moderator: **Ali Al-Jaberi**

### KEY MESSAGES

- Good procedures and planning are key when working with private companies. Issues like quality control of donated goods and their storage and shipping, but also the identification of critical companies and the goods they produce, are very important for establishing an efficient private-public partnership. The EU's private donation scheme for Ukraine is a model that has proved effective in response to a crisis of unprecedented dimension and duration.
- New technologies being developed by private companies, can help disaster response. For example, AI can help predict heat waves or floods, allowing local communities and civil protection agencies to take action in advance. Harnessing the benefits of these technologies by joining public and private efforts can lead to more effective disaster management.
- A change in culture at a range of operational layers, agencies and governments is needed to establish better cooperation with the private sector. This does not always have to happen through formal agreements, but establishing good relations ahead of time is crucial.



## Panel discussion:

# Open Science, Research Data Management and Evidence-based Civil Protection Decision-Making

Open science, research data management and evidence-based decision making are key for civil protection response and preparedness. However, a range of different stakeholders are involved in this process. These include scientists, civil protection agencies, national government agencies, research organisations and international institutions. This panel discussed how these entities can work together more effectively.



## SPEAKERS

- **Massimo Cocco**, National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology (INGV), EPOS
- **Patricia Gaspar**, Civil Protection Expert, Portugal
- **Erwan Marteil**, Head of Unit, Prevention and Preparedness Capacity Building, DG ECHO, European Commission
- **Giorgio Rossi**, The European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)

Moderator: **Daniela DiBucci**, International Relations and Activities Unit, Italian Civil Protection Department

## KEY MESSAGES

- Open science improves the quality, efficiency, and responsiveness of research when researchers share data, research findings, and knowledge as early as possible during their investigations. It is important to make science available to the public and to foster communication and trust between citizens and governments. Open science is the best remedy to fake news.
- Having good data in the field can make all the difference during a crisis response. Civil protection professionals cannot just make a decision based on their own perception of a situation. Research data and scientific information are necessary. The more data available, the easier it is for decision-makers to cross-check it. This scales up their ability to make the best possible decisions.
- Open science requires good security standards. There is always the risk of leaks, particularly when using sensitive data. This is why respecting the legal framework is so important (e.g., GDPR in case of using personal data). At the same time, ethical standards for open science need to be upheld.
- There is a wealth of scientific data, information, and knowledge that the scientific community makes available to the civil protection decision-makers. The process of data provision, the sharing of scientific information, and engagement of experts requires governance and transparent approaches. Monitoring systems in the CPs operational rooms are often openly shared, in accordance with EU and national regulations.
- Research data and scientific products have to be FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) and accompanied by the related information on uncertainties, when available. This allows the decision-maker to choose the best solution on the basis of reliable/authoritative scientific information, aware of what is not known from the scientific point of view. This is also important from an AI perspective.
- Priorities for the future include:
  - Scientific data: open as possible and closed as necessary, always discoverable;
  - Recognition of the resources necessary for governing Research Data Management process;
  - Common understanding between scientific data providers and data managers, and civil protection users; Shared procedures for addressing legal and ethical issues associated with open access to data and metadata;
  - EU and national investments for research data management, maintenance of public research data and their availability in the long run (data preservation).

## Panel discussion: Bridging the Inclusion Gap: Advancing Equality in European Civil Protection Teams

Civil protection is a field traditionally dominated by a specific demographic. European and national authorities are trying to understand how they can make the field more plural, to reflect further the diversity of its members and of society. This panel addressed those issues specifically for the European civil protection teams deployed under the UCPM.



In the lead up to the European Civil Protection Forum, three specific discussions had already taken place to explore these questions with different experts. During the panel, the suggestions from those discussions were explored further and expanded on.

### SPEAKERS

- **Anna Kosterkiewicz**, Civil Protection Expert, Poland
- **Geir Ellingsen**, Civil Protection Expert, Norway
- **Inger-Johanne Tjoflaat**, Civil Protection Expert, Norway
- **Michela Matuella**, Director Emergency Response Coordination Centre, DG ECHO, European Commission

Moderator: **Antonella Cavallo**, Programme Manager, rescEU, CBRN capabilities and strategic reserves, DG ECHO, European Commission

### KEY MESSAGES

- Diversity means much more than just gender diversity. It also includes cultural and professional background, ethnicity, age, and a number of other elements. This intersectionality of diversity is important if we want to pursue it honestly.
- Diversity is not just important from the perspective of equality. Research shows that diverse teams work better because they include a range of different perspectives. Diverse teams are also more likely to understand the populations they are helping because they include civil protection experts from different backgrounds.
- Diversity is not opposed to merit. A diverse team does not mean hiring underqualified candidates. It means taking away unconscious biases towards certain minorities so they can be accurately represented in civil protection teams.





## Workshop: Reducing Risks Together: Bridging Disaster Resilience and Climate Adaptation Strategies

What are the synergies between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation? How to integrate multi-hazard risk, climate change adaptation and nature-based solutions to enhance EU Disaster Resilience Goals (DRG) implementation? Do binding regulations improve alignment between civil protection and climate strategies? What scientific support do policymakers need?

These questions guided a workshop on aligning strategies for disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation, fostering discussions among policymakers, scientists, and professionals.



Short presentations gave an impulse to the discussion. Professor Daniel Sempere-Torres shed light on the importance of aligning disaster risk reduction with climate change risk assessment and adaptation. Professor Silvia Torresan showcased examples of how climate change risks have been integrated in disaster risk assessment within the MYRIAD-EU project and how it is relevant for the DRGs.

Following the presentations, discussions in smaller groups focused on the five DRGs: anticipation, preparation, alert, response, and security. Each group addressed specific questions to assess, adapt, and generate new ideas. Results complemented stakeholder consultations in pilot regions from MYRIAD-EU and CLIMAAX projects.

### SPEAKERS

- **Laura Indriliunaite**, Policy Coordinator, DG ECHO, European Commission
- **Daniel Sempere-Torres**, Director, Center of Applied Research in Hydrometeorology, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya
- **Silvia Torresan**, Co-director, Risk Assessment and Adaptation Strategies division, Centro Euro Mediterraneo sui Cambiamenti Climatici

### KEY MESSAGES

- It is important to bring climate risk information to the local level and support the ability of local regions to perform climate risk assessments and develop action plans. Comparable methodology will help to ensure the quality of the climate risk assessments.
- Awareness of climate-related risks and required actions need to be raised at all levels, from citizens to the policy and decision-makers (across the local, regional, national, supranational dimension), impacting education systems and public procurement.
- Resources of all kinds (financial, human, physical assets) need to be mobilised to ensure the safeguarding of the entire chain of crisis response.

## Workshop: Risk Communication and Awareness: the preparEU Initiative and Next Steps

The workshop focused on preparEU, the flagship initiative for the second goal of the (five) Union Disaster Resilience Goals. Participants discussed and suggested follow-up activities to the preparEU pilot project, to advance concrete steps on strengthening efforts towards citizen's risk awareness and preparedness with an EU-added value.

The pilot project presented five concepts for discussion and prioritisation:

- A common learning programme for students that can foster a culture of preparedness from an early age;
- Development of six basics of self-preparedness – guidelines of what every household needs to manage for some time in a crisis scenario;
- PreparEU web hub (online repository) on risk communication, with good practices, research and communication tools;
- A shared campaign across the EU (preparEU Day) to create a common culture of risk awareness and self-preparedness;
- A step-by-step guide on how to identify and engage vulnerable groups and describe their needs in risk communication.



This was further complemented with an interactive discussion on the content and format of a training package for risk awareness to be developed by the European Commission for EU Member States and UCPM Participating States.

### SPEAKERS

- **Carl Thomas Aarum**, Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection, DSB
- **Christina Andersson**, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, MSB
- **Artur Malantowicz**, Team Leader – Knowledge Network Coordination Team, DG ECHO, European Commission
- **Magnus Nilholm**, Head of Emergency Preparedness, Ringerike municipality, Norway

### KEY MESSAGES

- Risk communication and risk awareness are commonly considered as an important but 'challenging' task, mainly due to lack of funds, competencies, time, and human resources. The European Union has a role to play in helping to address these challenges, in collaboration with national authorities and other stakeholders.
- PreparEU has a potential to enhance cross-border coordination, raise awareness and foster safety culture across Europe. The activities it proposes should thus be actionable and supported with scientific evidence for stronger impact.
- In a similar manner, activities to be developed as part of the preparEU initiative must be mindful of cultural differences, varying socio-economic perspectives and risk landscapes across EU Member States and UCPM Participating States.

## Workshop: Cassandra Complex in Foresight for Civil Protection: If you wait, it will be too late

Human-induced climate change affects millions of people every year. Extreme weather events and disasters, such as droughts, floods, and wildfires deteriorate living conditions, destroy livelihoods, and multiply the needs of already vulnerable communities. Responding to these disasters and dealing with their aftermath has become a growing challenge.

The strategic application of anticipatory analysis and foresight is becoming increasingly important to improve resource development, capacity building, and proactive disaster mitigation. With the help of early detection and the proper recognition and analysis of alarm signs and patterns, civil protection authorities can react pre-emptively. Foresight can also potentially assist in the assessment of disaster impacts and cascading effects.

The question is whether the civil protection community is adequately prepared to face the magnitude of effects of climate change that are foreseen. The workshop not only introduced participants to the significance of foresight and anticipatory analysis in preparing for climate change-related disasters, but also provided a platform for practical application. Experts collaboratively utilised the 'backcasting' method, sharing their best practices and addressing challenges, thereby creating a dynamic space for mutual learning and expertise exchange.

### SPEAKERS

- **Nora Berger-Kern**, Policy Analyst, DG ECHO, European Commission
- **Carola Frey**, International Relations and Protocol Section, Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre

### KEY MESSAGES

- A more strategic approach to crisis management is needed, including the development of plausible scenarios and making informed decisions on these to improve preparedness.
- The use of foresight is critical to building resilience and flexibility, thereby improving our readiness for impending disasters.
- The mid-term vision includes carbon neutral legislation, which is fully coordinated across all sectors (e.g. agriculture, energy, transport, etc.) and across Member States at EU level. Full population preparedness, with citizens ready to respond when disaster strikes and being self-sustaining for 7 days feeds into societal resilience, in addition to Early Warning Systems and practical emergency plans.
- In order to achieve this vision a number of steps must be taken: harmonisation of legislation across sectors giving effective support to the climate agenda, engaging groups of citizens in the development of emergency plans and involving the whole of society, including government, scientific communities, NGOs and civil protection actors.



## Panel discussion: Crisis Management Principles: What is the ERCC's role?

Since 2021, amidst the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) of the EU is being reformed into the ERCC 2.0 initiative. The reform increased its anticipatory and predictive capabilities. Since then, the ERCC has been constantly evolving into a key operational crisis centre for Europe.

In this panel, the participants looked at how the ERCC is functioning today, and how it should evolve heading into the future. In this context, the first international guidelines on crisis management (ISO 22361:2022) were released in 2022, which offer a valuable perspective and support to further evaluate the challenges and opportunities for the ERCC's evolution.



### SPEAKERS

- **Faisal Al-Suhail**, Belgian Permanent Representation to the EU, Chair of PROCIV and IPCR
- **David Horodin**, Head of Crisis Management, Geneva Centre for Security Policy
- **Florin Urseanu**, Head of Unit, Crisis Management, Secretariat-General, European Commission
- **Michela Matuella**, Director Emergency Response Coordination Centre, DG ECHO, European Commission

Moderator: **Ali Al-Jaberi**

### KEY MESSAGES

- Evaluating risks is key for an institution like the Commission and its crisis coordination hub, the ERCC, which is heavily investing in situational awareness and risk analysis. For example, the ERCC produces integrated situational awareness and response reports on a regular basis about ongoing crises. These reports provide a complete, timely, and trustworthy picture of a situation, analysing future risks.
- A standard like ISO 22361:2022 can help the ERCC. The standard, for example, explains principles like ethics, governance, and leadership, which can help the ERCC navigate more precisely during its evolution. The standard also tries to make a distinction between what defines a crisis, and what does not. It divides events into incidents, emergencies, and crises on the basis of how manageable and containable they are.
- Crisis management is about people. People will be making the decisions that will determine whether a crisis goes out of hand. Crisis management is also about building trust. By having civil protection professionals practice and train together they can build trust, see where things go wrong, and transparently move forward.
- As prevention is much more efficient than a reactive response, it is key to building a stronger strategic anticipatory capability, benefiting from timely evidence-based scientific support and a holistic and integrated approach across sectors and levels.



## Panel discussion: Strengthening Societal Resilience to Disasters: Improving Engagement and Communication among Citizens and Authorities



Authorities at local and national levels are often investing heavily in civil protection measures. These actions should be aligned with international policy instruments such as the UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Union Disaster Resilience Goals, which emphasise that actions should be taken to improve civil protection preparedness. This includes an all-of-society approach for reaching and involving regular citizens. However, citizens are not always aware of the actions of authorities, and civic engagement is not always working as it should be. Moreover, there are ongoing gaps between research and civil protection efforts, and their recognition at regional or local levels.

This panel aimed to address these gaps. Building from a joined policy brief among nine HE- and H2020-funded projects, it looked at how to improve engagement and communication between authorities and citizens. During the panel, panellists looked towards future actions based on multi-sectoral and cross-disciplinary knowledge in support of improved and inclusive civil protection.

### SPEAKERS

- **Irene Cortés Calvo**, Director General of the Civil Protection Agency of the Regional Ministry of Development and the Environment, Castile and León
- **Jon Hall**, Crisis Management Innovation Network Europe (CMINE)
- **Kati Orru**, Associate Professor of Sociology of Sustainability, University of Tartu
- **Raffaella Russo**, Senior Project Manager, UNISA
- **Maïke Vollmer**, Senior Researcher, Fraunhofer INT

Moderator: **Nathan Clark**, Assistant Professor in Crisis Governance, Vrije University Amsterdam

### KEY MESSAGES

- All relevant stakeholders, particularly citizens, should be involved in civil protection initiatives from the beginning. For instance, they need to have a voice in identifying their local needs, but also what possible solutions are focused on. Needs can be discussed during e.g. workshops and forums and developed regularly from there. Co-creation is crucial to improve citizen engagement with civil protection.
- Certain risks are often greater in more vulnerable sub-populations, such as with refugees, elderly, or homeless people. Directing extra attention to these segments is key for disaster preparedness. These vulnerabilities can also be used to strengthen societal resilience as they bring different skills and perspectives to civil protection planning. To do this, it is good to establish relationships with intermediate actors such as social workers to support these actions, as this is often an untapped resource for civil protection.
- Volunteers can be a bridge between local populations and civil protection professionals. This can be important during a disaster, and when directing its response. Yet, they are also crucial in other phases, such as for informing local populations to participate in regional preparedness initiatives reducing vulnerability to various hazards.



## Panel discussion: Risk Reduction Strategies in Cultural Heritage

Natural and human-induced risks regularly threaten cultural heritage. Responding to this requires a transversal approach by different entities. Cultural heritage experts need to learn about disaster response and prevention, and civil protection professionals need to learn how to act in cases where cultural heritage is harmed.

One case in point was during the 2023 earthquake in Türkiye, which hit many important cultural heritage sites. During the panel, the Turkish civil protection agency AFAD shared their insights in how they managed to protect cultural heritage sites during their rescue operations.

The panel went into good practices and actions required to protect cultural heritage from disasters, and how civil protection agencies can do better.



### SPEAKERS

- **Louise Haxthausen**, UNESCO Representative to the European Union
- **Stefan Zotti**, Team leader for cultural heritage, DG EAC, European Commission
- **Burcu Ertaş Deniz**, Geological Engineer, Ministry of Interior of Türkiye, AFAD
- **Yasemin Didem Aktas**, Deputy Director at the UK Centre for Moisture in Buildings, University College London, UK

Moderator: **Giovanni De Siervo**, Policy Adviser, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Civil Protection Department, Italy

### KEY MESSAGES

- Heritage and civil protection professionals have often been seen as two separate worlds. In recent years, the protection of cultural heritage at risk has emerged as a new civil protection sector demonstrating the urgency of fostering cooperation and exchange between the two. We should also include local communities in this cross-sectoral approach.
- Protection of cultural heritage does not just need to happen when a disaster occurs. When disaster strikes, it is often already too late. Prevention and preparedness are particularly important. Many tools have been developed to address the increasing natural and human-made risks that can impact cultural heritage and related communities. In particular, the methodology developed by Proculther, entitled Key Elements of a European Methodology to Address the Protection of Cultural Heritage During Emergencies is a first knowledge base for UCPM Participating States on which to continue building a common European approach in this field.
- Interactions between heritage experts and civil protection cannot be superficial. A deep cooperation between different sectors needs to happen in an ecosystem approach. These problems are interdisciplinary and should be handled as such.
- If we want to contrast the increasing risks that we are experiencing and effectively reinforce the protection of cultural heritage at risk, we need to fill gaps without creating overlaps. We need to build a community.
- Academia is the place where analytical and empirical knowledge is produced, but it is no longer isolated. If these outputs on risk mitigation techniques in cultural heritage include analysis techniques for different levels (local and national), according to the structure, texture, architecture and most importantly the specific culture of each cultural heritage site, then appropriate policies can be achieved. Resilience is a systems issue and can only be achieved through multi-sectoral stakeholder engagement.

## Workshop: Satellites, Artificial Intelligence and beyond: The Future of Disaster Management

The rising incidence of global disasters underscores the critical role of advanced space technologies in supporting civil protection efforts. This workshop aimed to prioritise the development and application of these technologies to enhance the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).

A cornerstone of space-based assets is the Copernicus Emergency Management Service (EMS), which provides vital Earth observation data to the Emergency Response Coordination Centre. This information supports prevention, preparedness, and response activities, enabling more effective disaster management. Future space initiatives, such as the Galileo Emergency Warning System and GovSatCom, will further enhance capabilities. Leveraging space and ground data analytics, AI, and simulation software can improve the accuracy and timeliness of disaster information.

The workshop explored the potential of the European Space Agency's (ESA) and the European Union Agency for the Space Programme's (EUSPA) space initiatives to drive technology development for disaster management. The goal is to define the most critical research and development areas to strengthen both Copernicus EMS and the UCPM in the face of escalating challenges.

### SPEAKERS

- **Alessandro Carrotta**, Policy Officer, DG ECHO, European Commission
- **Elisabeth Hamdouch**, Deputy Head of Unit, Earth Observation, DG DEFIS, European Commission
- **Vasileios Kalogirou**, European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA)
- **Jakub Ryzenko**, Head of Crisis Information Centre, Space Research Centre, Polish Academy of the Sciences
- **Christopher Topping**, Head of Civil Security, Space Programme Office for the European Space Agency

### KEY MESSAGES

- There is an enormous amount of information out there. But only data that reaches the user is useful. Therefore, there is the need to work with the industry to process the data once received.
- Interoperability, fluid communication and coverage are essential.
- The main barriers to adopting a new space solution to operations relate to a lack of knowledge and skills, as well as a lack of funding.



## Workshop: Expect the Unexpected: Preparing the Union for Large-scale, Cross-sectoral and Complex Disasters

Based on the lessons learnt from past disasters, the 2021 amendment to UCPM's legal framework introduced a more scientific and forward-looking approach to preparedness, e.g., by introducing the need to develop disaster scenarios to improve disaster risk management planning at Union level, in particular regarding large-scale, cross-sectoral, multi-country transboundary events, in order to cope with the challenges that will likely be faced in Europe's changing risk landscape.

Consequently, the European Commission has developed 10 scenarios, in close consultations with experts from EU Member States and UCPM Participating States. Overall, the scenario-building initiative identified five high-level recommendations, which are meant to support political awareness raising and agenda-setting in relation to the UCPM's future development. During the workshop, the participants collaborated in group discussions to identify three specific suggestions on how to support implementation of these recommendations.

### SPEAKERS

- **Hans Ulrich Goessl**, Head of DG ECHO's Civil Protection Policy Unit, European Commission
- **Leonardo Sartori**, Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), NATO
- **Nadia Hadad**, Executive Committee, European Disability Forum (EDF)
- **Marzia Santini**, European Crisis Management Laboratory, Joint Research Centre (JRC), European Commission
- **Rachele Beretta and Phillip Frank Vilar Welter**, DG ECHO's Civil Protection Policy Unit, European Commission

### KEY MESSAGES

- Increase operational response capabilities through strategic partnerships (civil society, military, private sector), information sharing and coordination, funding and resource flexibility, and by sharing best practices on risk management.
- Improve cross-sectoral coordination, by providing relevant fora for coordination, facilitating access to information, and ensuring robust data and knowledge management.
- Improve knowledge sharing, by using all relevant channels and approaches (both public and institutional), and by improving risk communication and public awareness.
- Further consider the need of vulnerable groups, by improving the trust in authorities, and by local level engagement and inclusivity.
- Improve the availability of resources, through a whole-of-society approach, joint and cross sectoral procurement, a better use of existing budgets, and by influencing political decision making.





## Workshop: Climate and Security – How Can the UCPM Manage Competing Priorities?

Climate change and the associated increased global insecurity provides a multitude of challenges for national and European civil protection. Robust societies need to be able to tackle both slow-onset and sudden-onset disasters simultaneously. Civil Protection must be able to function during conflict. Data and analysis need to be used to identify unknown risks. Redundancies need to build readiness for cascading effects.

The workshop aimed to develop recommendations on how the UCPM can support Member States as risks multiply and priorities diverge across the Union. With a specific focus on risks related to climate change and risks related to conflict, the workshop also aimed to increase the understanding of different Member States' operational plans and priorities.

Member and Participating States were encouraged to discuss their national state of play, as well as to provide recommendations for the UCPM.

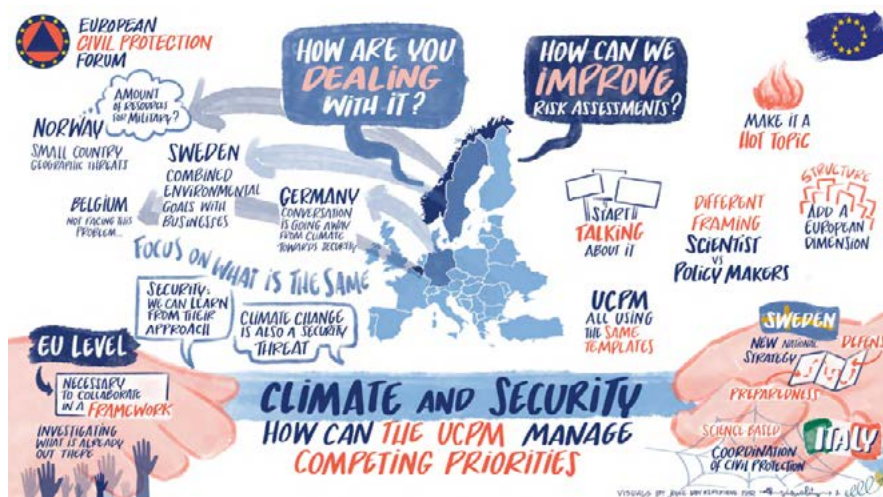


### SPEAKERS

- **David Fabi**, Italian Civil Protection Department
- **Annika Elmgart**, The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, MSB
- **Pieter Wynant**, Deputy Head of the International Relations Department, Directorate-General for Civil Protection, Ministry of Home Affairs, Belgium

### KEY MESSAGES

- Climate and security are intertwined, and this should be considered when creating policies. A different framing should be developed together by scientists and policy-makers considering also the impact of different structures.
- Risk assessment should be improved by having a comprehensive rather than a sectoral approach. This comprehensive approach to risk management should be based on common understanding and jointly agreed templates and their mandatory use. Focus on the common needs of the various sectors first and only afterwards on the differences.
- For civil protection to have a greater profile and be higher on the political agenda, it is necessary to involve the private sector and estimate the costs of non-action/potential impact on the economy.



# Union Civil Protection Medals Award Ceremony

To recognise and honour long-standing commitment and extraordinary contributions to the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, the European Commission can award medals to eligible Union and third country citizens as well as UCPM registered modules or other response capacities.

The second set of UCPM Medals was awarded at a dedicated ceremony on the first day of the 8th European Civil Protection Forum. The Commission decided to award medals for extraordinary contribution to two UCPM operations.

The first medal was awarded to the UCPM Medevac operation for Ukraine and received by Norway and Germany on behalf of the operation. In March 2022, Ukraine, Poland, Moldova and Slovakia requested assistance to support medical evacuation in the context of Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine. Since then, and up until 5 June 2024, 3 408 patients were successfully transferred to 22 UCPM Member and Participating States. In the context of this operation, Norway and Germany stand out in their involvement. As of 5 June 2024, Germany has received and treated 1 059 patients, almost three times as many as the next Member State, Norway, which has received 393 patients. In addition to receiving patients, Norway organised the transport of 1 738 patients through ad-hoc medical evacuation or pre-planned flights taking place on a weekly basis.

The second medal was awarded to the Italian civil protection team deployed to Libya in response to the floods caused by cyclone Daniel. During this operation, Italy provided truly cross-sectoral support with teams from the Italian Navy, Coast Guard, Airforce, and Army deployed alongside a USAR module and TAST team. Italy showed strong initiative in this operation and took on substantial responsibility with respect to the security arrangements in one of the most dangerous UCPM missions of the last years, having deployed over 100 staff to Libya.



# Civil Protection Village and outdoor demonstrations

The Exhibition Village at the Civil Protection Forum was a focal point of interaction and engagement, featuring 45 stands that explored themes ranging from CBRN response and new technologies to research and capacity building. This year, the Village was notably enhanced by the inclusion of two outdoor exhibitions: B-FAST showcased their Air Operations Support Capacity and a CBRN Mobile Laboratory, while St Bernard demonstrated the capabilities of search and rescue dogs in hazardous environments. Each display highlighted advanced technologies and procedures, including the use of a CBRN-contaminated scenario and subsequent decontamination processes, underlining the effectiveness of rapid response and safety protocols in real-world emergency situations.

This dynamic setup provided a comprehensive overview of the latest developments in civil protection and facilitated valuable networking opportunities among attendees.

## List of exhibition stands

CBRN & explosive aerosols assessment rescue and decontamination by **STBERNARD project**



comprehensive registration systems by **Bprepared and Ministry of Public Health Belgium**



NEST - An Interoperable Multidomain CBRN System by **AMPER SC IoT SL** threat alerts and security guidance, validated across multiple crowded transport and commercial sites.

Beyond Preparedness - Full-Scale Exercises Leading the Way by **Disaster Competence Network Austria**



EU Network of Training Centres for Preparedness to CBRN Events (eNOTICE-2): key methodologies and outcomes by **Université Catholique de Louvain, Centre for Applied Molecular Technologies**

Training and R&D for CBRN-E and Disaster Medicine HE TeamUP - H2020 NIGHTINGALE - H2020 MED1stMR by **Institute of Communication and Computer Systems**

Competence Center for EU Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (EUCC) of Johanniter Germany by **Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe e.V.**

HoloZcan: Deep Learning Powered Holographic Microscopy for Biothreat Detection on Field by **IDEAS Science Ltd.**

UCPM Exchange of Experts Programme by **CN Apell RO**

Vehicle fleet design and VR applications for Civil Protection the rescEU-CBRN-DSIM-IT project by **Fondazione Safe**

TRACENET - A virtual reality online collaborative framework to support training activities of UCPM by **Fondazione Bruno Kessler (FBK)**

Empowering Nations: Innovating disaster response through

EU MODEX by **MODEX CN APELL-RO Foundation**

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Integrated Romanian Emergency Situations Management System - a consolidated/unitary engage of the entire society by **the Department of Emergency Situations of Romania**

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EUUMA - Creating an EUropean Higher Education Network for MAster's Programmes in Disaster Risk Management by **University of Vienna**

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Paragon and preparEU by **the National Crisis Centre of Belgium**

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Germany as active player within the UCPM - projects and activities from local to international level by **the Federal Agency for Technical Relief - THW & Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance - BBK**

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Safe citizens from risk management to risk awareness: a virtual journey to discover volcano Stromboli by **the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology (INGV) & Italian Civil Protection Department (ICPD)**




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Satways: Your Partner in Disaster Preparedness and Response by **Satways Ltd**

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Space-based technologies for civil protection: the PPRD Med project by **PPRD Med**

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JRC Data Clinic: scientific tools for disaster risk management by **the Joint Research Centre, European Commission**

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Added value of regions to EU disaster management by **Danube and Baltic Sea (EUSDR, EUSBSR) and the Grande Region**

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PPRD EAST 3: Strengthening Resilience and Collaboration IPA CARE: Focus on Earthquakes and Health Emergencies by **PPRD East 3 and IPA CARE**

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From the Disaster of the Century to the Solidarity of the Century: Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes by **Ministry of the Interior of Türkiye, Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD)**

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International Humanitarian Partnership - strengthening response by cooperation and joining resources by **International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP)**

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Trusted Extremely Precise Mapping and Prediction for

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Emergency Management by **TEMA project**

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Building Disaster-Resilient Europe: Northern Perspectives from Knowledge Sharing to VR Shelters by **The Finnish Association of Fire Officers**

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ENGAGE-ing - Exploring collaboration between DRM stakeholders using the ENGAGE project serious game by **Deep Blue**




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ICEYE NATURAL CATASTROPHE SOLUTIONS Strengthen community resilience with satellite-powered disaster impact monitoring by **ICEYE**

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Stronger together - supporting the future of European Civil Protection by **Guardia di Finanza**

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Knowledge, Tools, and Approaches for Regional Cooperation Projects The IPA-FF program and the Multi-country project by **Italian Civil Protection Department**

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Operation Management system for large scale disaster and multiple agents and organisation coordination by **CS Group**

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Emerging technologies for responders - A joined-up approach to research and innovation by **Crisis Management Innovation Network Europe (CMINE)**

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Innovation in Integrated Wildfire Risk Management by **Fraunhofer Institute for Technological Trend Analysis (INT)**

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PrepaRED: Fostering Resilience aCROSS Communities by **Red Cross**

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Wildfire Risk Awareness and Communication as a pillar of Disaster Risk Reduction by **the Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia (CTFC)**

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Demonstration on fire behaviour analysis: Forest Fires affecting tourist areas in the Mediterranean region by **Pau Costa Foundation**

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Shaping resilient communities globally through education, science, and culture by **UNESCO**

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Veterinary Services' role in emergency and disaster management - WOAHA contributions by **World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) WOAHA Sub-Regional Representation in Brussels**

One Incident One Response – an innovative approach for incident management preparedness by **Sea Alarm Foundation**

Protecting civilians and nature against the devastating impact of climatic extremes by **General Directorate of Water Management, Hungary**



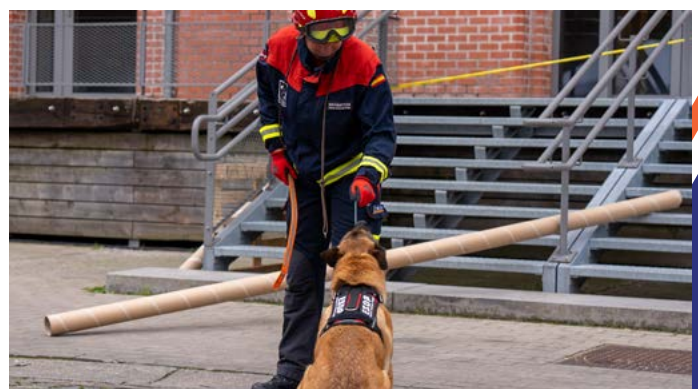
Safeguarding communities through innovations in public warning - AWARE Project by **European Emergency Number Association (EENA)**

Sweden's situational awareness and emergency management system by **the Swedish Contingencies Agency (MSB)**

Presentation of NOJAHIP Norwegian Jet air Ambulance for transport of Highly Infectious Patients by the **Norwegian Directorate of Health (Department of Emergency Preparedness)**



Union Civil Protection Mechanism by the **Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)**



# Photo Exhibition

The photo exhibition highlighted the importance of solidarity, cooperation, and resilience-building in addressing complex challenges. By sharing stories of resilience, showcasing good practices, and inspiring collective action, the exhibition promoted greater awareness and support for European civil protection efforts, contributing to a safer, more resilient Europe.

## Themes

**2023 Türkiye-Syria Earthquake:** This theme honoured the collaborative efforts of European Civil Protection teams in response to the February 2023 earthquake. Striking imagery and narratives showcased the solidarity and rapid mobilisation of resources to assist affected communities.

**“The Faces of European Civil Protection”:** Celebrating the dedication of first responders, policymakers, and researchers, this theme highlighted their courage, compassion, and expertise through portraits and stories, showcasing the human side of resilience.



**Disaster Resilience Goals (DRGs):** Introduced in February 2023, the Union Disaster Resilience Goals aim to improve disaster anticipation, preparedness, and response. This theme explored the DRG impact on European civil protection, demonstrating how the goals strengthen communities, mitigate risks, and save lives, contributing to a more resilient Europe.



Good decisions require reliable and timely information. The **Anticipate** goal proposes to improve the capability of the Union and Member States to identify and assess relevant disaster risk information with potential transboundary and cross-sectoral impacts. Based on accurate information, authorities can develop better preventive measures and ultimately, better protect citizens.



Both the Union and the Member States need to keep abreast of new and emerging threats and improve the understanding of their impact as a first step to ensure the necessary

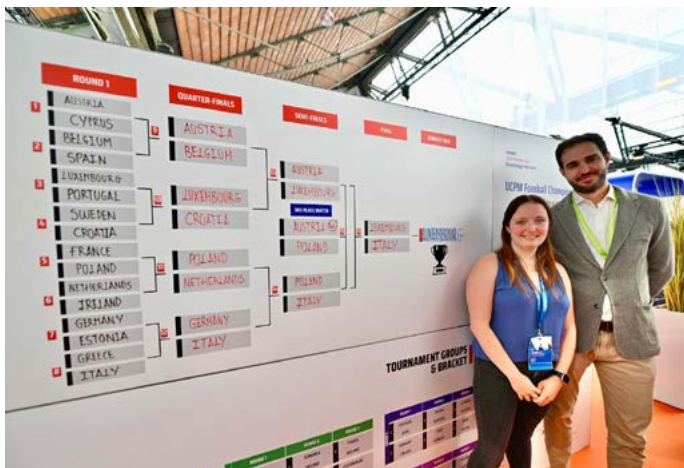
# UCPM Foosball Championship 2024

Brought to the audience through the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network, the 2024 UCPM Foosball Championship was an exciting side event of the 2024 European Civil Protection Forum, right on time to warm up the crowds ahead of the UEFA European Football Championship hosted by Germany in June-July 2024. A total of 24 countries registered and were part of the tournament.

After a fun but also fierce competition, the podium was finally made up of the following UCPM countries:



<b>Winner</b>
<b>Luxembourg - The Ultimate UCPM Team!</b>
<b>Runner-up</b>
<b>Italy - A True UCPM Team!</b>
<b>3rd place</b>
<b>Austria - A Phenom UCPM Team!</b>



# Communication

Relations with the media, social media activity and production of audiovisual materials played an important role in increasing visibility of the European Civil Protection Forum, as well as generating engagement with the Civil Protection community. The 2024 edition featured the dressing of Manneken Pis in a civil protection uniform and a dedicated social media ambassadors' campaign.

## Manneken Pis ceremony

The famous Brussels Manneken Pis statue, a symbol of the city's resilience and humour over the centuries, was dressed in an EU civil protection uniform in anticipation of the Forum, on 31 May. This unique event symbolised the unity and shared mission of enhancing civil protection across Europe. The dressing of Manneken Pis served as a reminder of the importance of civil protection and the collective efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of European citizens.



## Social Media Ambassadors

The [Social Media Ambassadors Campaign](#) successfully helped to drive registrations, foster engagement, and raise awareness for the event on social media. The campaign enlisted influential civil protection practitioners, policymakers and researchers and was the first of its kind in relation to the Civil Protection Forum. Ten ambassadors, chosen for their diverse backgrounds in terms of profession, gender, age, ethnicity, and nationality, were active on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and X. The campaign generated 75 posts, broadening the Forum's reach and facilitated connections among civil protection practitioners.

**Laurent  
ALFONSO**



**Antonella  
CAVALLO**



**Claudia  
CHATELUS**



**Esther  
EL HADDAD**



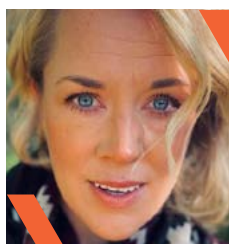
**Jon  
HALL**



**Commissioner  
Janez LENARČIČ**



**Kajsa  
SJÖSVÄRD**



**Inger-Johanne  
TJOFLAAT**



**Bart  
VAN DEN HURK**



**Gonzalo  
VELASCO**





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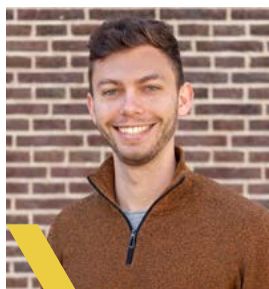
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Giacomo FINATO



Teodora BRATU



# Contractors

netcompany

intrasoft

ceciforma

ACTION  
GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS

# Graphic recording of the event compiled in the central visual hub at the event



