



## ECHO's Next

Newsletter for Civil Protection national experts

N°9 – December 2014

### Useful links

- [European Commission DG ECHO website](#)
- [General overview training](#)
- [EU CP Mechanism training programme brochure](#)
- [Calendar of courses](#)
- [List of national training coordinators](#)
- [ERCC Portal, including lessons learnt documents and details on emergencies](#)
- [Further info on the ERCC](#)
- [EU Exchange of Experts](#)

### Welcome

Dear Experts,

Welcome to the last edition of the Next newsletter for 2014. As usual, this newsletter will allow you to take a look at some of the recent operations and activities of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC).

Over the last months, the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak in West Africa has kept us occupied and it is fair to say that it is the most intense emergency of this year. Not only has the European Union mobilised the UCPM, but it has also activated various other tools in the field of humanitarian aid and health in order to support both global and EU efforts. In spite of these efforts, it is still too early to say that the fight is won, but let us all hope that this will be one of the good news in 2015.

In the present edition, you will also find information on the upcoming 2015 Civil Protection Forum. The forum will take place in May 2015 in Brussels and we hope to see many of you at this event.

Stay tuned and keep sending us your feedback and suggestions to [echo-next@ec.europa.eu](mailto:echo-next@ec.europa.eu)

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and all the best for 2015,

Juha Auvinen  
Head of Unit  
DG ECHO Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection  
European Commission

## Latest emergencies

### Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa

It is almost a year now that the Ebola outbreak has kept the world busy. While in the beginning it seemed to be a local and later a regional challenge, in early August 2014 the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Ebola outbreak "an international health emergency". It had become obvious at that time that a coordinated international response was essential to stop and reverse the spread of the virus.

Hand in hand with the global concern, the Union Civil Protection Mechanism was activated on 14 August 2014. The request for assistance came straight from the WHO and comprised Foreign Medical Teams (FMTs) as well as a wide range of medical equipment including fully-fledged Ebola Treatment Centres, ambulances, medicines and much more.

Up to now, twenty Participating States have responded to the request and several thousands of tons of assistance have been successfully delivered to the region. In addition, civil protection mechanism experts were deployed through the UCPM, first in support of the UNDAC missions to Monrovia, Liberia and Bamako, Mali, and then to the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) headquarters in Accra, Ghana.

However, with the global response gaining speed and substance, also the coordination

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became increasingly challenging. With the UNMEER not in place before the end of September, the European Commission's Emergency Response Coordination Centre assumed the role of the central coordination hub in the first months, not only for the European response but also for bringing the international community on-board. The regularly held coordination meetings sometimes saw more than a hundred participants, in person or joining via video or telephone link from all over the world – including people working on-site in the affected region.

Since October, daily Ebola Task Force meetings have been held in the ERCC, bringing together the relevant European institutions and services, Member States and, in dedicated open sessions, also humanitarian partners and relevant international actors. Regular updates from the EU Delegations and ECHO field experts on the evolving situation on the ground also help to feed the situational awareness in the ERCC.

A recurrent topic of concern in supporting the fight against Ebola was and still is the recruitment of personnel. One of the limiting factors to attract essential staff was considered to be the guarantee of appropriate medical care, including the option of medical evacuation. It was therefore decided that the Commission would establish an EU medevac system in order to provide such guarantee to all international humanitarian aid workers fighting Ebola in West Africa. The system is based on cooperation between the European Commission Directorates-General ECHO and SANCO (DG for Health and Consumers), plus the WHO on one side and the support and participation of EU Member States on the other. A first activation of the system came in late November and went smoothly and according to plan, resulting in the successful evacuation of a patient to Europe.

With the crisis being far from over, the ERCC will most likely continue to be at the forefront of the coordination, also for the months to come. We will all have busy times ahead – but with concerted efforts we will manage to win the fight against this disease: <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en/field-blogs/videos/ebola-together-we-can-stop-it>

Dennis Nehb and Anika Ruisch, DG ECHO – Ebola Taskforce

## Exercises

### 4<sup>th</sup> cycle Modules Exercises

The 4<sup>th</sup> cycle of Modules Exercises has recently ended. The organizers of the Modules Exercises, THW (DE), IBZ (BE) and Falck (NL, priv.), managed to engage participants from 26 countries of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism during the 11 exercises of the cycle. Concretely, Lot 1 - in charge of two table top exercises for forest fire fighting modules - counted with the participation of 96 people, Lot 2 - water related modules exercises - had 265 participants, and Lot 3 - Urban Search and Rescue modules exercises - had 426 participants.



*Participants in the exercise held in Venice, Italy*

In general, the exercise evaluation of participants has been very positive. The real feel of the exercises, in which modules and experts are allowed to freely establish their next steps given that the exercises are not directed, as well as the participation of an ERCC Liaison Officer, have been highly valued.

With the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> cycle, a new 5<sup>th</sup> cycle of Modules Exercises has also recently begun. During 2014 – 2015, the leaders of the organising consortia of Modules Exercises will be the following: THW, DE for Lot 1 - Five Table Top Exercises for key personnel of civil protection modules/TAST and EUCPT, the Belgian Federal Public Service Home Affairs, BE for Lot 2 - Three field exercises for at least three modules composed of HCP, WP, CBRNDT and EUCPT, and Falck, NL for Lot 3 - Three field exercises for at least three modules composed of MUSAR/HUSAR, TAST and EUCPT.



*Scenario faced by participants in Lincolnshire, UK*

Pekka Tiainen, Desk Officer

A list of upcoming exercises with information about scenario, location and participating organisations is to be found on [our website](#).

Full-scale and modules exercises are an opportunity for experts to be involved as EUCP team members or observers. Make sure your National Training Coordinator and your operational focal point are aware of your availability.

## Training in the ERCC

### One week at the ERCC - The Civil Protection Experts training experience

The ERCC has developed a number of tools to undertake a better monitoring the risk of forest fires in summertime, including a project to hold hands-on trainings for CP Experts between July and September. Participating States can second experts for one week in Brussels for a "learning by doing" experience. Both of us were selected by the Croatian and Italian Civil Protection authorities, respectively, as participants in July 2014.

The week in Brussels turned out to be quite an intense one, during which we were asked to support the ERCC in monitoring forest fires and assess their incidence in Europe. We did so using both national monitoring services and EU-funded tools such as EFFIS, the European Forest Fire Information System. EFFIS provides an overview of data that Member States collect through their national forest fire programmes, as well as a press review service covering forest fires and Meteorological Alerts, thus ensuring the compilation of the most accurate and detailed information in weather forecasting and warning alert systems throughout Europe.

During our time at the ERCC, we also supported the organisation of the weekly video conference with those countries traditionally more subject to forest fire hazards: Spain, Croatia, Portugal, Greece, Italy and France. Representatives from each country shared their forest and wild fire forecasts, as well as information on their fire-fighting air fleet capacity available for the season, including details of the potential needs and probable offers in case requests for assistance would arise. This exchange was based on shared terminology and a mutual sense of solidarity. We found it to be a very enriching experience as the ERCC offered a platform for an open dialogue on a weekly basis, encouraged by a friendly informal setting, and resulting in a valuable information exchange over the status of on-going forest fires as well as the deployment of national civil protection capacities. Joint Research Centre (JRC) representatives also took part in the meeting, offering real time information on EFFIS. The information collected in these exchanges was then compiled in a dedicated report that was shared with the authorities on a regular basis and also uploaded to the ERCC portal.

It was on times such as this teleconference that the spirit of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism became most apparent to us: national capacities joining together side-by-side to show their mutual solidarity in the fight against forest fires by making the best assistance possible available to others, both in terms of manpower and equipment (i.e water bombing aircraft, helicopters, fire-fighting air fleet or forest fire relief expert personnel).

By working in the Emergency Response Coordination Centre, we also had the opportunity to become more familiar with the activities of the ERCC with regard to other risks and ongoing emergencies. We were impressed by the team work and the professional skills at play in elaborating the ECHO Daily Flash and the provision of support in the shape of satellite mapping services, as well as in ensuring the proper exchange of information among different stakeholders, for instance during the daily briefings that take place in one of the well-equipped meeting rooms.

Last but not least, we learnt that though traditionally southern European countries face higher risks of forest fires, no European country is immune, as just a few days after our stay ended, Sweden had to deal with a large forest fire, joining efforts with other European states that sent their support.

All in all, we were happy to work "on the other side of the phone" for some time, as we got to better understand the truly international dimension and the great potential of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism also for our work at a national level. We hereby encourage our colleagues to apply for a spot for next summer season!

Erika Conti and Stjepan Kovaček, Civil Protection Experts

## Civil Protection Forum

### Innovation and Partnerships at the heart of the next European Civil Protection Forum

The fifth Civil Protection Forum organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO) will take place on 6-7 May 2015 in Brussels.

Following previous successful editions, the 2015 Civil Protection Forum will again provide you with a platform to interact with experienced civil protection professionals and to share views on the challenges and opportunities ahead for the disaster management community. The Forum will bring together civil protection authorities, international and regional organisations, and further partners in humanitarian aid, research, communication, education and training, among others, all aiming to meet key international stakeholders and build new partnerships.

The 2015 edition of the CP Forum will focus on partnerships and innovation in the field of disaster management. A two-day conference consisting of plenary sessions and panel debates will provide a forum for discussion on both operational aspects and policy considerations. The discussion will touch upon a wide range of topics including cooperation between the European and the international disaster management community, the role of experts in European civil protection, disaster communication, the potential of technological innovation, and the increased engagement with academic, research and business communities.

Alongside the Forum, a two-day exhibition will invite the public to discover opportunities for partnerships and innovation in the field of disaster management. An ample variety of exhibitors will illustrate results of research and other EU-funded projects in the area of disaster management, together with examples of technological innovation and network opportunities to find new synergies between the civil protection community of users and research and development communities.



*Intervention of Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva during a plenary session of the 2013 Civil Protection Forum*

Please follow the Forum's website for further information on the agenda and registration: <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en/partnerships/civil-protection-partners/civil-protection-forum-2015>

We are looking forward to welcoming you at the 5<sup>th</sup> European Civil Protection Forum on 6 and 7 May in Brussels!

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