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CivPro-LiNC
Civil Protection - Liaison Network Concept

Co-funded by the European Union

Model Cross-border Liaison Manual

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This model liaison manual is one of the products developed through the EU co-funded project CivPro-LiNC (Civil Protection-Liaison Network Concept). Partners of the project consortium were the District Government of Cologne (Germany), the State Fire Service Institute of North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany), the Netherlands Institute for Public Safety (NIPV), and the International CBRN-e Institute (ICE) from Belgium. The project ran from March 2025 to August 2026.
The aim of CivPro-LiNC was to enhance the role, position, and competencies of cross-border liaison officers during incidents with cross-border impact that remain below the threshold for activation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). In contrast to UCPM Host Nation Support Liaison Officers, who may be deployed throughout the European Union and beyond, cross-border liaison officers primarily operate within their own regional cross-border areas.
In close cooperation with experts in the field of regional cross-border civil protection cooperation, the following definition / job description for the cross-border liaison officer was developed:

A cross-border liaison within the CivPro-LiNC context is an experienced professional who facilitates cooperation and communication between emergency response organizations across national borders during disaster situations. This individual operates in a multi-disciplinary, all-hazards environment and is embedded within disaster/crisis teams or command groups, rather than in routine daily operations. The liaison acts as a representative of her/his own organization, while also serving as a connector, advisor, observer, and mediator between teams from different countries. Fluent in the languages and cultures of both sides, the liaison is not a decision-maker but plays a crucial role in interpreting and relaying information, ensuring mutual understanding, and supporting coordination efforts. Her/his effectiveness relies on deep knowledge of both her/his own and the partner organization's structures, procedures, and operational cultures. With strong analytical skills, cultural awareness, and a well established network, the liaison is able to navigate complex situations and contribute to a shared situational picture, ultimately enhancing cross-border crisis/disaster response.

Tasks:
- *Operates in the field of disaster relief during crisis situations (multidisciplinary/all-hazard)*
- *Acts as an interface between the civil protection authorities in cross-border regions and connects organizations and officials across borders*
- *Facilitates the exchange of information and clarifies its meaning where necessary*
- *Acts not as a decision-maker, but as an advisor and mediator*

Skills:
- *In-depth knowledge of disaster management systems in both countries, combined with extensive experience*
- *High intercultural awareness and language skills relevant to cross-border emergency operations*
- *Ability to work in a solution-oriented and collaborative manner in dynamic, complex and stressful environments*
- *Strong diplomatic and interpersonal skills, combining strategic awareness with empathy and mediation capability*
- *Clear understanding of one's position and role within command structures, with the ability to represent one's own organisation effectively without overstepping decision-making authority*

In addition to this Model Liaison Manual, the CivPro-LiNC project produced a State Analysis Report and a Course Curriculum for a Cross-Border Liaison Training Course. Based on this curriculum, a pilot course was conducted in the spring of 2026, bringing together participants from cross-border regions along the border of the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Netherlands. The evaluation findings and recommendations resulting from the pilot course have been incorporated into the final version of the Course Curriculum. The State Analysis Report, the final Course Curriculum, and further information about the project are available on the CivPro-LiNC portal of the European Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network:
https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/projects/civpro-linc

CivPro-LiNC project team
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Clarification / explanatory notes / suggestion

This template suggests topics and a structure that are relevant to the day-to-day work of a cross-border liaison officer. It is up to users to further develop this template and adapt and personalise it to suit the specific working environment of the (individual) liaison officer. This model is not complete and is primarily intended to provide users with as many guidelines and suggestions as possible. Users of this manual are free to remove sections, reorganize the content, or add own information.

1. Introduction

-Aim of the manual
-Organisations involved
-General insight in area of operations (geographic / binational)

By way of introduction, this chapter could describe the origin and purpose of the handbook. What does the handbook cover? Which crisis management agencies have contributed to it? Which cross-border agreements or arrangements form the basis for the deployment of cross-border liaisons? To which (geographical) area does it apply? etc.

2. Definition of Liaison

-Definition of the liaison (as jointly agreed upon)
-Job-description of the liaison (as jointly agreed upon)
-'Work instructions' (in relation to scope of mandate)

This chapter is intended to describe the liaison officer's duties as jointly defined by the neighbouring regions for whom this manual applies. For example, the region's own definition and/or job description of the liaison officer can be included here. Work instructions may also be included, outlining which tasks are (or are not) expected of the liaison. At what level does the liaison operate? Does the liaison have decision-making authority, and if so, what does that mandate entail? If not, are there situations in which exceptions might be considered? Or could this be something that, depending on the situation during an incident, is arranged between the home organization and its liaison?
Including this information the manual can help the liaison verify during operational activities whether he or she is still on the right track. It can support personal reflection on the own tasks. In cases of misunderstandings about the scope or content of the liaison's responsibilities during deployment, it can also provide a solid basis for clarifying the liaison's role.

3. Preparation of organisations

-Sending organisation
-Receiving organisation

When regions from two neighboring countries intend to work together using cross-border liaisons, both (or all) regions (organizations) will need to make mutual agreements. How will the cooperation structure be organized, and what can they expect from one another? This chapter provides — in the form of guiding questions — examples of elements that sending and receiving organizations can prepare in advance to the actual activation of liaisons during an incident with cross-border implications. It is logical

that these organizations document their agreements on these topics, both internally and jointly. Again, it is up to the users of this manual to decide whether all these agreements (internal or mutual) should be included in detail in this handbook. It can certainly be helpful to include at least the main points of these agreements, so that liaisons who are deployed can easily refer back to the most relevant agreements.

-Sending organization

- Are all the legal aspects of sending out an employee (liaison) to another country covered? Employment arrangements? Insurance? Expences? Personal liability? Etc.
- Have agreements been made on how — and by whom — it is decided whether a liaison will actually join the crisis team in the neighboring region?
- Is it possible that, depending on the situation, the liaison may be deployed to a different team than the one originally designated in plans or agreements?
- Is there a fixed point of contact within the sending organization with whom the deployed liaison maintains communication? Is this a specific officer? A kind of "back office"?
- How is it communicated within the home organization — insofar as relevant — that a liaison representing the (own) organization is present in the neighboring country's crisis team?
- Is it clear within the sending organization how lines of communication between the home organization and the liaison are structured?
- Is it known within the sending organization what the purpose of the liaison is, what tasks he/she is deployed for, and who may or may not contact the liaison?
- Does the deployed liaison have his/her own 'back office' to turn to with (personal) questions about replacement, succession, ending the deployment, personal well-being, etc.?
- Have agreements been made about how — and with whom — the liaison may or may not share operational information during their presence in the neighboring crisis team?
- If applicable, does the liaison have access to the organization's digital crisis information management system, and what work arrangements apply to this?
- Is it necessary to document the exchange of messages with the liaison (logbook)?
- Etc.

-Receiving organization

- How does the receiving organization know that a liaison from the neighboring country is coming?
- May a liaison report to the neighboring country's crisis team on her/his own initiative, or is this only possible by invitation?
- To what extent is it desirable or necessary to formalize the invitation or deployment of a liaison (legally or otherwise)?
- Is the building of the receiving organization accessible and easy to reach for the incoming liaison? (Parking, security, etc.)
- Is there someone within the receiving organization who welcomes and receives the incoming liaison?
- Are workplace facilities available for the visiting liaison? (Desk, Wi-Fi, electricity, printer, etc.)
- Have the liaison's tasks been incorporated into the workflows of the receiving team?
- Has consideration been given to the role the liaison can play in providing information to support the working and/or decision-making processes of the receiving team?
- Are there agreements regarding the liaison's (physical) freedom of movement?
- Are the members of the receiving team — insofar as relevant — informed about the arrival of the liaison?
- Is it clear within the receiving organisation what the internal procedures are in relation to getting in touch with the incoming liaison?

- Etc,

4. Operational information
-alertation
-contact details of counterpart organisations
-Means of communication
-Lines of communication
-Checklists
- **Call out protocol**
- **Departing from your own organisation**
- **During the liaison duty (when deployed)**

In this chapter, topics are addressed that relate to the liaison's operational activities. It can begin with a description of the agreements made between neighboring regions regarding how a liaison is alerted. This may also include arrangements for situations in which country A has information or rumors about an incident across the border in country B, and country A wishes to contact country B — as a precaution — to verify that information. In addition, this chapter may include detailed information about the relevant crisis teams in the border region of the neighboring country, including contact details. If a liaison is deployed, this chapter can also describe the technical means by which the liaison maintains communication with his/her home organization, including communication schemes that outline who communicate with whom. This information may reflect the mutual agreements described in Chapter 3. Finally, liaisons may include their own personal checklists in their manual. Three examples are provided below.

Call out protocol
- Who is contacting you? (Name, organization, position, and contact details).
- Has the liaison in the "incident country" already been informed? (For example, if alerting takes place via the dispatch centre).
- What is happening? Nature of the incident, location, scale, affected persons, etc.
- Are there already any concrete requests (for assistance)?
- Which teams in/from the neighboring country have already been alerted?
- Have teams/units from the 'own country' been alerted (and dispatched)?
- Is there any insight into short-term and long-term developments? (Threat assessment.)
- Is there already an indication whether it will be necessary to invite a liaison?
- How will we keep each other informed?
- Etc.

(Often, operatives work with a pre-printed form that helps or guides them in collecting the necessary information. Such forms can, of course, also be included in this manual. A suggestion is to place them in Chapter 11)

Leaving for the crisis team in the neighboring country (Departing from your own organisation)
- Do you know where you need to go (address, contact person, etc.)?
- Is there a specific route you must follow?
- Have you checked whether there are already questions or tasks from the crisis team in your own organisation?
- Coordinate with your home-organization contact person how initial communication will be maintained

- Have you Informed your contact person in the home-organization that you are leaving for the neighboring country?
- Do you have everything with you? (Hardware, software, communication equipment, etc.).
- Etc.

Points of attention during deployment
- Establish contact with the appropriate counterparts in the receiving team.
- Conduct an initial coordination meeting with your contact person regarding concrete working arrangements.
- Assess the situation of the incident.
- Prioritize issues with cross-border implications.
- Monitor whether crisis teams on both sides of the border share the same situational/operational picture.
- If necessary, synchronize the situational/operational picture.
- Prepare periodic situation reports for the home organization.
- Verify that messages have been received correctly.
- Maintain a logbook of your own message traffic.
- Keep the (own) digital crisis management information system up to date.
- Think about long-term implications of the incident in relation to cross-border issues.
- Keep an eye on your own wellbeing and start thinking about your own replacement in good time
- Etc.

5. Overview of the relevant structures of the emergency management agencies of the counterpart

In this section, overviews, diagrams, flowcharts, and similar materials can be included that describe the (most relevant) crisis teams the liaison may work with or encounter in the neighboring country. This may cover different teams, their responsibilities, and the roles they have within the overall structure. It may also be useful to include information about the crisis teams in the liaison's own home country as a reference.

6. Overview of the relations between the structure of the own emergency management agencies and that of the counterpart

The previous chapter describes the structure of the disaster management teams in the home country or in both countries. This chapter provides insight into the structure between the two countries. If applicable this overview could reflect the agreements made between both countries. It may also (partly) be based on the topics mentioned in Chapter 3. Here as well, schematic overviews, flowcharts, or similar visual representations can be useful.

7. Overview of potential crisis partners

Here a list can be included of the many other crisis partners who, depending on the type of incident, may also have a role in disaster relief or crisis management. This primarily refers to other governmental bodies that hold responsibility for crisis management within their own sectors, such as energy, vital

infrastructure, veterinary affairs, water authorities, transport, public health, and so on. In addition to listing these crisis partners, their contact details may also be provided, as well as a description of the specific responsibilities these authorities hold.

8. Crisis specific information (geographically)

In this chapter, information can be included for each type of crisis that is specifically relevant to the cross-border area within the scope of the two countries. This may concern known high-risk objects, special arrangements, or existing plans and agreements related to certain hazardous sites or situations. Examples include post-Seveso facilities, nuclear power plants, railways, waterways, nature reserves, and densely populated areas. Also think about areas/locations with vulnerable people such as homes for elderly people, schools, hospitals. All information, planning and procedures already established on these topics can be incorporated into this chapter.

9. Maps

Here is room for all types of maps that can support the liaisons in carrying out their tasks.

10. Language / Culture

If specialised glossaries exist, they can be included here. Several countries have developed specific dictionaries for their border regions that contain professional terminology in two (or more) languages. These may cover the names of firefighting and technical-rescue tools, vehicle types, different crisis types and associated hazards, titles of various officials, names of different crisis teams, and more.
There are also initiatives in which such glossaries are publicly accessible online. All such available information can be included in this chapter.

11. Notes

At the end of the manual, space is provided for the user to make own notes. As with the rest of the manual, it is of course also possible for the users to add any additional information they consider useful for carrying out their tasks.