



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN AID
OPERATIONS (ECHO)
Emergency Response Coordination Centre
Civil Protection Emergency Response Capabilities

Brussels,
ECHO.A.4/EG

**rescEU shelter – In-person workshop with awarded Member and Participating States in
Brussels
10-11 October 2024**

Detailed Report

Participants:

European Commission: Michela Matuella, Director, Emergency Response Coordination Centre; Marco Panigalli, Head of Unit Civil Protection Emergency Response Capabilities; Francesco Pontiroli Gobbi, rescEU Team Leader, Elena Giral, rescEU Shelter Programme Manager; Jana Vlckova, Administrative and Financial issues; Grega Grobovsek, Legal Officer, Cristian Giménez Payo, Operational and Administrative Support and Anna Battistutta, Policy officer Disaster Risk and Resilience, Equality Focal Point in Civil Protection policy.

Croatia: Josipa Burić and Darko Protulipac

Sweden: Gunilla Fallqvist and Hanna Söderqvist

Slovenia: Martin Legiša and Tanja Tofil

Poland: Krystyna Sikorska and Tomasz Kostrzewa

Romania: Veronica Neagu and Florin-Iulian Popa

Spain: Juan Jose Rios Gomez, Fernando Meana Henarejos, Raúl García Aganzo

Türkiye: Faruk Ünlü and Habip Günes

Introduction

The second in-person rescEU shelter workshop took place during 10-11 October 2024 in Brussels, bringing participants from 7 countries (ES, SE, HR, SI, PL, RO and TR) implementing 9 projects.

To kick-start the workshop, Michela Matuella, Director of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre of DG ECHO, provided a warm welcome and introductory remarks, thanking participants for the progress so far and reminding them of the importance of rescEU shelter to enhance the EU's preparedness towards disasters.

During this event, participants took part in a number of presentations and technical discussions and presented the progress made on the projects. Currently they are at different levels of implementation. Colleagues with relevant expertise from other units in DG ECHO also participated in various dedicated discussions to reflect on important aspects related to the development of the capacity, including deployments and retrieval of assets, vulnerability and environmental considerations, legal and administrative matters, visibility and communication, and medium and long-term perspectives of rescEU.

The final agenda of the workshop is attached to this report (Annex 1).

Day 1 – Thursday 10 October 2024

Overview of shelter capacity, progress and way forward - Elena Giral, rescEU shelter programme coordinator

Elena Giral gave an introductory presentation that included an overview of the development of the rescEU shelter capacities from their conceptualisation and through their development, including the deployment of the first assets from the emergency shelter-UA capacities, and concluding with the main objectives and timeline for the upcoming months, until the completion of the capacities.

With a budget of 196.6 million euros, these capacities will be able to provide emergency shelter for thousands of people in the event of major disasters. At present, the emergency reserves constituted with Sweden and Romania in the context of the war in Ukraine are ready for deployment and have been utilised in numerous occasions both in the country, as well as in Slovakia and in the aftermath of the Türkiye 2022 earthquake. The other “long-term” emergency grants, are being constituted and will be gradually ready until 2026.

The presentation also included some key figures/data to show the administrative workload linked to the projects’ implementation, e.g. number of processed reports, amendments, etc., as well as some key takeaways from the most recent monitoring missions carried out to Türkiye, Romania, and an informal visit to Spain.

Presentations by MS/PS on progress (MS/PS)

Participants outlined the progress achieved since the start of their projects, including important developments, such as the finalization of some of the opened public procurements, and the reception of some of the items. Some countries responsible for the *regular* shelter grants indicated that their capacities could be made operational, at least partially, during 2025, while others will become available during the first two quarters of 2026.

Highlights by country:

- **Croatia**: Procurement tenders being prepared. First deliveries expected end of 2024, while all equipment procurement contracts to be signed in early 2025.
- **Sweden – regular**: Procurement tenders launched and ongoing or finalized. Delays in procurement of shelter units caused by Court appeal, resolution of the trial expected soon. Completion expected by mid 2026.
- **Sweden UA**: The capacity is ready for deployment, with additional items being currently developed.

- **Slovenia**: Tendering procedures ongoing, with publication of some tenders, while other items being delivered, particularly containers. All assets expected to be received by end 2025. Trainings and a pilot exercise (large-scale) are planned for end of 2025.
- **Poland**: Procurement tenders being finalized with expected signature in December 2024. 1st module expected to be ready for deployment in Feb 2025, and a total of 6 container towns by August 2026. The current estimation is that this capacity will take 10-14 days for assembly once on site.
- **Romania UA**: The capacity is available for deployment while some new items are being purchased and some deployed ones are being replenished.
- **Spain**: Several items and units delivered. Full delivery expected during 2025. Trainings/large-scale exercises are expected in the first half of 2026. The capacity should take 1 day to be assembled and operational with a team of 70 people.
- **Türkiye**: Procurement tenders being prepared and contracts are expected to be signed in early 2025. Items expected by the second half of 2025.

Main takeaways and follow up:

- Most capacities are concluding procurement and receiving the first items, with different levels of progress. All capacities should be ready for deployment in the upcoming 18 months.
- Periodic technical meetings should continue to align the capacities as much as possible both in terms of assets and procedures.
- COM recommends testing shelter units outdoors to verify their resistance against weather elements when in use.
- During the discussions, countries underlined the importance of deploying specialised teams with the capacities both for site planning (ahead of assets) and assembly/coordination in the early stages of the emergency, and before handover to national/local authorities.

Deployments – Working together in large emergencies: Activation, transport & logistics, Host Nation Support and handover – what do we need to prepare in advance? - *Elena Giral, rescEU shelter programme coordinator*

This session launched a discussion on some of the most important operational aspects that need to be developed ahead of the deployment of rescEU shelter capacities, which are large and complex in nature. Main aspects discussed covered key information needed at the moment of activation of the capacities, transport and logistics aspects, Host Nation Support (HNS) and handover.

Participants briefly discussed each of these topics and agreed to focus the session on the initial brainstorming for the development of a standard factsheet. This document will gather key information to serve the Commission, the requesting country and other parties involved to clearly understand both how the capacities are structured and which are the technical and logistical requirements from deployment and transport to setting them up at destination (ie-

site infrastructure, land preparations, etc.) This initial discussion gathered some of the key aspects to be included, but the development of the factsheet will require some work amongst the different countries. COM will consolidate all the ideas into a draft document that will be shared with participants. After that, a technical meeting will be held to refine the document, which will then be discussed again internally for its adoption.

Other key matters such as SOPs or HNS will be discussed in future technical meetings together and as a follow-up from the development of the factsheet.

Update on upcoming legal changes - *Grega Grobovsek, rescEU legal and policy officer*

COM delivered a brief presentation on the forthcoming implementing rules regarding the UCPM, which will also impact the deployment and management of rescEU capacities. A quick overview was provided, explaining how the implementing act will revise the current chapters and incorporate existing provisions into a consolidated act. Two key amendments were highlighted: i) the introduction of a new chapter on the operationalisation of rescEU, and ii) a complete overhaul of the procedures for UCPM response actions (including transport costs).

The new provisions for rescEU will now include: i) the principle of long-term commitment to rescEU, ii) the possibility of donating disposable rescEU items without a formal request for assistance, iii) clearer certification rules, iv) the complementary deployment of other rescEU items, and v) other existing rules concerning deployment criteria and national use. Finally, the revised chapter on Union response actions was explained, with particular emphasis on the role of Member/Participating States hosting rescEU shelter. They will be involved in the process once there is a request to mobilise rescEU shelter items.

What have we done to improve the assistance to vulnerable groups and reduce the environmental impact of our capacities? (sharing of progress and discussion) - *Elena Giral, rescEU shelter programme coordinator & Anna Battistutta, Policy officer Disaster Risk and Resilience, Equality Focal Point in Civil Protection policy*

Building up on the sessions at the previous in-person workshop that took place in September 2023, this session had the goal of illustrating how participating countries have implemented concrete measures to improve the assistance to vulnerable groups and to reduce the environmental impact of our capacities during deployments. Such considerations included specific proposals made by participating countries in their project proposals, as well as those conclusions agreed between them at the last workshop. Following individual presentations, each of the topics were discussed in detail.

Main highlights by country:

- Croatia: Special containers and tents are being developed. Foldable wheelchair ramps, wider doors and special beds to improve the lives of vulnerable groups. Waste removal equipment to reduce environmental impact will be included.
- Sweden: Gender markers will be used in the implementation of the response and a gender field expert will be deployed with the capacities; there is a higher than required percentage of mobility - adapted facilities; and tailored hygiene kits. Both capacities

include ramps, distinct entrances, lighting, and attention is paid to recruiting staff composed of men and women. In terms of environmental measures, vacuum toilets are used to reduce water and air transport will be avoided when possible.

- Slovenia: Special beds are included for people with mobility issues as well as adapted WASH facilities, ramps and tailored hygiene kits. No single use items are included, and perishable ones have long expiration dates. Recycled materials are privileged, and low emission/silent generators are foreseen.
- Poland: NGOs have been consulted and contributed with ideas regarding the accessibility of the units. An innovative step is the inclusion of Near Field Communication (NFC) stickers with audio descriptions for people with visual impairments. Thanks to the stickers, persons with visual impairments can autonomously look for information regarding the location of the services in the camp.
- Romania: The capacities were conceived based on existing assets, and no accessible units were procured. Romania will look into potential adaptations.
- Spain: Attention has been paid to facilities for recycling and composting. Water saving devices included in WASH containers as well as greywater reusing and water generation from atmospheric caption. A short educational infographic on sustainable practices and environmental protection will be produced.
- Türkiye: Tailored hygiene kits for different groups and atmospheric water caption devices are foreseen.

Main takeaways and follow up:

- Countries have made a great effort to include these considerations in the design of their capacities. The next steps should focus on including them also into the deployment SOPs, focusing on adequate site planning, reducing transport costs and waste, and ensuring adequate handover/disposal/recycling.
- Participants are encouraged to draw on each other's examples and share their best practices among them to implement additional measures in these areas.

Day 2 – Friday 11 October 2024

Administrative and financial Q&A - *Laura di Paolo, Legal officer and Kathleen Rosiers, Finance Team Leader (E3)*

Two presentations were delivered, one with focus on administrative and legal aspects and the other on financial aspects of project implementation. They were both designed to include information that is relevant and useful for the current and future phases of implementation.

The presentation on legal aspects covered legal framework under which the projects operate, and highlighted some important messages, including the rights and obligations of the

beneficiaries, the main rules on subcontracting and procurement, and amendments. The presentation on financial aspects covered mainly rules on eligibility of costs, their classification, information on budget flexibility, and reporting and payments.

Administrative remarks and good reporting practices - Informal session – *Elena Giral, rescEU shelter programme coordinator, and Jana Vlckova, rescEU shelter call coordinator and project officer.*

The presentation included guidance and practical tips to help the beneficiaries with the administrative aspects and management of their projects. It was based on internal observations and recurrent errors/issues, with the aim to improve the quality and flow of information and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our cooperation.

Commission insisted on the basic principles for good reporting, clarity and transparency, encouraging countries to keep an open dialogue and inform as soon as changes are foreseen or issues occur. Other relevant points were highlighted such as which templates to use, what to include in the reports, how to report the costs incurred, etc.

Retrieving of assets after deployments: What do we need to foresee practically and legally? – *Francesco Pontiroli-Gobbi, Team Leader rescEU and Elena Giral, rescEU shelter programme coordinator*

This session focused on the potential challenges and what needs to be foreseen in order to bring certain assets back to their original hosting country following a deployment. Retrieving shelter units is crucial to ensure a more sustainable use of rescEU stocks, as well as to make investments more durable and efficient, therefore it is a key aspect in the development of shelter capacities, which are heavy in terms of size and can be very durable in time if properly maintained, while taking a very long time to be procured and manufactured.

This discussion has shown that bringing assets back opens many operational and legal questions and challenges, but all participating countries agreed that it is a sensible approach under the right circumstances.

Main points discussed:

- Retrieval vs donation: Some items may be loaned while others may remain as donation. It will be important to define clear criteria on which items will, a priori, be donated and which will be expected to return, ahead of deployment (financial, procurement length, type of disaster, expected use and duration...). It was clarified that, depending on the circumstances (location, scale and gravity of the crisis) these might differ, and all items could, eventually, be donated if it is so decided.
- Donation and loan agreements: Conditions for donation and retrieval should be specified in an agreement. The drafting of a template for the loan agreement form will be one of the main issues to discuss in the coming months.

- Teams' deployments: It is very important to send a qualified team to the location before the arrival of shelter capacities. This will facilitate/enable to support the receiving country with the site selection, required infrastructure set-up, correct assembly, etc.
- Customs: Export/Import procedures should be anticipated and facilitated depending on the recipient country.
- Time considerations: How long will the recipient country need the items? Will they be in good condition upon return? Some items might be donated, even if foreseen as a loan, if the time and use make it no longer cost-effective to retrieve them.
- Wear and tear: Different weather conditions and different uses could impact the life of the assets differently, both before and after deployment, which should be monitored and considered when deciding whether these should be retrieved.
- Types of shelter/capacity: Depending on the configuration of developed capacities, and the type of assets used, it will be easier/harder to plan the retrieval. This will also depend on the time that the capacity is expected to be deployed for. For each capacity, which items are in principle a loan should be clearly defined together with the intended time of use.
- Dismantling at the end of deployment: It seemed pertinent to send a reduced team from the Host Country to support the correct dismantling and retrieval of the assets.
- Relocation: In principle, the receiving country could decide to relocate the capacities to a different location (locally, regionally). There was consensus that these costs should be, in principle, borne by the receiving country.
- Financing modalities: The current practice/regulation is that while the emergency is still open, transportation of items back to original storage has been financed through transport grants. However, it remains to be clarified how to use these grants once an emergency has been closed, or if, in this case, it should be kept open for this reason.
- Replenishment, repair and maintenance: Replenishment of donated items should be paid with underspending whenever available. Additional resources might be made available depending on the future EU long-term budget. Repairs and maintenance of retrieved assets shall be done through dedicated rescEU maintenance grants. One issue to be clearly stipulated is the responsibilities of the receiving countries to properly maintain and carry out minor repairs on loaned assets during their use, and in case of negligence/misuse.
- Monitoring: The importance of monitoring deployment and use of capacities was highlighted by the participants. This is the only way to ensure adequate use while avoiding potential reputational damage if sites are not properly managed/set-up. It is also an invaluable source of lessons learnt for the following deployments. Security should be considered for each context to assess feasibility.
- SOPs and HNS: Both Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Host Nation Support (HNS) guidelines specific to rescEU shelter capacities will be drafted to ensure procedures are cleared and unified during deployments and information can be provided for decision making both to the receiving country and to COM Management.

Communication: Good practices and examples

This session had the goal of sharing best practices on visibility and communication that are already being implemented in the development of rescEU shelter projects. Countries were strongly encouraged to actively communicate about the development of their capacities (via social media, websites, in relevant events...) not limiting themselves only to contractual requirements on visibility (ie, EU logos/funding statement).

Main highlights by country:

- Sweden: Several platforms have been used: Website, SE television, SE radio, local radio, Twitter, Facebook, especially during some deployments. EU logos highlighted in materials and transportation. Banners and Polos have been created. In some cases, communication was delayed due to political sensitivities (war on UA) and security needs.
- Slovenia: Several platforms have been used: Website, Facebook, Instagram, news articles. Slovenia highlighted the need to send pictures to media when sending information, to ensure the references they use are accurate and to be mindful about misinformation.
- Romania: Institutional Website and social media (Facebook) have been used. Pictures and interviews of various deployments have been recorded, and the EU logo was showcased thoroughly on most capacity assets.
- Spain: Several platforms have been used: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram as well as YouTube and Flickr. ES has created and used different hashtags and good quality pictures. The most popular posts have been those including videos about the newly received assets.

Main takeaways and follow up:

- Participating countries are encouraged to draw on each other's examples to implement additional actions in these areas. It is particularly important to actively communicate, not limit the action to logos/visibility. This will enhance awareness and credibility towards EU public about this programme.
- People in pictures are always better than just pictures of material. Videos are generally better than pictures. However, posting people can be sensitive. The GDPR rules and consent (written) must be respected, and particularly in emergencies. COM can provide guidance in this regard.
- Whenever feasible, relevant logos should be printed/engraved directly on surfaces, not used as stickers, as these wear off very quickly, especially when exposed to weather conditions. Stickers should not be removed after donation.
- Always tag DG ECHO, Communication colleagues will be happy to guide you on how to best feature the Commission.
- Countries should take screen captures and save them, as posts disappear, and visibility and communication should be systematically reported to COM.
- In general, countries are encouraged to share images (even informally) with COM, when new assets are received, or some activity/training/inspection is carried out. This is very useful for the follow-up of the capacities' implementation.

Medium and long-term perspectives on rescEU. 2024-26 – X - What is next? *Francesco Pontiroli-Gobbi, Team Leader rescEU and Elena Giral, rescEU shelter programme coordinator*

This session included an overview of the medium and longer-term aspects still to be defined both in terms of work to be done together with the countries developing rescEU shelter

capacities as well as the overall future of rescEU, depending on EU budget and political developments.

Main takeaways and follow up:

Medium term

- The main upcoming technical discussions that are foreseen are:
 - Legal definitions for loan of assets (including donation agreement);
 - HNS guidelines, specific to the technical complexity of the shelter capacities, and complementary to current guidelines;
 - Definition of capacity factsheets based on the workshop discussions;
 - SOPs for deployments from the moment of offer/acceptance, including defining the roles of Commission, hosting and receiving country.
- Finalisation of procurement of assets
- Trainings and exercises
- Certification of assets after development
- Capacities should be developed and ready for deployment by 2026 at the latest.

Long term

- There is a general agreement among COM and participating countries that capacities should be made available for the long run. The ongoing grant agreements covering the development of the capacities should be followed by other grants covering the maintenance of the capacities. They should cover the maintenance of items, refurbishment, replenishment and costs such as warehousing, insurance, personnel, etc. needed to keep the capacities ready to be deployed.
- While the budget beyond 2026 is unconfirmed for the time being, COM will make a proposal for the next MFF in the summer of 2025, which should give more clarity on the availability of additional financial resources.

Conclusions

The workshop was a very valuable opportunity to have an update on the state of implementation of the various capacities, serving both the Commission and all awarded

countries to have a better overview and understanding of the reserves being built. It was also a key moment to discuss many open issues and clarify the way forward as well as the priorities that the participants want to deal with. All the aspects regarding preparation of deployments are as important as the procurement of assets to ensure the speed, quality and effectiveness of assistance. The work done up to now is very good, but the upcoming two years are crucial to ensure the viability of these reserves.

The fact that the meeting took place in-person was greatly appreciated by both participants and organisers, creating meaningful connections that will undoubtedly be of use for the future development of the capacity and during deployments. The Commission will follow up with communications and invitations to dedicated meetings on the above-mentioned topics, or others that could arise. A general meeting will take place (online) in the spring of 2025, followed by an in-person meeting in the fall of 2025.

The meeting ended with a brief summary of what was discussed and the main takeaways, as well as some words of acknowledgement to all the work done up to now, including some closing remarks from Marco Panigalli, Head of Unit of the Civil Protection Emergency Response Capabilities.