

## EVALUATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION

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# Interim Evaluation of the implementation of Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2017-2022

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Interim evaluation of the implementation of Decision No. 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2017, 2022

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Interim Evaluation of the implementation of Decision No. 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil  
Protection Mechanism, 2017-2022

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## **ABSTRACT**

This interim evaluation of the implementation and performance of Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) was commissioned by the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). The UCPM aims to strengthen cooperation between European Union (EU) Member States and Participating States on civil protection in order to improve prevention, preparedness and response to disasters. The evaluation assessed the effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, coherence, and EU added value of the UCPM, identified lessons, and provided strategic and operational recommendations. Overall, it found that UCPM activities in the field of prevention, preparedness, and response contributed to achieving the Decision's objectives. Despite a notable increase in UCPM activations between 2017 and 2022 – driven by the emergence of new and more frequent disasters – the UCPM has successfully adapted to changing pressures and demands, consistently maintaining a high response rate and contributing to effective support to international response efforts. Together with the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP), the establishment of rescEU was a key development that strengthened EU and national preparedness. The evaluation also identified a number of challenges impacting the UCPM, such as the evolving disaster risk landscape and the need to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation at national and EU level.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This is the Revised Final Report of the independent interim evaluation commissioned by the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) to support its interim evaluation of the implementation and performance of Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). The interim evaluation was carried out by ICF on behalf of the European Commission between September 2022 and September 2023.

The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 1** presents the objectives and scope of the evaluation;
- **Section 2** provides an overview of the background to the interim evaluation, focusing on the policy and legal context and presenting the baseline of the implementation of the Directive. It also includes the theory of change (ToC) of the Decision;
- **Section 3** presents the baseline analysis;
- **Section 4** includes the methodological approach, its main limitations and mitigation measures;
- **Section 5** presents the findings for each evaluation criterion. Each has been divided into two or more sub-sections that answer one or more evaluation questions;
- **Section 6** presents the main conclusions of the interim evaluation and suggests recommendations for the Commission.

The main report is supported by several annexes (sent in a separate document):

- **Annex 1:** List of acronyms;
- **Annex 2:** Glossary of terms;
- **Annex 3:** Revised evaluation framework;
- **Annex 4:** List of documents reviewed;
- **Annex 5:** Overview of stakeholders consulted;
- **Annex 6:** Approach to cost-benefit analysis (CBA);
- **Annex 7:** Case studies;
- **Annex 8:** Example indicator framework;
- **Annex 9:** Stakeholder Synopsis Report;
- **Annex 10:** Terms of reference.

### 1.1 *Objectives and scope of the interim evaluation*

This independent evaluation was commissioned by the European Commission's DG ECHO to support its interim evaluation of the implementation and performance of Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). The study findings will feed into the staff working document prepared by the Commission to present to the European Parliament and the Council by 31 December 2023, in line with Article 34 of the Decision. This independent evaluation, which covers the period from January 2017 to December 2022, will support the Commission to:

- Understand progress in implementing the Decision, including any gaps or shortcomings;
- Understand the extent to which the Decision is achieving its objectives and the main quantitative and qualitative impacts;
- Improve the implementation of existing legislative provisions;
- Provide inputs for possible proposal(s) to amend the Decision or its implementing acts;
- Inform, where appropriate, the review of the financial breakdown of the UCPM as set out by Article 19(5) of the Decision, and identify potential room for improvement in the UCPM budget implementation.

In line with the Better Regulation Guidelines (BRG), this interim evaluation assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, and EU added value of the UCPM across its three pillars (prevention, preparedness, response) and cross-pillar/horizontal activities. It also identifies success factors, good practices and lessons from the implementation of the Decision. The study evaluates actions carried out under the UCPM framework spanning prevention, preparedness, and response to natural and man-made disasters. While acknowledging that the terms natural and man-made disasters do not fully encompass the multifaceted nature of disasters (namely, the complex interactions between human activities, environmental conditions, and socio-political factors)<sup>11</sup>, the evaluation uses these terms, in line with the Decision and with Article 196 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU).

As an interim evaluation, this study reflects the fact some UCPM elements and components were introduced at different times, and some of the expected activities, outputs, results and impacts of the Decision have yet to materialise (e.g. Article 6(4) of the Decision only entered into effect in mid-2021). Specific attention is paid to new Participating States and the extent to which the UCPM can effectively expand. The interim evaluation also pays particular attention to the UCPM's capacity to intervene in conflict-affected countries, in particular through the case study on the Ukrainian crisis, thus shedding light on the consequences of this type of activation.

The interim evaluation has a strong summative focus, but, as an interim evaluation, also includes some formative assessment. It identifies some aspects of the UCPM that may require direct adjustment in order to improve its functioning, as well as wider strategic orientations, including consideration on whether further legislative changes are warranted. It is framed by the evaluation questions agreed with the Commission in the evaluation framework. It also gathers data on the sustainability of the UCPM budget and how today's investments might be managed in the future, considering potential changes in the financial frameworks.

Figure 1. Scope of the interim evaluation

<b>GEOGRAPHICAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; 27/8* EU Member States;</li> <li>&gt; 8** UCPM Participating States;</li> <li>&gt; 19 eligible third countries;</li> <li>&gt; Other third countries involved in UCPM activities;</li> </ul>	<b>TEMPORAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; All activities since the Interim evaluation of the UCPM 2014–2016 and until the end of the evaluation period, i.e. January 2017– December 2022</li> </ul> <p><i>The study may review documents published before 2017 and after December 2022 where relevant.</i></p>	<b>LEGAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Decision No 1313/2013/EU; Decision 2014/762/EU; Regulation (EU) 2016/369; Regulation (EU) 2018/1475; Decision (EU) 2019/420; Decision (EU) 2019/1310; Decision (EU) 2020/547; Council Regulation (EU) 2020/521; Regulation (EU) 2021/836; Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1956; Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/706</li> </ul>
<b>STAKEHOLDERS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; DG ECHO officials;</li> <li>&gt; Relevant European Commission DGs (e.g. DG CLIMA, DG HOME) and EU Agencies;</li> <li>&gt; International partners;</li> <li>&gt; National/regional civil protection/maritime authorities (and where applicable other relevant sectors);</li> <li>&gt; Trainers and national training coordinators;</li> <li>&gt; Experts participating in UCPM activities (e.g. Knowledge Network, deployed through ECPP, PPP project leads)</li> <li>&gt; Professional organisations involved in the running of the Mechanism</li> <li>&gt; Other relevant initiatives and actors in the field of civil protection (e.g. PPRD South III, private sector non-traditional civil protection actors)</li> </ul>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b> <p>Main activities of the UCPM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>Prevention activities</b> (e.g. compilation and dissemination of information on disaster risks)</li> <li>&gt; <b>Preparedness activities</b> (e.g. ERCC, rescEU)</li> <li>&gt; <b>Response activities</b> (e.g. delivery of equipment and deployment of experts)</li> <li>&gt; <b>Horizontal activities</b> (e.g. advisory mission)</li> </ul>	<b>THEMATIC</b> <p><b>Natural disaster, e.g.:</b> Geological risks (earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, etc) Hydro-meteorological and climate risks (extreme heat and drought, forest fires, floods, windstorms, etc.)</p> <p><b>Man-made disasters:</b> Malicious disasters (e.g. cyber-attack, CBRN attacks) Non-malicious disasters (e.g. marine pollution) Other disasters (e.g. displacement of persons).</p>

Notes: \*United Kingdom (UK) was eligible as an EU Member State until 2020 (inclusive); \*\* Bosnia and Herzegovina (September 2022) and Albania (November 2022) recently joined the UCPM; Ukraine joined the UCPM in April 2023, outside the scope of the interim evaluation.

<sup>11</sup> At international level, there is a growing trend to change how disasters are described. For example, the expression 'natural disasters' is criticised for overlooking human influence and the socio-political context of events (e.g. UNDRR; Mizutori, M., *Time to say goodbye to 'natural' disasters*, 2020, <https://www.preventionweb.net/blog/time-say-goodbye-natural-disasters>).

## 2 BACKGROUND TO THE INTERIM EVALUATION






### 2.1 Overview of the UCPM

This section provides an overview of the UCPM's general and specific objectives, the evolution of the UCPM's legal framework, its main activities, and budget.

#### 2.1.1 UCPM objectives

The TFEU gives the EU a guiding role in the field of civil protection, mandating it to 'encourage cooperation between Member States in order to improve the effectiveness of systems for preventing and protecting against natural or man-made disasters'<sup>2,3</sup>: the UCPM is at the core of that work. Established in 2001<sup>4</sup>, it provides a framework for stronger cooperation across the EU's 27 Member States and Participating States<sup>5</sup> in the field of civil protection to improve prevention, preparedness and response to natural and man-made disasters<sup>6</sup>. Table 1 presents the general and specific objectives of the UCPM.

Table 1. General and specific objectives of the UCPM

UCPM objectives		Relevant pillar(s)
General	Specific	
<b>Strengthen the cooperation</b> between Member and participating States to <b>facilitate coordination</b> in the field of civil protection in order to improve the effectiveness of systems for preventing, preparing for and responding to natural and man-made disasters	Achieve a high <b>level of protection</b> against disasters by preventing or reducing their potential effects, by fostering a <b>culture of prevention</b> and by improving cooperation between the civil protection and other relevant services	
	<b>Enhance preparedness</b> at national and Union level to respond to disasters;	
	<b>Facilitate rapid and efficient response</b> in the event of disasters or imminent disasters	
<b>Promote solidarity</b> between the Member and Participating States through <b>practical cooperation and coordination</b> , without prejudice to the Member States' primary responsibility to protect people,	<b>Increase public awareness and preparedness</b> for disasters	
	Increase the availability and <b>use of (scientific)<sup>7</sup> knowledge</b> on disasters <sup>8</sup>	

<sup>2</sup> The term 'man-made disasters' is now largely replaced by 'human-induced disasters'; however, this report uses 'man-made disasters' for consistency and alignment with relevant legislation.

<sup>3</sup> Article 196(1) TFEU.

<sup>4</sup> Council Decision of 23 October 2001 establishing a Community mechanism to facilitate reinforced cooperation in civil protection assistance interventions, OJ L 297, 15/11/2001, P. 0007-0011.




<sup>5</sup> As of June 2023, the UCPM has nine Participating States: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Ukraine and Türkiye. Ukraine joined the UCPM in April 2023 (outside the scope of this evaluation).

<sup>6</sup> Article 1(2) Decision No 1313/2013/EU provides that the protection to be ensured by the UCPM shall 'cover primarily people, but also the environment and property, including cultural heritage, against all kinds of natural and man-made disasters, including the consequences of acts of terrorism, technological, radiological or environmental disasters, marine pollution, hydrogeological instability and acute health emergencies, occurring inside or outside the Union'.

<sup>7</sup> While the Decision refers to 'scientific knowledge on disasters', the report refers to the entire knowledge base relevant for the management of disasters and is accordingly noted as '(scientific) knowledge' for clarity.

<sup>8</sup> The focus is on this pillar, as the most relevant, with cross-cutting considerations of the availability of scientific knowledge in conclusions.



the environment, and property, including cultural heritage	Step up <b>cooperation and coordination activities at cross-border level</b> and between Member States prone to the same types of disasters	  
------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Source: Decision No 1313/2013/EU, UCPM 2022 programme statement, Terms of Reference.

Notes: Key to symbols for the pillars:



The UCPM is a complex instrument that supports Member and Participating States in civil protection, intervening in all phases of the disaster risk management cycle (prevention, preparedness, response). Through its external dimension, the UCPM strengthens the EU as a global actor, expanding solidarity beyond EU borders<sup>9</sup>.

## 2.2 Evolution of the UCPM legal framework

In 2009, with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, civil protection became a self-standing policy area with its own legal basis: Article 196(1) of the TFEU provides that the Union ‘shall encourage cooperation between Member States in order to improve the effectiveness of systems for preventing and protecting against natural or man-made disaster’.

In civil protection, the main responsibility for protecting citizens and the environment lies with the Member States, while the EU coordinates, supports and complements national actions on risk prevention, preparedness and response to disasters. Provided with this new legal basis, Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a UCPM was adopted, repealing the previous Council Decision.

During the evaluation period (2017-2022), the UCPM was strengthened through several legislative and operational changes, in particular amendments adopted in 2018, 2019 and 2021 (see Figure 2). Triggers for these changes were the need to increase capacity and interlinkages in 2017, and to better respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

<sup>9</sup> European Commission, ‘UCPM Programme Statement. Heading 2: Resilience and values’, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/about\\_the\\_european\\_commission/eu\\_budget/ps\\_db2023\\_ucpm\\_h2.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/about_the_european_commission/eu_budget/ps_db2023_ucpm_h2.pdf)

Figure 2. Main legislative changes to the UCPM, 2017-2022

Noteworthy legislative acts from before the evaluation temporal scope (before 2017)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; 2001/792/EC Council Decision establishing a Community mechanism to facilitate reinforced cooperation in civil protection assistance interventions</li> <li>&gt; Art. 196 TFEU 'Civil Protection'</li> <li>&gt; Decision (EU) 1313/2013 ('UCPM Decision').</li> <li>&gt; Commission Implementing Decision 2014/762/EU</li> </ul>	
Legislative developments throughout evaluation temporal scope (2017-2022)	
<b>Key:</b>	<span style="color: green;">&gt;</span> UCPM <span style="color: blue;">&gt;</span> RescEU <span style="color: orange;">&gt;</span> Other
<b>2018</b>	<span style="color: green;">&gt;</span> <b>Integration of European Medical Corps in the Voluntary Resource pool</b> (Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/142).
<b>2019</b>	<span style="color: green;">&gt;</span> <b>Redefinition of the European Civil Protection Pool</b> Decision (EU) 2019/420 and implementing Decision (EU) 2019/1310). <span style="color: blue;">&gt;</span> <b>Establishment and defining capacities of the rescEU reserve pool</b> (Decision EU/ 2019/420 and Commission Implementing Decisions (EU) 2019/570, 2019/1310, 2019/1930).
<b>2020</b>	<span style="color: blue;">&gt;</span> <b>Reinforcement of rescEU's medical stockpiling capacities</b> (Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2020/414) <span style="color: blue;">&gt;</span> <b>Definition of rescEU capacities established to respond to low probability risks with a high impact</b> (Definition of the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2020/452) <span style="color: orange;">&gt;</span> <b>Mobilisation of the Contingency Margin in 2020 to provide emergency assistance to Member States and further reinforce the UCPM/rescEU in response to the COVID-19 outbreak</b> (Decision (EU) 2020/547)
<b>2021</b>	<span style="color: green;">&gt;</span> <b>Reinforcement of the UCPM Decision</b> , including the following main changes: revising rescEU capacities, development of Union Resilience Goals and a more flexible UCPM budget structure (Regulation (EU) 2021/836) <span style="color: blue;">&gt;</span> <b>Definition of rescEU capacities in the area of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents</b> (Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/88) <span style="color: blue;">&gt;</span> <b>Definition of stockpiling rescEU capacities in the area of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents</b> (Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1886) <span style="color: green;">&gt;</span> <b>Establishment and organisation of the Knowledge Network</b> (Implementing Decision 2021/1956)
<b>2022</b>	<span style="color: blue;">&gt;</span> <b>Reinforcement of rescEU shelter capacities and the modification of quality requirements for Emergency Medical Teams Type 3 capacities</b> (Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/288) <span style="color: blue;">&gt;</span> <b>Reinforcement of rescEU transport and logistics capacities</b> , e.g. also to respond to low probability high impact disasters (Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/461) <span style="color: blue;">&gt;</span> <b>Definition of rescEU mobile laboratory capacities and rescEU CBRN detection, sampling, identification and monitoring capacities</b> (Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/465) <span style="color: blue;">&gt;</span> <b>Definition of rescEU emergency energy supply capacities</b> (Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/1198) <span style="color: orange;">&gt;</span> <b>Establishment of criteria and procedures for recognising long-standing commitment and extraordinary contributions to the UCPM</b> (Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/706)

Source: ICF elaboration

In 2017, the long and severe forest fires across several European countries (including Portugal, Spain, Italy, Croatia and France) highlighted the need to strengthen the UCPM. Despite very significant efforts from Member and Participating States and the coordination efforts by the European Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), not all requests for assistance (RfA) could be met<sup>10</sup>. Decision (EU) 2019/420 of 13 March 2019 amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU was subsequently adopted in order to<sup>11</sup>:

- Strengthen Union response capacity by creating a common European reserve of resources, 'rescEU';
- Further develop mutual assistance, consisting of pre-committed national capacities offered by countries participating in the European Civil Protection Pool (ECP) by setting higher or new EU co-financing (in UCPM deployments);

<sup>10</sup> European Commission DG ECHO (2017) Annual Report.

<sup>11</sup> European Parliament (2022) Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Legislative Train. Available here: [08 2022 | A Stronger Europe in the World | Union Civil Protection Mechanism 2021-2027 \(europa.eu\)](#)

- Improve prevention and preparedness to enhance Member States' disaster risk management;
- Create a Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network (Knowledge Network).

Decision 2019/420 aimed to address the limitations and issues identified by the 2017 interim evaluation<sup>12</sup> by introducing new reporting provisions and revising the voluntary pool (changing its name to the ECPP and increasing its financing). The ECPP brings together resources from Member and Participating States, such as forest fire fighting, water purification, CBRN and other rescue or medical teams, ready for deployment to a disaster zone at short notice. Other important changes introduced by Decision 2019/420 (in addition to those in Figure 2) included a substantial amendment to Article 6 (risk management)<sup>13</sup>. Decision 2019/420 introduced new reporting obligations for Member States on risks with a cross-border impact (para 1), a new specific consultation mechanism to enhance appropriate prevention and preparedness planning among Member States prone to similar types of disasters (para 2), and new rules for when a Member State frequently requests the same type of assistance through the UCPM for the same type of disaster (para 4). Article 6(3) was introduced, requiring the Commission and Member States to develop reporting guidelines for the submission of the summary referred in para 1 (d)<sup>14</sup>. However, the UCPM still mainly relied on Member States' resources.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly tested the UCPM's ability to respond to a large-scale, high-impact, low-probability (Hi-Lo) disaster happening simultaneously across several Member and Participating States. On 2 June 2020, the Commission tabled a proposal to reinforce the UCPM and the crisis management system, resulting in the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2021/836 amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU. That revision:

- Enhanced the analytical, monitoring, and anticipatory capabilities of the ERCC;
- Reinforced the rescEU reserve by granting the Commission the possibility to directly procure elements;
- Introduced Union Disaster Resilience Goals to enhance the resilience of the Union and Member States by establishing baseline objectives to steer prevention and preparedness action in the area of civil protection. The Goals are closely linked to scenario building, assessing the risks, capability gaps and elements to close those gaps;
- Established a more flexible budget structure (e.g. carry-over for response activities) to increase UCPM efficiency;
- Significantly developed scenario-building and disaster management planning. The revised Article 10 provides that planning includes scenario-building at Union level for disaster prevention, preparedness, and response, taking into account the work on the Union Disaster Resilience Goals and by the Knowledge Network, and based on additional data sources, including the overview of risk<sup>15</sup>.

In recent years, the Commission has adopted several implementing measures to shape the UCPM legal framework. Commission Implementing Decision 2021/1956 established the Knowledge Network, which strengthens the UCPM by increasing cooperation, coordination, skills, and expertise in Member and Participating States (see next section). Eleven rescEU implementing acts have been

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<sup>12</sup> European Commission, *Interim evaluation of the UCPM 2014-2016, 2017*, [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2017-06/ucpm\\_-\\_opc\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2017-06/ucpm_-_opc_report_0.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Decision (EU) 2019/ 420 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 March 2019 amending Decision No 1313 / 2013/ EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019D0420>

<sup>14</sup> In 2019, the Commission adopted reporting guidelines on disaster risk management for the submission of summaries of risk assessments and risk management capabilities in order to guide Member States in their reporting obligations (European Commission, *Reporting Guidelines on Disaster Risk Management*, Article 6(1)d of Decision No 1313/2013/EU, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/836 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L\\_.2021.185.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:L:2021:185:TOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2021.185.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:L:2021:185:TOC)

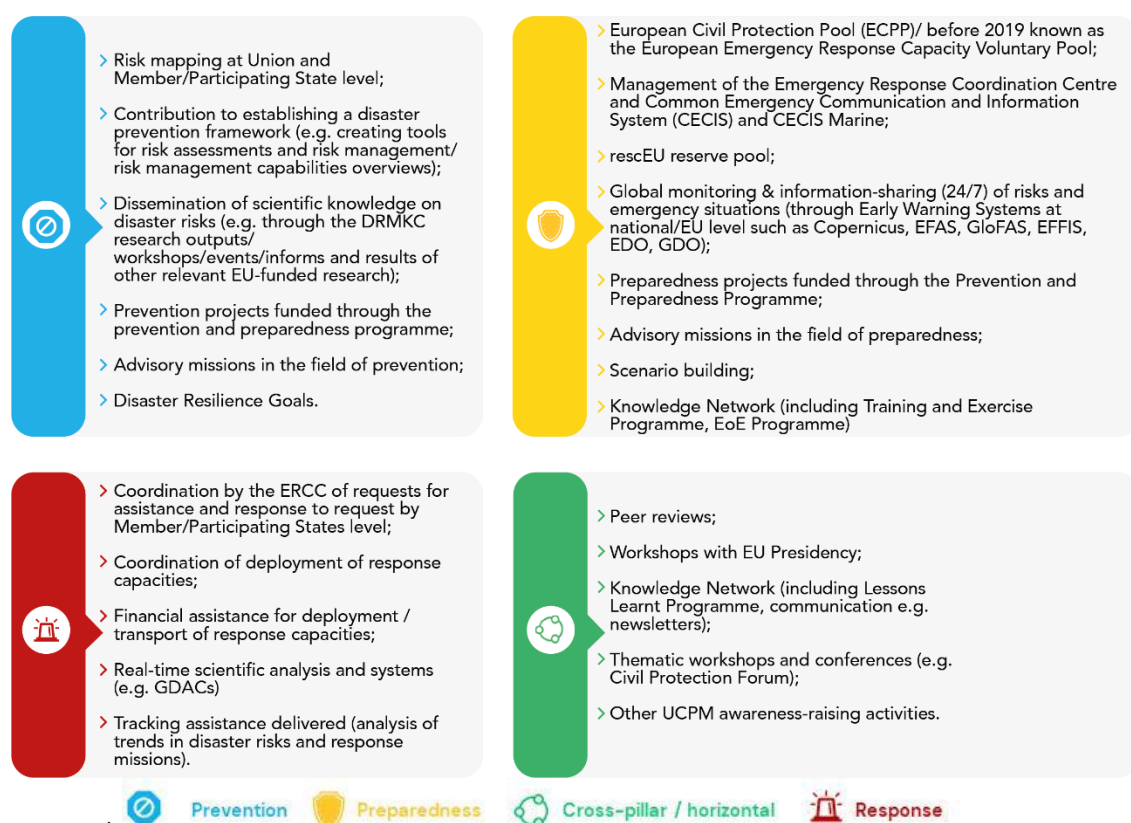
adopted, reflecting the regular analysis of identified and emerging risks, as well as capacity and gaps at Union level, which revealed the need to support civil protection activities by providing medical stockpiling, shelter capacity, and CBRN detection capability.

Although it falls outside the UCPM legal framework, the European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) was established in 2021 to strengthen health security coordination within the EU during preparedness and crisis response times. HERA was set up to strengthen the Union's ability to prevent, detect, and rapidly respond to cross-border health emergencies by ensuring the development, manufacturing, procurement, stockpiling and equitable distribution of key medical counter-measures<sup>16</sup>.

### 2.2.1 UCPM activities and functioning

The UCPM's three strands of activities cover the main phases of the disaster management cycle – prevention, preparedness and response (see Figure 3). This section provides an overview of the activities per pillar.

Figure 3. Overview of UCPM activities across pillars



Notes: Legend -

Source: ICF elaboration

#### 2.2.1.1 Prevention

The UCPM's prevention activities include actions to: improve the knowledge base on disaster risks; support and promote national risk assessments; promote the sharing of good practices; establish and regularly update a cross-sectoral overview and map of natural and man-made disaster risks the Union may face; promote the use of various Union funds which may support sustainable disaster

<sup>16</sup> Commission Decision of 16 September 2021 establishing the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (2021/C 393 I/02); European Commission, *Introducing HERA, the European Health Emergency preparedness and Response Authority, the next step towards completing the European Health Union*, 2021.

prevention; and highlight the importance of risk prevention through awareness-raising, public information and education.

Decision No 1313/2013/EU requires Member States to develop **risk assessments** (at national or appropriate sub-national level) and share a summary with the Commission, focusing on key risks (i.e. DRM Summary Reports). The 2019 revision of Decision No 1313/2013/EU introduced additional reporting obligations for Member and Participating States. They are now required to report the prevention and preparedness measures taken to address risks with a cross-border impact, as well as low probability risks with a high impact<sup>17</sup>. Where a country frequently requests the same type of assistance through the UCPM for the same type of disaster, the Commission may request additional information on specific prevention and preparedness measures and, where appropriate, propose the deployment of an expert team or recommend steps to strengthen the level of prevention and preparedness in the Member State concerned (see Box 1).

Building on nationally assessed disaster risks and taking a coherent approach across different policy areas that may address or affect disaster prevention, Decision No 1313/2013 (Article 5(1)(c)) requires the Commission to prepare an **EU-level overview of the natural and man-made disaster risks**<sup>18</sup>. During the period covered by this evaluation, such cross-sectoral overviews were issued in 2017 and 2020<sup>19</sup>.

Box 1. DRM Summary Reports and risk management capability

Regular assessments of disaster risks, capability, and sharing risk information at EU level are crucial elements of the disaster risk management work under the UCPM. Today, National Risk Assessments are established practice in all Member States, typically embedded in their national legislative or policy frameworks. DRM Summary Reports differ in the types of risks covered: some focus on natural hazards, others include technological accidents, while others cover different types of threats, including social unrest or even military threat. The UCPM legislation is not prescriptive, but, rather, recommends taking an all-hazards approach, in line with other relevant international frameworks (e.g. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/G20 framework on disaster risk assessment and risk finance). Recent trends in DRM Summary Reports reflect a growing recognition that risks are interdependent and characterised by a high degree of complexity, with an associated multi-risk assessment/analysis.

Following the 2019 revision, the Commission adopted reporting guidelines on disaster risk management for the submission of summaries of risk assessments and risk management capabilities to guide Member States in their reporting obligations<sup>20</sup>. These guidelines are non-binding and are designed to help with summarising the relevant aspects of: a) risk assessment (focusing on key risks), b) risk management capability assessment, and c) a description of priority prevention and preparedness measures addressing key risks with cross-border impacts and, where appropriate, low probability risks with a high impact. They are based on scientific research<sup>21</sup>.

Since 2015, the UCPM and JRC have run the **DRMKC**, a platform for Member States to exchange science and knowledge in a holistic and cross-sectoral way. It goes beyond the strict civil protection

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<sup>17</sup> Article 6(3) Decision No 1313/2013/EU (consolidated version).

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face*, Staff Working Document, 2020, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/89fcf0fc-edb9-11eb-a71c-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.; European Commission, Reporting guidelines on disaster risk management, Article 6(1)d of Decision No 1313/2013/EU, 2019, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2019.428.01.0008.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2019:428:TOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2019.428.01.0008.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2019:428:TOC)

<sup>20</sup> European Commission, Reporting guidelines on disaster risk management, Article 6(1)d of Decision No 1313/2013/EU, 2019, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2019.428.01.0008.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2019:428:TOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2019.428.01.0008.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2019:428:TOC)

<sup>21</sup> European Commission, *Recommendations for National Risk Assessment*, Joint Research Centre (JRC), 2019, [https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC114650/jrc114650\\_nrarecommendations\\_updatedfinal\\_online1.pdf](https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC114650/jrc114650_nrarecommendations_updatedfinal_online1.pdf)



agenda, linking science and knowledge to climate adaptation, international sustainable development, and more. The DRMKC works to anticipate, respond to and support recovery from disasters such as wildfires, droughts and floods. A key initiative is its Risk Data Hub, a database designed to collect risk and loss data from natural and technological hazards<sup>22</sup>. Its outputs include a video series on the science around different types of hazard and papers, reports and policy briefs on various research domains and policy areas. During the evaluation period, for example, it published two flagship reports as part of a series on 'Science for disaster risk management' (in 2017<sup>23</sup> and 2020<sup>24</sup>), and in 2020<sup>25</sup> it published an analysis of National Risk Assessments. Since the creation of the Knowledge Network, the DRMKC has played a central role in its science pillar activities.

One of the novelties of the 2021 legislative revision was the introduction of **Union Disaster Resilience Goals** in the area of civil protection to support prevention and preparedness actions in the event of disasters that cause, or are capable of causing, multi-country, transboundary effects. The Goals aim to enhance the resilience of the Union and Member States. They will be based on current and future scenarios, including the impacts of climate change on disaster risks, data on past events and cross-sectoral impact analysis, with particular attention paid to vulnerable groups. The Goals are to be established in the form of Commission recommendations, based on close cooperation with Member States. On 8 February 2023, the Commission adopted the first Commission Recommendation on Disaster Resilience Goals, with an accompanying Communication setting out the policy context and proposing flagship initiatives to support the implementation of the Goals (see Figure 4)<sup>26</sup>.

Figure 4. Union Disaster Resilience Goals

## Disaster Resilience Goals



Source: DG ECHO.

<sup>22</sup> European Commission, DRMKC Risk Data Hub, JRC, 2023, <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/risk-data-hub/#/>

<sup>23</sup> European Commission, Science for disaster risk management 2017: knowing better and losing less, JRC, 2017, <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/knowledge/science-for-drm/science-for-disaster-risk-management-2017>

<sup>24</sup> European Commission, Science for disaster risk management 2020: acting today, protecting tomorrow', JRC, 2020, <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/knowledge/science-for-drm/science-for-disaster-risk-management-2020>

<sup>25</sup> European Commission, Recommendations for national risk assessment for disaster risk management in EU, JRC, 2020, <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/knowledge/science-for-drm/nra>

<sup>26</sup> Commission Recommendation of 8 February 2023 on Union disaster resilience goals 2023/C 56/0, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023H0215%2801%29&qid=1676531610023>; European Commission, Communication on European Union Disaster Resilience Goals: Acting together to deal with future emergencies, COM/2023/61 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2023%3A61%3AFIN&qid=1675958089171>

### 2.2.1.2 Preparedness

Preparedness activities represent the majority of the UCPM's work. Chapter III of Decision No 1313/2013/EU (preparedness) covers a number of actions on the part of both the European Commission and Member States.

DG ECHO manages the **ERCC**, which coordinates, monitors and supports (in real-time) the response to emergencies at Union level, working in close contact with national civil protection authorities and relevant Union bodies to promote a cross-sectoral approach to disaster management. The Centre monitors events around the globe 24/7 and ensures rapid deployment of emergency support through its direct link with national civil protection authorities.

The ERCC uses the **Common Emergency Communication and Information System** (CECIS), an online application for the real-time exchange of information and communications with civil protection authorities in Member States. CECIS enables communication and sharing of information between the ERCC and Member States' contact points<sup>27</sup>. A newer version (CECIS 2.0), with additional functionality and a more user-friendly interface, is in development.

Other important services, including **EWS**, (such as the Geographic Information System and the Copernicus programme for emergency management, climate change, and security, Galileo and GovSatCom) support the activities of the UCPM within and outside the EU. A close partnership with the Commission's JRC facilitates a solid scientific base and collaboration across Member States, e.g. on flood, wildfire and drought monitoring and early warning.

Decision No 1313/2013/EU provides that Member States shall, on a voluntary basis, develop modules, response capacity and experts within their competent services (particularly civil protection or other emergency services), which could be made available for intervention upon request through the UCPM. Modules comprise Member and Participating States' resources and can be dispatched at very short notice following a request for assistance through the ERCC<sup>28</sup>.

The Decision regulates the European Civil Protection Pool (ECP) (previously named European Emergency Response Capacity), which consists of a pool of voluntary pre-committed response capacities of Member and Participating States and includes modules, other response capacity, and categories of experts. These capacities cover a wide range of services, such as urban search and rescue (USAR) teams, medical treatment, water purification modules, or forest firefighting. Resources are available for immediate deployment worldwide, following a request for assistance through the ERCC. All of these response capacities are certified before being registered in CECIS' designated section for ECP (as per Article 6(4) Implementing Decision No 2014/762/EU) and deployed under the UCPM. DG ECHO awards annual adaptation grants to support this process by co-funding the upgrade or repair of response capacity. Certification involves the participation of emergency teams in disaster simulation exercises to test their procedures with peers, ensuring high operational standards during international deployment. The certification of resources in the ECP generally follows a three-step process: consultative visit, table-top exercise, and field exercise<sup>29</sup>. As of

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<sup>27</sup> Other general preparedness actions undertaken by the Commission (DG ECHO) include working with Member States to develop transnational detection and EWS, establishing and managing the capability to mobilise and dispatch expert teams, and maintaining a network of trained experts who can be available at short notice to assist the ERCC in monitoring information and facilitating coordination. (see Article 8 Decision No 1313/2013 (consolidated version)).

<sup>28</sup> Modules shall also satisfy a number of additional conditions. For instance, they must be interoperable and be able to cooperate with other Union bodies and/or international institutions, particularly the UN (see Article 9(2) Decision No 1313/2013 (consolidated version)). Other Member States' actions include identifying experts, providing other response capacity, and designating contact points (see Article 9 Decision No 1313/2013 (consolidated version)).

<sup>29</sup> European Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) and USAR teams follow World Health Organization (WHO) and INSARAG classification methodology; European Commission, Guidelines on certification and registration of response capacities in the European Civil Protection Pool, 2019, [https://ercportal.jrc.ec.europa.eu/DesktopModules/ResponseCapacity/Documents/Certification Guidelines - October 2019.pdf](https://ercportal.jrc.ec.europa.eu/DesktopModules/ResponseCapacity/Documents/Certification%20Guidelines%20-%20October%202019.pdf); Commission Implementing Decision 2014/762/EU; UN INSARAG, Preparedness and response: background of INSARAG external classification (IEC), n.d., <https://www.insarag.org/iec/background-of-insarag-external-classification-iec/>

1 January 2023, there were 123 committed/offered ECPP capacities, out of which the number of registered, fully fledged, Pool capacities is 85.<sup>30</sup>

The 2019 revision introduced a new reserve of European response capacities, '**rescEU**'<sup>31</sup> (see Box 2).

Box 2. rescEU

rescEU is designed to be an additional safety net, to be mobilised in worst-case disaster scenarios when emergency assistance from the Pool or voluntary contributions from Member States cannot be mobilised or are insufficient. It aims to enhance the protection of citizens from disasters and the management of emerging risks, strengthening European preparedness for disasters. Regulation (EU) 2021/836 amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU strengthened this initiative, allowing the Commission to directly acquire, rent, lease and stockpile identified rescEU capacities. As a European reserve of capacities, rescEU resources include a fleet of firefighting aeroplanes and helicopters, medical evacuation aeroplanes, and a stockpile of medical equipment and field hospitals for use in health emergencies. In addition, the rescEU reserve includes mobile shelters for those displaced and is developing a reserve to respond to CBRN (detection, sampling, identification and monitoring, CBRN decontamination capacity, CBRN strategic stockpiles), an emergency energy supply capacity, as well as transport and logistics capacities.

rescEU involves two elements:

- **rescEU proper** (100% co-financing), where a general agreement covers the geographical distribution and type/number of capacities to be procured. Development costs are fully financed for capacities addressing Hi-Lo risks<sup>32</sup>. Here the Commission signs single grant agreements with Member States to procure capacity;
- **rescEU transition** (75% co-financing), a provisional arrangement (valid until 1 January 2025) to ensure that the maximum number of existing aerial firefighting capacities would be available from summer 2019 (and every summer thereafter) to bridge the gap until additional capacity can be purchased on the market.

rescEU capacities are available for response operations under the UCPM following a request for assistance. The decision on their deployment is taken by the Commission, in close coordination with the requesting State and the Member State owning, renting, or leading the capacity.

The **Knowledge Network** is another crucial preparedness activity organised by the UCPM. Launched in 2021, the Knowledge Network aggregates, processes and disseminates knowledge and information relevant to the UCPM, bringing together relevant civil protection and disaster management actors, centres of excellence, universities, and researchers. It has introduced a new Science Pillar, coordinated by the DRMKC, and continues the work towards building a shared science-based knowledge base for prevention, preparedness and response policy and practice. The Knowledge Network also incorporates several longstanding elements of the UCPM, such as the EoE Programme (see Figure 3). This Programme provides additional opportunities for the exchange of specialist knowledge and allows civil protection experts from UCPM Member or Participating States (or eligible third countries) to be seconded on short-term exchanges to share experiences and gain in-depth technical skills.

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<sup>30</sup> As of December 2022, the committed/offered capacities were 124. Germany withdrew its Standing Engineering Capacity (SEC) in January 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/836 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU; European Commission, Civil Protection Performance.

<sup>32</sup> European Commission, *rescEU: EU that protects. European response to disasters*, n.d., [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/resceu\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/resceu_en.pdf)



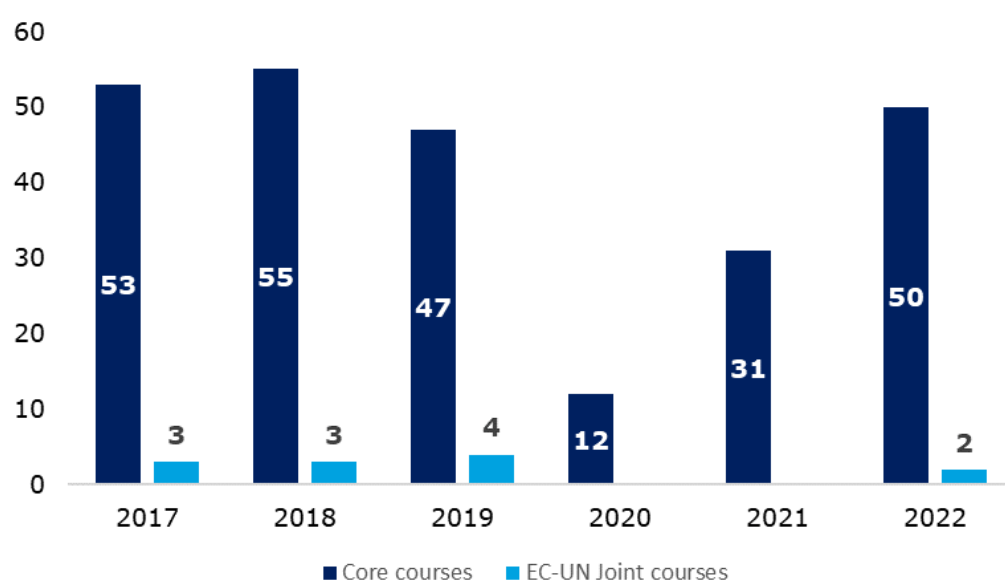
Another longstanding UCPM activity under the Knowledge Network is UCPM training courses and exercises, which will be brought together in the new UCPM Training and Exercises Programme (currently being designed, to be implemented from September 2023)<sup>33</sup>:

- Training Programme for civil protection and emergency management personnel supplements the national training offered to experts by their home country to better prepare them for international deployments under the UCPM;
- Civil Protection Exercises, which provide learning and testing opportunities for UCPM intervention teams and experts through exercise scenarios that closely mimic real-life situations faced by disaster response teams. These include field and table-top exercises (EU MODEX), full-scale exercises (FSX), plug-in exercises, and host nation support table-top exercises outside the EU<sup>34</sup>.

The UCPM **Training Programme** is designed for civil protection and emergency management personnel to enhance prevention, preparedness and disaster response by ensuring compatibility and complementarity between the intervention teams and other intervention support, as well as by improving the competence of the experts involved.

The training courses complement the national training provided to experts by their home country or organisation. A total of 248 training courses took place during the evaluation period (see Figure 5), with a further 12 courses run jointly with the UN between 2017 and 2022.

Figure 5. Training courses, 2017-2022



Source: ICF elaboration, DG ECHO internal data.

The **Exercises Programme** offers civil protection exercises that enhance prevention, preparedness and disaster response, as well as improving collaboration between European civil protection authorities and teams. There are several types<sup>35</sup>:

- EU MODEX exercises, including table-top and field exercises;

<sup>33</sup> Tender specifications - part 2, [https://www.bcgrowthhub.com/storage/3b94c9cf-757a-4ec0-9d7e-15aeaf0d0615/Tender specifications - part 2.pdf](https://www.bcgrowthhub.com/storage/3b94c9cf-757a-4ec0-9d7e-15aeaf0d0615/Tender%20specifications-part%202.pdf)

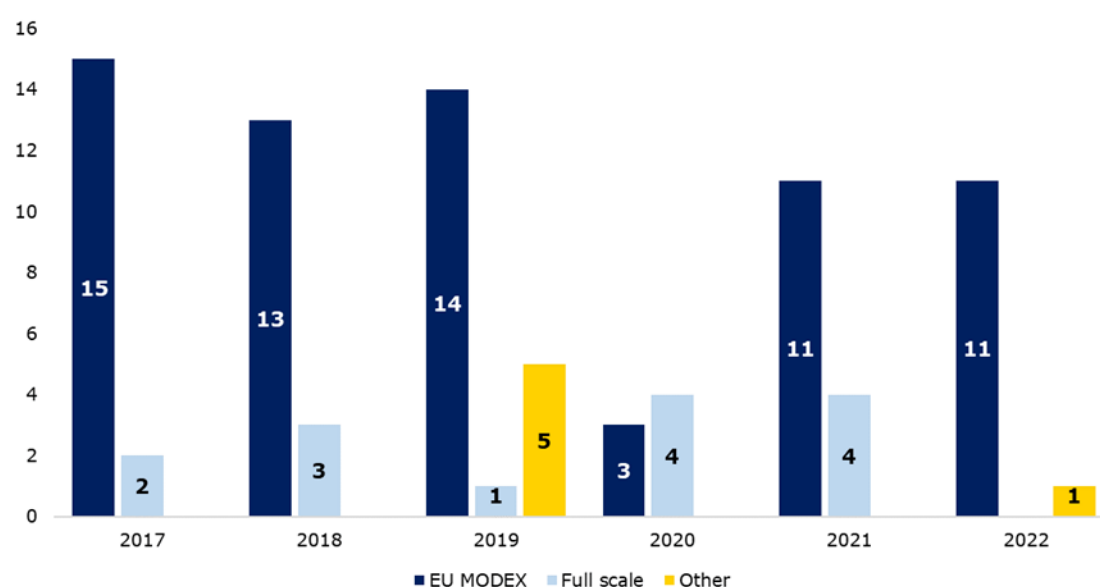
<sup>34</sup> UCPM Knowledge Network, Civil protection exercises, n.d., <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/disaster-preparedness/civil-protection-exercises#bcl-inpage-item-761>

<sup>35</sup> UCPM Knowledge Network, Civil protection exercises, n.d., <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/disaster-preparedness/civil-protection-exercises#bcl-inpage-item-761>

- FSX, including table-top exercises, command post exercises;
- Other exercises, including plug-in exercises, and host nation support table-top exercises outside the EU.

A total of 92 exercises took place throughout the evaluation period (see Figure 6). For the EU MODEX exercises, the number includes digital exercises developed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 6. Exercises, by type, 2017-2022



Source: ICF elaboration, DG ECHO internal data<sup>36</sup>. Notes: For **FSX**, the numbers indicate the number of exercises **financed** per year; number of FSX conducted between 2017 and 2022 is 19.

The new Training and Exercises Programme will bring these two activities under the same umbrella and introduce several innovations. For instance, the training programme will include a deployable expert pathway, comprising the completion of all courses and participation in EU MODEX exercises (first a table-top exercise and then a field exercise).

### 2.2.1.3 Response

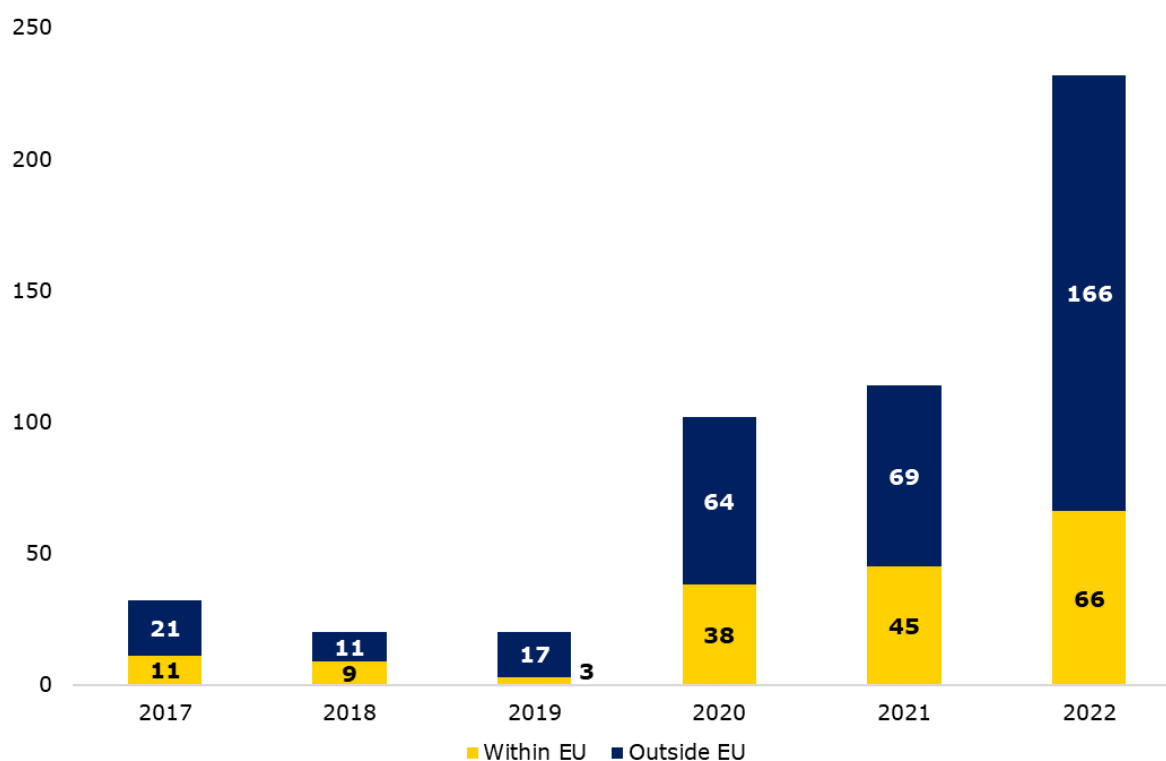
Chapter IV of Decision No 1313/2013/EU regulates UCPM response activities. Following a request for assistance, the ERCC mobilises in-kind assistance, teams, modules and expertise. The request can be made through the ERCC, the UN and its agencies, or an international organisation. The ERCC coordinates the delivery of assistance to disaster-stricken countries, ensures the rapid, efficient and effective deployment of the emergency support, and acts as a coordination hub between Member and Participating States, the affected country, and civil protection and humanitarian experts.

For responding to disasters outside the Union, DG ECHO supports consistency in delivery of assistance through several actions, including maintaining a dialogue with Member and Participating States' contact points, inviting Member and Participating States to deploy specific capacities, facilitating the coordination of the assistance, and liaising with the affected country. The Commission informs the European External Action Service (EEAS) to allow for consistency between the civil protection operation and overall Union relations with the affected country. The UCPM may also be used to provide civil protection support to consular assistance to the citizens of the Union in disasters in third countries. This was particularly important for the repatriation of EU citizens stranded in third

<sup>36</sup> For the FSX, the number indicates the exercises *financed*, not the actual year the exercise took place. 'Other' exercises include plug-in host nation support and table-top exercises outside the EU.

countries during the COVID-19 outbreak. Non-EU countries account for around two-thirds of UCPM activations<sup>37</sup>, highlighting the importance of the UCPM's external dimension and its international relevance in response activities (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Overview of total UCPM activations, within and outside the EU, 2017-2022



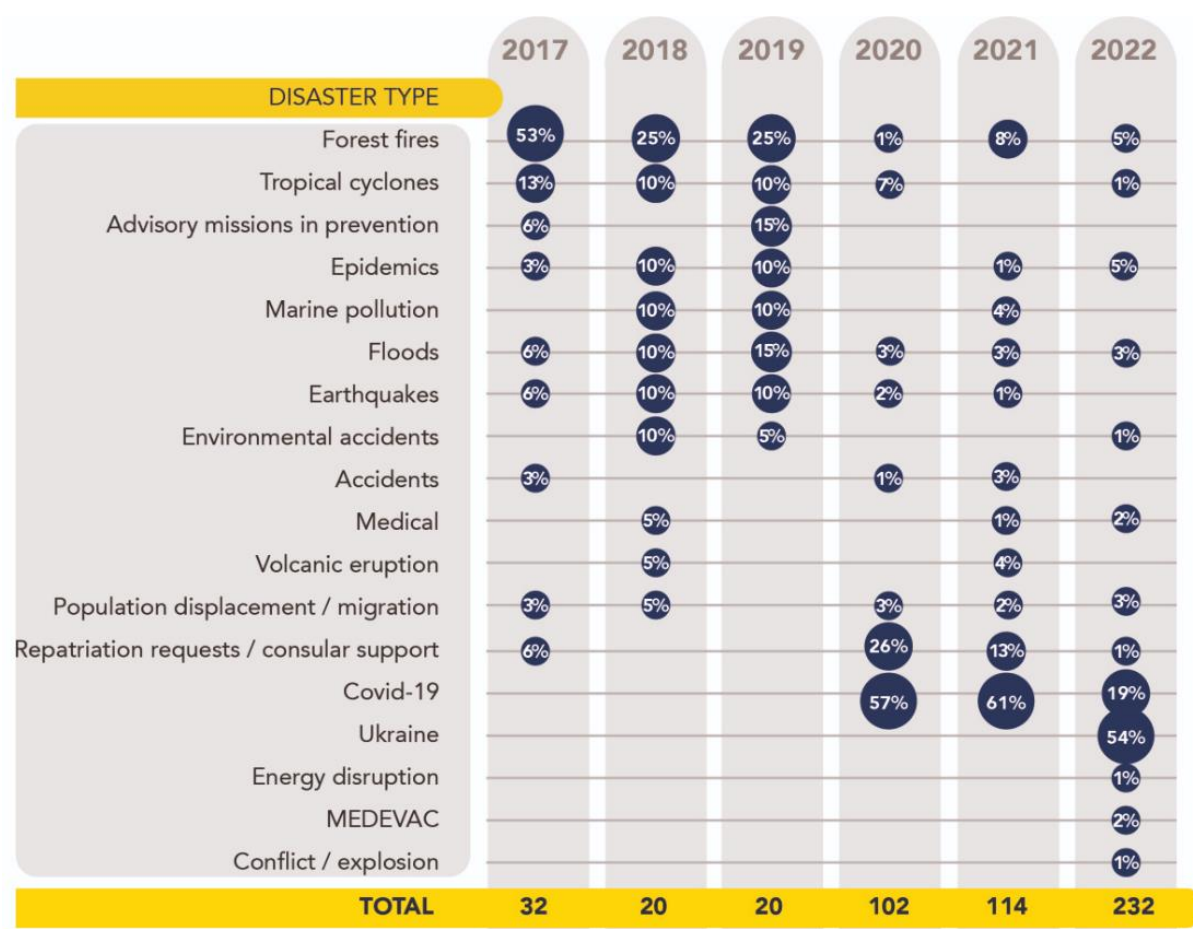
Source: ICF elaboration on the basis of DG ECHO internal data, DG ECHO annual reports, and Lessons Learnt Programme meeting minutes.

Notes: Of the 166 activations outside the EU, 126 were RfA from Ukraine.

The evaluation period saw a significant increase in the number of UCPM activations and evolution of the types of hazards covered (see Figure 8). There was a spike in UCPM activations in 2017 compared to the years before the evaluation period, reflecting the devastating forest fires season that year. Similarly, the unprecedented number of UCPM activations in 2020 and 2021 were caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>37</sup> European Commission, Civil protection – performance, n.d., [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-overview/civil-protection-performance\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-overview/civil-protection-performance_en)

Figure 8. UCPM activations, by type, 2017-2022



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

Between 2017-2019, natural events represented over 50% of all annual activations. This pattern changed substantially from 2020 following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2020-2021, COVID-19 represented over 50% of activations per year. While the average annual number of natural event activations remained consistent between 2017-2022, they represented less than one-quarter of activations between 2020-2022. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine represented 54% of the activations in 2022.

#### 2.2.14 Horizontal activities across pillars

Through the **Knowledge Network**, the UCPM framework ensures the continuous exchange of knowledge and information involving **all areas of activity** under the UCPM. This is done through a number of actions, including:

- **Knowledge Network Partnerships projects**<sup>38</sup>, which provide opportunities for networking, collaboration and partnership-building among civil protection and disaster risk management actors. The current focus is on developing and supporting thematic communities to underpin the Knowledge Network pillars by producing, exchanging, disseminating, and applying knowledge, good practices, skills, and expertise. Between 2020 and 2022, 19 projects were awarded funding under the Knowledge Network Partnership, with a total budget of around EUR 11 million;

<sup>38</sup> As of 2023, the Knowledge Network Partnerships projects are incorporated in the Knowledge for Action in Prevention and Preparedness (KAPP) call.

- Development of the Knowledge Network **online platform**<sup>39</sup>, which serves as the information and collaboration hub for the civil protection and disaster risk management community in Europe. It is where the community comes together across risk-based themes to share their expertise, learn from others, debate issues of importance, and build new synergies and projects;
- **Lessons Learnt Programme**, which identifies and shares lessons and good practices from UCPM deployments and horizontal, cross-cutting activities to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the UCPM as a whole.

Other activities include the organisation of thematic workshops and conferences, scientific advice and innovation (in collaboration with the DRMKC), as well as partnership facilitation opportunities to bring the civil protection and disaster management communities closer together and foster their collaboration.

DG ECHO manages the **Peer Review Programme** for Member and Participating States, as well as eligible third countries<sup>40</sup>. The main objective is to facilitate the sharing of good practices in disaster risk management through an independent analysis carried out by a team of experts (peers) selected from different UCPM countries. Seven peer reviews were carried out between 2017 and 2022 – three in 2018 (Tunisia, North Macedonia, Cyprus), three in 2019 (Serbia, Portugal, Algeria) and one in 2022 (Romania)<sup>41,42</sup>. On average, four peers participated in each review, which took an average nine days. DG ECHO developed a Disaster Risk Management Peer Review Assessment Framework (PRAF) in 2020-2021. Member and Participating States can volunteer for fully-fledged peer reviews or thematic peer reviews. The themes covered include risk governance, risk assessment, risk management planning, risk prevention measures, preparedness, emergency response, recovery and lessons learnt. Peer reviews support countries in taking stock of strengths and weaknesses and put forward recommendations to increase effectiveness.<sup>43</sup>

DG ECHO organises **advisory missions in the field of prevention and preparedness**, where experts from Member and Participating States are deployed at the request of a national government or international institution. In 2018-2019, advisory missions on forest fire prevention and preparedness took place in Portugal and Georgia. From 2020-2021, COVID-19 prevented advisory missions, with missions resuming in 2022 as part of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project in Cuba, on strengthening capacities in the event of disasters and focusing on search and rescue (SAR) training within collapsed structures. Bearing in mind the current budgetary allocation of EUR 100,000 annually for such missions, the planning is to have two advisory missions each year (in 2023 two took place, one in Sri Lanka, on responses to marine pollution and one in Ukraine, on medical evacuations).

The UCPM co-finances projects supporting Member and Participating States' efforts in the field of disaster prevention and preparedness (under the **PPP**). Funding opportunities are available through annual calls for proposals, helping civil protection authorities and other relevant actors to develop actions for disaster risk management. The 2021-2025 multiannual work programme groups them under the Disaster Resilience Goals grants, containing two specific actions for grants:::

- **Action 2.1.1** Pan-European prevention and preparedness projects and UCPM exercises: this covers **multi-country prevention and preparedness projects** (formerly part of the Track II call and the Knowledge Partnership call) and **FSX**. Since 2023, these topics are covered under the Knowledge for Action in Prevention and Preparedness (KAPP) call..;

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<sup>39</sup> Knowledge Network, <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu>

<sup>40</sup> EU Neighbourhood countries and Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) beneficiary countries that are not Participating States.

<sup>41</sup> European Commission, Peer review programme, n.d., [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/peer-review-programme\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/peer-review-programme_en)

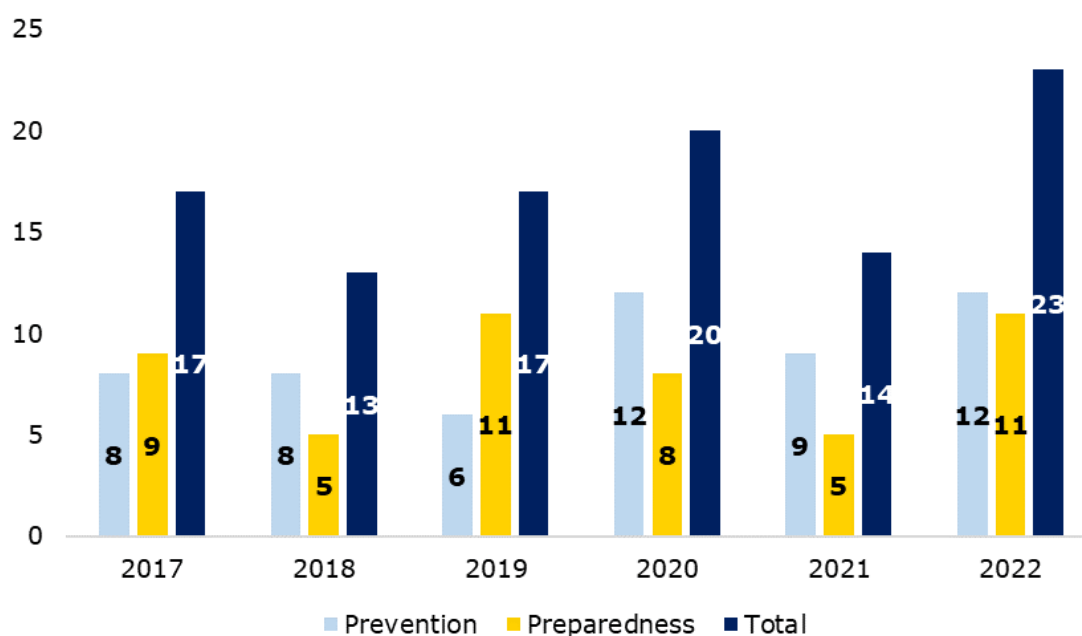
<sup>42</sup> A peer review for Moldova was conducted in 2023, final report not yet published.

<sup>43</sup> European Commission, *Lessons learnt wildfires & floods: reinforcing prevention*, 2023.

- **Action 2.1.2. Technical Assistance for Disaster Risk Management:** this covers **single country grants for disaster risk management** (Track I).

A total of **103 prevention and preparedness projects** were awarded during the evaluation period (see Figure 9)<sup>44</sup>. Of these, **49 focused on prevention** and **54 on preparedness**. The average EU contribution was around EUR 500,000.

Figure 9. Prevention and preparedness projects awarded, 2017-2022



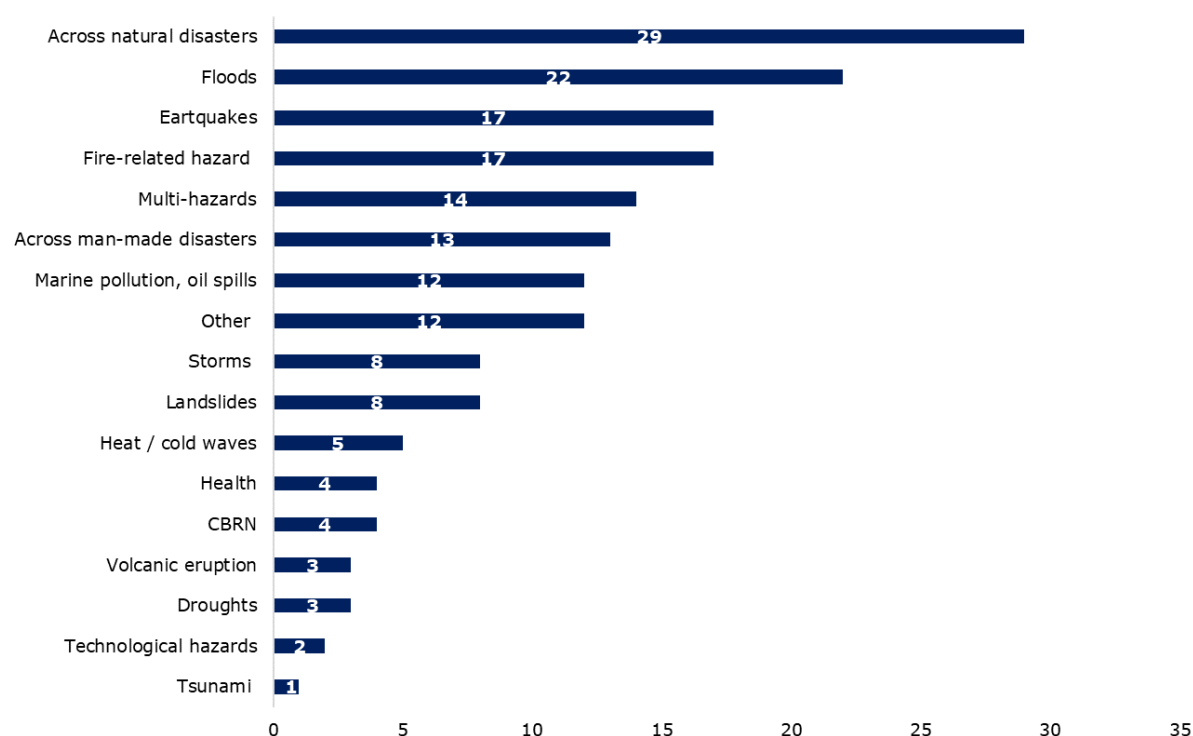
Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO, *Overview of the past Track I and Track II projects*<sup>45</sup>.

The main hazard types covered by these prevention and preparedness projects was the risk of floods, although a majority covered several types of natural disasters (see Figure 10). Multi-hazards projects cover multiple hazards with a cascading effect on one another. The categories of man-made hazards and across natural disasters cover multiple hazards within each of the categories, such as floods *and* earthquakes for natural disasters.

<sup>44</sup> DG ECHO, Prevention and preparedness projects in civil protection, 2023, [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/funding-evaluations/financing-civil-protection/prevention-and-preparedness-projects-civil-protection\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/funding-evaluations/financing-civil-protection/prevention-and-preparedness-projects-civil-protection_en)

<sup>45</sup> European Commission, *Overview of the past Track I and Track II projects*, n.d., [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/funding-evaluations/financing-civil-protection/prevention-and-preparedness-projects-civil-protection/overview-past-track-i-and-track-ii-projects\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/funding-evaluations/financing-civil-protection/prevention-and-preparedness-projects-civil-protection/overview-past-track-i-and-track-ii-projects_en)

Figure 10. Prevention and preparedness projects, types of hazards covered, by number of projects, 2017-2022



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO, Overview of the past Track I and Track II projects.

In 2023, one of the disaster resilience grants introduced the **Knowledge for Action in Prevention and Preparedness ('KAPP')**, merging the calls for the PPP (multi-country grants), Knowledge Network Partnership projects, and FSX<sup>46</sup>. KAPP calls are now structured across the following topics: 1) KAPP-PV 'prevention', 2) KAPP-PP 'preparedness' and 3) KAPP-EX FSX<sup>47</sup>.

Through its **external dimension** (spanning its three pillars), the UCPM focuses on **strengthening cooperation with the EU's immediate neighbouring countries** at bilateral and regional level, notably through the regional programmes financed by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE). It also maintains a dialogue with the Union for the Mediterranean and finances a number of prevention and preparedness projects with a cross-border dimension in third countries<sup>48</sup>.

### 2.2.2 UCPM budget

The timeframe of this interim evaluation covers two Multiannual Financial Frameworks (MFF), namely MFF 2014-2020 and MFF 2021-2027. The budget allocation for the UCPM over these two financial cycles illustrates the increase in the frequency and variety of crises to which the Mechanism reacted. From 2014-2019, the average yearly budget allocated to the UCPM through the MFF was EUR 51 million, rising to EUR 618 million in 2020. Overall, **the total budget of the UCPM for the**

<sup>46</sup> European Commission, *Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) Call for proposals - Knowledge for Action in Prevention and Preparedness (KAPP)*, 2023.

<sup>47</sup> Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network, *Knowledge for Action in Prevention and Preparedness*, 2023, <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/knowledge-action-prevention-preparedness>

<sup>48</sup> European Commission, *Civil protection – performance*, 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-overview/civil-protection-performance\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-overview/civil-protection-performance_en)



**programming period 2021-2027 (EUR 3,562 million)** represented a significant increase compared to MFF 2014-2020 (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Development of UCPM funding, 2014-2022



Source: ICF elaboration, based on data provided in the Terms of Reference for the interim evaluation.

Notes: the period evaluated here covers the years 2017-2022.

Compared to the previous MFF cycle, the financial envelope for 2021-2027 comprises funds from the **MFF** and an additional allocation from **NextGenerationEU** funding. While introduction of the rescEU reserve already provided an increase to the UCPM budget through the MFF since 2019<sup>49</sup>, the most significant increase came through NextGenerationEU, a temporary reinforcement addressing the recovery needs of the EU and its Member States in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although access to NextGenerationEU was perceived as a strong reinforcement of the UCPM budget, it came with conditionalities and could only be used for preparedness measures clearly related to the difficulties faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and to address the risk of further waves of COVID-19 and major crises of a similar nature.

Finally, in 2021, part of the budget allocated under Next Generation EU was transferred to the recently established Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), which co-delegates to DG ECHO implementation of the budget.

### 2.3 Revised theory of change

Table 2 illustrates the revised ToC underpinning this interim evaluation. Starting from the draft version prepared at project inception, the interim evaluation has reconstructed the ToC throughout the project, based on the evidence collected from the various tasks. The ToC summarises the context and rationale for the intervention and identifies its key elements. The revised ToC reflects evaluation findings on achievement of each of the elements (see Section 5.1). The degree of achievement is illustrated in the form of a traffic light assessment:

- **Green:** elements that were achieved fully or to a large extent;
- **Yellow:** elements that were partially achieved;

<sup>49</sup> There was funding to rescEU from 2017, but the main increase was in 2019.



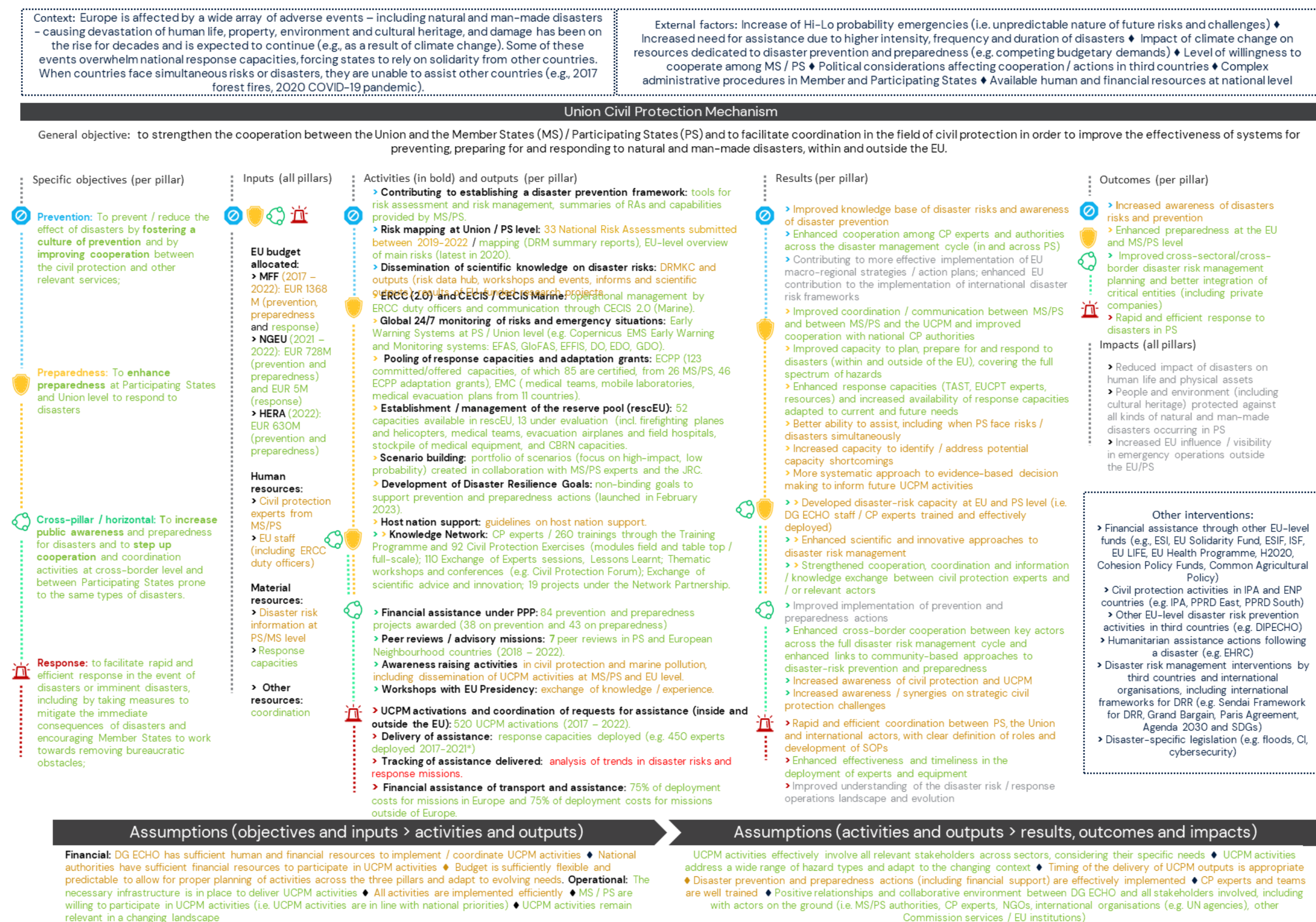
- **Red:** elements that were not achieved or achieved to a very limited extent;
- **Grey:** elements for which the information collected was insufficient to assess their level of implementation.

Table 2 briefly explains the elements included in the ToC and summarises the main changes to the draft version prepared at project inception.

Table 2. ToC: key elements and changes since inception

Element	Changes compared to draft ToC
<b>Objectives</b> that the intervention sought to achieve	Unchanged
<b>Inputs</b> , i.e. financial, institutional and human resources	Updated the financial updates.
<b>Activities</b> under the UCPM between 2017-2022, structured as per UCPM pillars	Revised the number of activities carried out with updated data from DG ECHO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of DRM Summary Reports submitted</li> <li>- Number of peer reviews carried out</li> <li>- Number of training initiatives;</li> <li>- Number of exercises</li> <li>- Number of Knowledge Network Partnership projects</li> <li>- Number of activations</li> </ul>
Results of activities in the short term ( <b>results</b> ), medium term ( <b>outcomes</b> ) and long term ( <b>impacts</b> )	Unchanged
Underlying <b>assumptions</b> explaining the casual links between the different elements	Unchanged
<b>External factors</b> influencing the effects of the intervention	Refined to reflect evaluation findings (see Section 5.1.2), adding the administrative complexities and human and financial resources available at national level

Figure 12. Revised ToC



### 3 BASELINE ANALYSIS

To provide a baseline for this interim evaluation, this section provides an outline of the situation at the time of the previous evaluation in 2017, with particular focus on the main areas of improvement and related recommendations. Accordingly, the preliminary baseline in the Inception Report was expanded with the findings from all documentation reviewed for the evaluation. As in the Inception Report, the baseline is drafted per pillar.

#### 3.1 Findings across all pillars

##### Sources

Baseline data extracted from:

- European Commission, Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism 2014-2016;
- European Commission, Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face, 2020.

##### 3.1.1 Monitoring system

The 2017 interim evaluation revealed that the **UCPM monitoring system** did not allow for a comprehensive follow-up of actions undertaken. The evidence for monitoring UCPM progress against indicators included:

- Participating States' reports on the implementation of the disaster prevention framework by providing summaries of their DRM Summary Reports and risk management capabilities;
- Progress in increasing readiness to disasters;
- Progress in improving response to disasters;
- Progress in increasing public awareness and preparedness for disasters.

These tools presented several limitations, including a lack of comprehensive reporting of progress due to challenges in measurement and large differences between individual response operations. **Monitoring tools and systems should be improved** and implemented to measure the effectiveness of UCPM activities more accurately and consistently. This should include a performance monitoring framework (e.g. KPIs for each UCPM activity), specific tools (e.g. data collection and aggregation exercises) and a reporting cycle (at least annually). Monitoring human resources allocations would also be helpful in assessing the management of the UCPM and its components.

#### 3.2 Prevention

##### Sources

Baseline data extracted from:

- European Commission, Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016, 2017;
- European Commission, Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face, 2018;
- JRC Science for Disaster Risk Management, DG ECHO, Early Warning Systems (EWS) Expert Group meeting minutes (2016), 2017.

##### 3.2.1 National risk assessment (including Disaster Risk Management Summary Reports) and EU overview of risks

Compared to the previous evaluationsevaluations, the 2019 amendment of the UCPM Decision for the UCPM further emphasised disaster risk management planning and the development of **DRM**



**Summary Reports** by Member and Participating States. This legal basis was crucial to the development of national risk assessment processes and DRM Summary Reports, which underpinned the mapping of EU-wide risks and enhanced prevention activities. However, some areas were found to be underreported/underdeveloped in the DRM Summary Reports (e.g. climate change adaptation, health, environment). The UCPM should support Member and Participating States to improve the quality and scope of their DRM Summary Reports, particularly for topics not previously systematically reported. Closer national-level cooperation with ministries and departments covering other policy areas should be supported, such as the organisation of a workshop on comprehensive risk assessments prior to submission of the next DRM Summary Reports.

The Commission's **2017 overview of natural and man-made disasters** underlined specific issues and related recommendations for DRM Summary Reports, including:

- Varying methodologies and scenarios across Member States do not always allow replicable and comparable results;
- A number of DRM Summary Reports take an all-hazard approach while using a single-hazards assessment. Where the interaction of different threats and their consequences are considered, the contribution of the risk assessment exercise for the emergency management decision-making process could be reinforced;
- Better understanding of the regional dimension of certain disaster risks through assessments and planning assumptions at a regional scale (e.g. earthquake, extreme weather, pandemic, animal diseases, terrorism, cybercrime) could reinforce the added value for European disaster management cooperation, as disasters happen irrespective of national borders – either through small-scale events localised in border regions, or large-scale events with impacts across different countries;
- Addressing the interdependencies and cascading effects of disaster risks could improve the management of complex disasters by bringing together competent authorities and streamlining approaches at all levels of disaster risk governance;
- Increasing awareness of a changing risk landscape (including through research and foresight) sheds light on new and emerging risks that could be more of a focus in DRM Summary Reports.

Best practices included DRM Summary Reports encompassing the impact of climate change, the cross/border and regional dimension, and when the legislative framework requires relevant authorities to carry out regular risk analysis activities. Other best practices identified included multi-stakeholder involvement for the development of DRM Summary Reports, the use of specific data and scientific tools (e.g. historical records and databases of events, impacts and recorded loss and damage), lessons, risk matrices, and research, innovation and scientific projects that can inform the risk assessment process (e.g. development of scenarios). In addition to recorded disaster losses from past events, it suggested that the process could consider potential estimated losses resulting from possible future events. Finally, Member States could look to current and emerging risks of neighbouring states in order to better understand measures in place.

### 3.2.2 DRMKC<sup>50</sup>

Research activities carried out by the DRMKC (launched in 2015) increased and some improvements were detected in **EWS**. The aim of the DRMKC is to bring together science and policy through the connection of communities, facilitating the exploitation of research results and their implementation in operations, as well as testing and adopting new technologies. However, knowledge about these activities was not sufficiently disseminated among Member and Participating States and relevant practitioners. It would be beneficial for the UCPM to build on the existing civil protection knowledge base (across all pillars) to **enhance visibility and relevance**. It could be useful to invest in raising

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<sup>50</sup> For consistency with the 2017 interim evaluation of the UCPM, the DRMKC is presented under the prevention pillar.

awareness of this knowledge base (and the DRMKC), e.g. through a workshop for practitioners in Member and Participating States, a survey of practitioners' research and knowledge needs, enhanced visibility on the DG ECHO website and websites of national civil protection authorities. The results of the research, together with planned research, should be more clearly signposted on JRC and DG ECHO websites.

### 3.2.3 Awareness-raising activities and UCPM visibility<sup>51</sup>

Between 2014-2016, EUR 1.1 million was committed for **awareness-raising activities**. Workshops, meetings, exchanges of experience and practices, for example, were considered relevant to prevention needs at national level, but only met the needs of experts within the sector and were not considered wholly relevant to the needs of the wider public. Between 2014-2016, the UCPM was not very effective in raising public awareness and preparedness for disasters. Stakeholders with prior knowledge of the UCPM responding to the public consultation (PC) criticised the UCPM's contribution to increasing the general public's preparedness for disasters. The Special Eurobarometer survey in 2017 showed that most of the general public believed that insufficient efforts were made to prepare for disasters.

There would be a benefit to enhancing UCPM visibility and emergency and disaster prevention awareness (e.g. biannual special Eurobarometer survey, more information for third countries via fact sheets, targeted information campaigns). As the population in Europe becomes increasingly diverse, there is a need for multilingual and multicultural communications that are culturally adapted. Different demographics are likely to access information in different ways, with younger generations primarily accessing information through social media and less likely to trust the information they are reading, often cross-checking and cross-referencing across multiple channels.

### 3.3 Preparedness

#### Sources

Baseline data extracted from:

- European Commission, Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016, 2017;
- DG ECHO, Early Warning System, minutes, 2017;
- JRC, Forest fires in Europe, Middle East and North Africa, 2017.

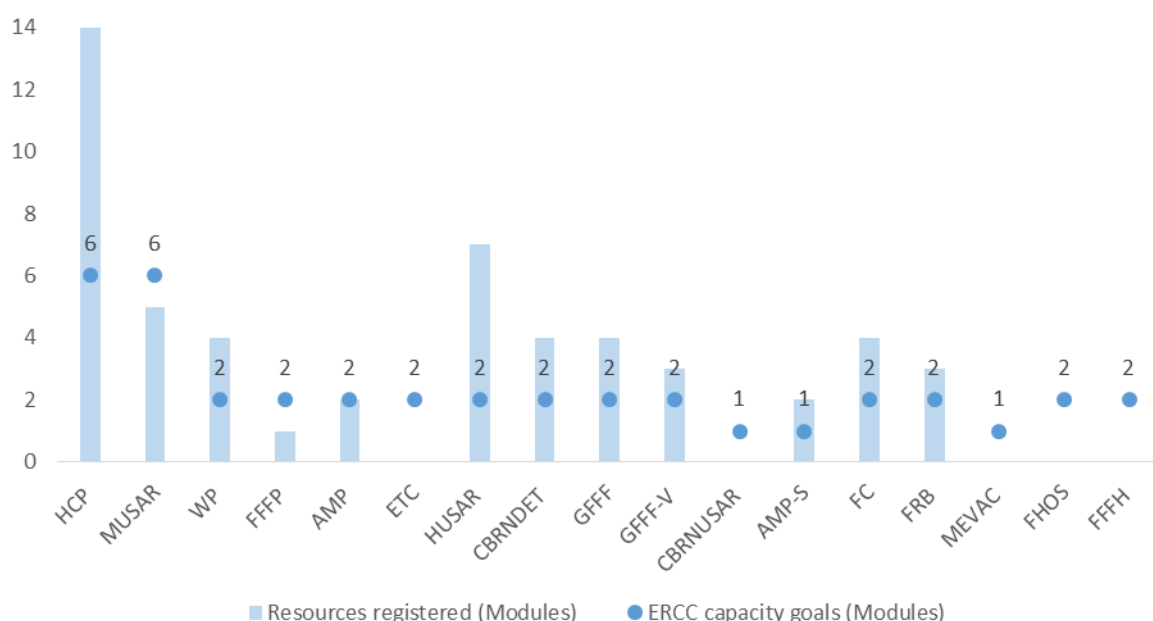
#### 3.3.1 EERC (now ECPP)

Between the launch of the **EERC** in October 2014 and the end of 2016, 16 Member and Participating States committed 77 response capacities to the EERC. The EERC enhanced the preparedness of the UCPM and of Member and Participating States to respond to disasters, although its implementation suffered from delays, legal issues and some capacity gaps (see Figure 13). The development of the **EERC Voluntary Pool**, although slow, improved preparedness and raised overall capacity. It was recommended that the capacity goals in the Voluntary Pool be set according to commonly agreed criteria (e.g. number of times a module was requested and deployed; approximate average cost of a single module of that capacity type; size of the module; likelihood of certain emergencies).

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<sup>51</sup> For consistency with the 2017 interim evaluation of the UCPM, awareness-raising is presented under the prevention pillar.

Figure 13. EERC: capacity goals and resources registered, 2014-2016



Source: European Commission, Report on progress made and gaps remaining in the European Emergency Response Capacity and 2014 UCPM Implementing Decision

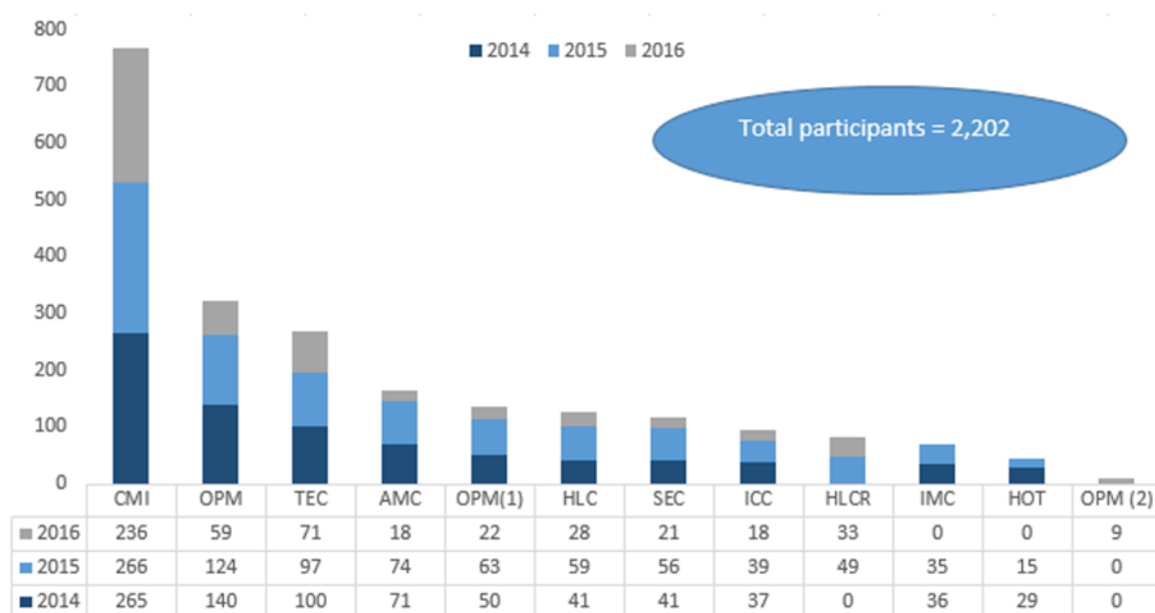
On the **deployment of experts**, it was recommended that DG ECHO organise a general call for experts to select EU Civil Protection Teams (EUCPT), after which experts could express their availability. DG ECHO could then select the experts (based on existing criteria) for deployment. The UCPM could also benefit from a reduction in the pool of experts by creating micro-pools to increase the relevance/quality of experts.

### 3.3.2 UCPM Training and Exercises Programme

**The UCPM Training Programme** was found to be very effective in enhancing the preparedness of the UCPM to respond to disasters. Between 2014 and 2016, EUR 13.4 million was committed to cover 100% of the costs of training courses<sup>52</sup>. Over that period, 1,680 experts participated in at least one UCPM training course (see Figure 14). Prior to 2013, 2,255 experts attended one or more courses. The annual average participation for the applicable financial framework was 740. Around 15% of the experts training during the evaluation period were women. Shortcomings of the UCPM Training Programme included a lack of internal evaluation of the training courses and individual assessment of participants, as well as a relatively low rate of deployment compared to the number of people trained (see recommendations below).

<sup>52</sup> European Commission, Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism 2014-2016, 2017.

Figure 14. UCPM Training Programme, numbers of participants, 2014-2016



Source: ICF elaboration, based on data from DG ECHO.

**UCPM exercises** were considered valuable in strengthening preparedness to respond to disasters at Member and Participating State level, as well as at EU level.

37 EU Module exercises (EU MODEX) were conducted between 2014-2016 (14 table-top exercises and 23 field exercises), 10 exercises were organised under cycle 4 (2013-2014), 11 exercises under cycle 5 (2014-2015), 14 under cycle 6 (2015-2016) and 4 under cycle 7 (2016-2017). Five FSX were organised between 2014-2016.

A budget of EUR 26.6 million was committed for up to 85% of eligible costs for exercises<sup>53</sup>.

Ensuring an appropriate balance between the different types of modules covered in the exercises was challenging. Accordingly, the interim evaluation recommended considering a needs assessment based on specific criteria (how often modules are used in response operations, share of modules registered, share of modules in the Voluntary Pool, minimum guarantee for refresher possibilities)<sup>54</sup>.

Several **recommendations** were made to enhance the UCPM Training Programme and Exercises, including<sup>55</sup>:

- Base the specific choice for EU MODEX exercises on clear criteria to ensure a good balance of topics (e.g. between USAR and less common exercises);
- Streamline the database of trained experts by establishing clear criteria and monitoring the quantity and quality of training received, as well as when participants last attended training;
- Improve the drafting of expert profiles/types;
- Evaluate experts' performance in the training/exercise and deployment;
- Establish a selected pool of qualified trainers;
- Develop a number of key concepts (i.e. mission (deployment); training, exercise; certification of experts);
- Introduce a fully fledged UCPM e-Learning Centre;
- Mapping (as per DG ECHO) national level civil protection training.

<sup>53</sup> European Commission, Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism 2014-2016, 2017.

<sup>54</sup> Voluntary Pool is now the ECPP.

<sup>55</sup> European Commission, Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism 2014-2016, 2017.

### 3.3.3 EoE Programme

Between 2014-2016, almost EUR 2.2 million was committed to cover 100% of the costs of the **EoE Programme**. DG ECHO should increase the impact of the programme at national level by encouraging more active involvement of national civil protection authorities in monitoring the cascading of knowledge process.

### 3.3.4 EWS

Between 2014-2016, the **EWS** contributed to the development and integration of transnational detection and early warning/alert systems, ultimately leading to better preparedness and more effective response to disasters. However, there was scope for more involvement of the scientific community in developing the European Flood Awareness System (EFAS). The EFAS sent information about upcoming flood events to those National Hydrological Services (NHS) that were members of the EFAS partner network, the ERCC and the COPERNICUS rush mode mapping service. In this context, better awareness of the possibilities of EWS could have clear advantages, and DG ECHO should enhance its cooperation with Member and Participating States to raise awareness of the possibilities of these systems and other EWS at national level.

The **European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS)** first came into operation in 2000 and was adopted as one of the components of the EU Copernicus programme in 2015. It provides support for DG ECHO and for the Directorates-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) (DG GROW) and Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO). It offers reliable information on conditions that might trigger fire and provides a platform for countries to exchange good practices on fire prevention and activities related to fire management. Areas for improvement include the importance of moving beyond Europe and developing a near-real time forecasting component, thereby improving functionalities, data access, user-friendliness and the overall danger forecasting system.

**DG ECHO could develop, strengthen and pool scientific and technical approaches to assess hazards**, i.e. by developing detection methods, assessing vulnerabilities, and developing communication and awareness-raising policies at European level (e.g. through the JRC, European Space Agency, Copernicus network, and relevant Directorates-General such as Research and Innovation (DG RTD), Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) and Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT). In this context, **EWS harmonisation** would be beneficial by possible generating foresight in certain areas and providing better quality responses on the ground.

## 3.4 Response

### Sources

Baseline data extracted from:

- European Commission, Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016, 2017;
- European Court of Auditors (ECA), Union Civil Protection Mechanism: the coordination of responses to disasters outside the EU has been broadly effective, 2016;
- DG ECHO, Outcomes of the lessons learned meeting on the UCPM operations in 2017, 2018;
- DG ECHO, European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP) Snapshot report 2022. State-of-play on 01/01/2023;
- DG ECHO, Lessons and good practices identified from TAST [Technical Assistance and Support Teams] deployments, 2019;



- European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Consolidating the EU-Civil Protection Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory, 2020.

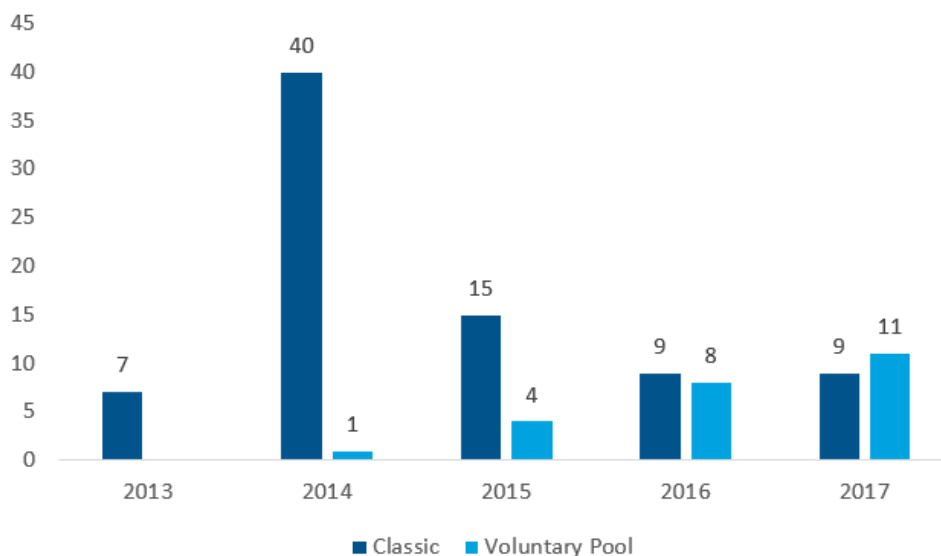
#### 3.4.1 UCPM activations and coordination of RfA

Overall, the UCPM was broadly effective in facilitating the coordination of responses to disasters within and outside the Union. The crucial contribution to achieving a rapid and efficient response in the event of disaster was the effective flow of information and coordination of disaster response at EU level through the ERCC.

Between 2014 and 2016, the UCPM was activated by providing two types of assistance – expertise and in-kind assistance (majority) and in-kind assistance only (e.g. migration crisis). Although both types of support were relevant to the mandate of the Mechanism, **better exploitation of the pool of expertise** during response operations could boost the relevance of response activities. In 2017, faced with multiple requests to respond to the same type of disaster (forest fires), the UCPM was not always able to offer the assistance required, as the emergencies were taking place simultaneously and there was insufficient response capacity to meet all needs.

Figure 15 shows the number of classic and Voluntary Pool deployments between 2013 and 2017. Classic deployments refer to ad hoc contributions to a UCPM activation, outside the pre-committed reserves of the Voluntary Pool.

Figure 15. Classic and Voluntary Pool deployments, 2013-2017



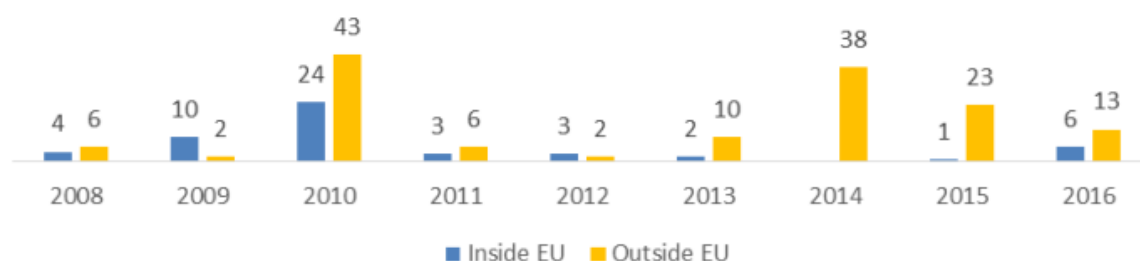
Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

The **proportions of emergencies within and outside Europe** varied. Between 2014 and 2016, on average, 33% of requests (21 out of 64) came from within the EU, with the remainder from third countries. The time between activation of the Mechanism and the request for specific assistance, as well as between offer and acceptance of the offer, **was shorter for disasters in the EU**<sup>56</sup>. This reflected a higher level of awareness of the Mechanism and its procedures among Member and Participating States. Occasionally, for responses to disasters occurring outside the EU, there was a **need to gaining an improved understanding of the context and needs of local stakeholders**. This could be improved by partners growing their links with local communities, authorities and

<sup>56</sup> Due to the way information was registered in CECIS, the 2017 interim evaluation struggled to access information to produce statistics, overviews and comparisons of UCPM interventions.

contractors on the ground. Figure 16 shows the number of UCPM modules deployed within and outside the EU between 2008 and 2016.

Figure 16. UCPM activations within and outside the EU, 2008-2016



*Source: DG ECHO, last update 24 February 2017*

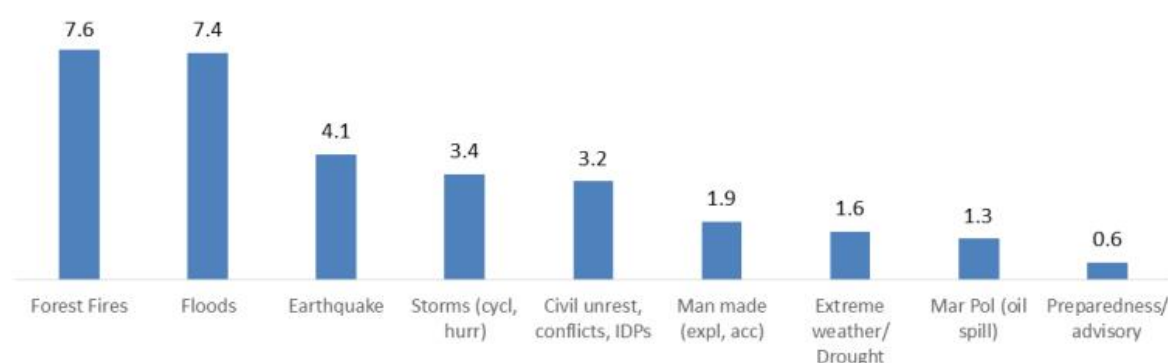
*Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO data.*

For responses outside the EU, the **blurred definition of civil protection interventions in humanitarian aid** operations presented a challenge and impacted the achievement of UCPM objectives. The 2017 interim evaluation concluded that it would be beneficial to better define the scope of civil protection interventions outside the EU, including a clearer distinction between civil protection interventions and humanitarian interventions by DG ECHO or international organisations and partners. According to the European Court of Auditors, **potential synergies** had yet to be fully exploited between the civil protection and humanitarian assistance areas. For instance, DG ECHO field network staff were experts in the UN humanitarian aid system, but untrained in matters of civil protection. The 2018 outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on UCPM operations suggested increasing training on humanitarian principles and including technical experts in missions.

The flexibility, adaptability and scalability of **Technical Assistance and Support Teams (TAST)** was seen as an essential element for the optimal functioning of a deployed EUCPT. The reinforcement of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment (e.g. additional laptops or phones) was perceived as an area for improvement in the context of the forest fires in Chile, in 2017, for example. Indeed, there is no common or homogeneous approach to using information management tools (e.g. SharePoint, DropBox, Google Drive). The use of cloud-based systems depends on the TAST. It was noted that it would be desirable to identify a single agreed tool, which would facilitate the ERCC's access to information and ensure consistency across deployments (e.g. earthquake in Ecuador, hurricane in Haiti in 2016).

Figure 17 presents the average annual numbers of hazards leading to an activation between 2007 and 2016. Forest fires and floods were the most common causes, followed by earthquakes, storms and civil unrest.

Figure 17. Hazards leading to UCPM activations, per year, 2007-2016



*Source: DG ECHO, last update 30 May 2017*

*Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO data, 2017.*

The main challenges and areas for improvement identified in the 2017 interim evaluation related to the quality and speed of response, and issues with transport grants.

#### Quality and speed of response

- The **actual speed and efficiency of response could not be measured precisely**. There were limitations in monitoring processes and an absence of a baseline or existing targets (e.g. response speed). It was suggested to **assess the speed of response as standard practice** after every response operation within or outside the EU. The outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the UCPM activations revealed that, in 2017, the **average speed** of civil protection assistance readiness to intervene (from acceptance of the offer to readiness for deployment) was **20.7 hours**, with the fastest being one hour;
- To improve the quality and speed of response operations, especially the quality of requests, it was suggested that the ERCC should be enabled to play a stronger role in **clarifying requests before publishing them on CECIS**. More specific requests can save time for requesting or receiving states or the ERCC. This could be achieved through a standardised glossary of civil protection terms and concepts to reduce ambiguities. Additionally, although the Commission activated the Mechanism for responding to emergencies on a timely basis, additional time could be gained through better use of the **pre-alert** phases;
- **Improve CECIS by developing dedicated tools for statistics and introducing a search tool**, including search by type of emergency, year and month of request, Participating State requesting/providing support, disaggregated data or breakdown for each type of module requested/provided, and a search tool by tags (i.e. finding certain key works in specific fields);
- To improve the efficient identification of the most appropriate experts for deployment, add a search tool with detailed characteristics, enabling search of their last year of deployment, number of deployments, and qualitative information on performance. In the 2017 system, identification was only possible for experts already in the database;
- Strengthen certain **EU delegations** in civil protection through **engaging civil protection advisors** (e.g. similar to specialised counter-terrorism advisors).

Finally, according to the European Economic and Social Committee, major natural disasters in recent years (mass fires in southern Europe in 2017 and 2021, floods in central and northern Europe in 2014 and 2021, earthquakes in Haiti in 2010, etc.) and the increase in their frequency and intensity undermine existing response mechanisms such as the UCPM, which is simultaneously confronted with other complex crises (e.g. migratory, health, humanitarian).

#### Transport grants:

- Details on the assistance provided by Participating States against the reimbursement required were collected through a general text string. Information about transport grants should be **recorded in greater detail** to facilitate establishment of cost benchmarks;
- Consider raising the minimum amount eligible for transport grants (from EUR 2,500) to lower the relative administrative burden. Alternatively, simplify the administrative procedures for low-level reimbursements of under EUR 10,000;
- **Comparability of data could be improved** by recording information consistently using pre-defined entries or by developing/purchasing software allowing for the entry of single data and automatic reporting. For instance, data could be collected on: type of assistance (e.g. in-kind assistance or module, Voluntary Pool/general pool, Participating State or third country where the operation took place, number of module team members deployed); Participating States should be asked to fill out an online form about what was included in the operation;
- To clarify the **appropriateness of transport costs**, benchmarks could be established for unit cost ranges and the characteristics of transport costs;
- **Explain transport procedures** through training, workshops or a handbook, including the use of the transport grant, broker, and pooling. This would improve understanding and potentially increase take-up. Table-top exercises (including pooling of transport resources) were recommended, as well as a set of transport pooling case studies.

### 3.5 Horizontal/cross-pillar activities

#### Sources

Baseline data extracted from:

- European Commission, Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016, 2017;
- DG ECHO, Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the UCPM operations in 2017, 2018;
- European Commission, Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020), 2021.

Horizontal/cross-pillar activities included the Peer Review Programme, Lessons Learnt Programme, prevention and preparedness missions, and the PPP.

#### 3.5.1 Peer Review Programme

Areas for improvement identified in the 2017 evaluation were the follow-up of reviews, improved resources, and the difficulties for smaller Member and Participating States to implement peer review findings due to funding limitations.

More specifically, it was recommended to establish a **follow-up** three years after its completion to understand how the Peer Review Programme recommendations were incorporated by Member and Participating States and third countries (e.g. mapping progress or state of play)<sup>57</sup>. It was suggested that 5% of the Peer Review Programme budget could be set aside for such follow-up.

Another recommendation was the need for **better visibility** of the Peer Review Programme, such as a dedicated section on the DG ECHO website featuring a factsheet and highlighting recommendations and results through an interactive map (allowing visitors to click on a country and find the details on the programme and its results).

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<sup>57</sup> European Commission, Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016, 2017.

### 3.5.2 Lessons Learnt Programme

Overall, the stakeholders consulted generally considered the Lessons Learnt Programme effective, although the **implementation of lessons** was an area of concern<sup>58</sup>. This was partly due to the number of potential lessons identified, not all of which had the same priority or feasibility for follow-up and implementation.

The **take-up of lessons** learnt from the programme would be improved through their systematic capture from all activities, e.g. by organising workshops, lessons learnt sessions after every series of exercise and training, and adopting a matrix structure for classification and monitoring.

### 3.5.3 Prevention and preparedness missions

According to the 2017 interim evaluation, there were some concerns about these missions, notably the process of identifying the relevant Participating States or third countries, as well as whether the structure and approach to prevention and preparedness missions could achieve **better value for money**.

It was unclear how these missions **complemented other mechanisms** for building prevention and preparedness capacity in third countries. The recommendations of the 2017 evaluation and the 2018 lessons learnt outcomes meeting were to:

- **Improve access and information** about the prevention and preparedness missions in **third countries**, with consistent lessons learnt events after every activity. The extent to which third countries were aware (or had the possibility) of inviting an EU advisory mission was an area of concern;
- **Make a factsheet available** on the purpose and possibilities of the prevention and preparedness missions (advisory missions);
- **Enhance visibility and accessibility** of missions by launching an annual ‘expression of interest’ from third-country governments, including a needs statement;
- **Ensure follow-up** of all prevention and preparedness missions through a short summary report three years later to assess the state of play of the country’s civil protection system and take-up of any recommendations made;
- **Use advisory and capacity-building missions to enhance development of preparedness plans** with national authorities and international organisations in most vulnerable/disaster prone areas.

### 3.5.4 Prevention and preparedness projects

Between 2014 and 2016, 33 **preparedness projects** were selected and nearly EUR 17 million was committed to this component of the UCPM. The average project cost was EUR 691,000. Figure 18 presents the main expected results of preparedness projects between 2014 and 2016.

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<sup>58</sup> European Commission, Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016, 2017.

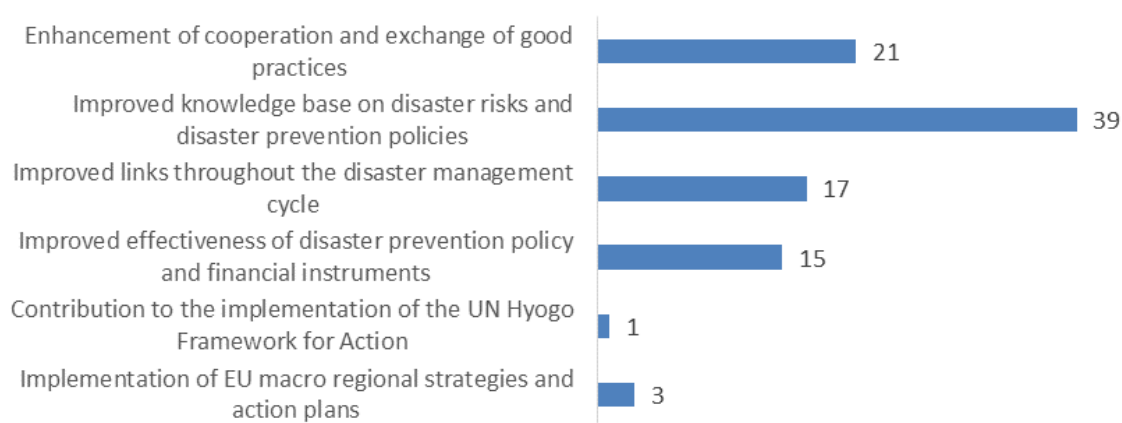
Figure 18. Preparedness projects (PPP): main expected results



Source: ICF elaboration, based on preparedness projects mapped.

Between 2014 and 2016, 40 **prevention projects** were selected and more than EUR 22 million was committed to this UCPM component (see Figure 19). The average project value was EUR 610,000 (with EU funding averaging EUR 470,000). The total EU contribution to these projects was around EUR 18.7 million. The success rate of applications for prevention projects was 39%. Figure 19 presents the main results of prevention projects between 2014 and 2016. Overall, prevention projects contributed to a) improving the knowledge base on disaster risks and disaster prevention policies and raising awareness of disaster prevention, leading to a better understanding of approaches to adapting to future impacts of climate change, and b) enhancing cooperation and exchange of good practices in prevention. However, concerns included the dissemination, visibility and sustainability of results (see preparedness recommendations).

Figure 19. Prevention projects (PPP): main expected results



Source: ICF elaboration, based on prevention projects mapped.

For better impact, the UCPM should ensure **complementarity with other EU funds** (e.g. on climate change adaptation, floods, the Seveso Directive). Specific contact points could be set up within DG ECHO and other Commission services to establish areas of complementarity and potential overlap and to ensure more consistent EU-wide funding and activities for 2020 onwards.

Other recommendations to maximise the relevance, added value and sustainability of **prevention and preparedness projects** included:

- Draft specific selection criteria (given the high levels of funding available via Cohesion Funds) on disaster risk prevention and management to avoid duplication and maximise EU added value. The selection criteria could include elements related to sustainability;
- Organise joint kick-off and closure meetings with project coordinators to foster sustainability and avoid duplication;
- Consult project coordinators and partners after projects finish to establish sustainability.

Recommendations from the 2021 evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020) included:

- Increase awareness, accessibility and engagement with ongoing and past EU-funded projects on civil protection prevention and preparedness and their results;
- Establish an internal planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) policy to assess the performance and quality of the PPP;
- Introduce clearer requirements for DG ECHO's Desk Officers, including enhanced communication and engagement with PPP beneficiaries;
- Introduce the possibility to request project extension/expansions;
- Continue to further simplify the PPP reporting and monitoring mechanism;
- Facilitate access to national level data for PPP applicants;
- Support the creation of a forum to integrate national civil protection authorities from eligible third countries on specific PPP-related needs and expectations into existing and/or incoming platforms and dialogues;
- Consider more sources in the analysis of EU and national needs prior to Civil Protection Committee (CPC) meetings;
- Raise awareness of the PPP and provide guidance on successfully applying for funding to overcome varying involvement across national contexts and entities;
- Provide soft guidance on the minimum information that should be provided in applications to national authorities for endorsement;
- Include end users and relevant stakeholders in project design through steering committees and regular workshops;
- Pay more attention to end users' capacity and sustainability in project proposals.

## 4 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This section provides an overview of the methodological approach for this interim evaluation, covering the inception, research and consultation, and analysis phases. Section 4.1 presents the data collection methods and tools used, before discussing the analytical approach (Section 4.2). It concludes with an overview of methodological limitations and mitigation measures (Section 4.3).

### 4.1 *Methodological approach and data collection tools*

The methodological approach was informed by research tools developed and tailored to build a robust and comprehensive evidence base. It combined complementary quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect data from relevant sources and mitigate the impact of data limitations to the extent possible. In line with the BRG, the methodological approach provided a basis for triangulation and verification of data from different sources to answer the evaluation questions, draw conclusions, highlight lessons and develop recommendations.

The interim evaluation began in October 2022 and comprised the following phases:

- **Inception phase.** The purpose of this phase was to ensure a thorough understanding of key aspects of the interim evaluation and refine the methodological approach. It consisted of several tasks: a kick-off meeting, scoping interviews, rapid review of documentation, an inception workshop, definition of the stakeholder consultation strategy, refinement of the

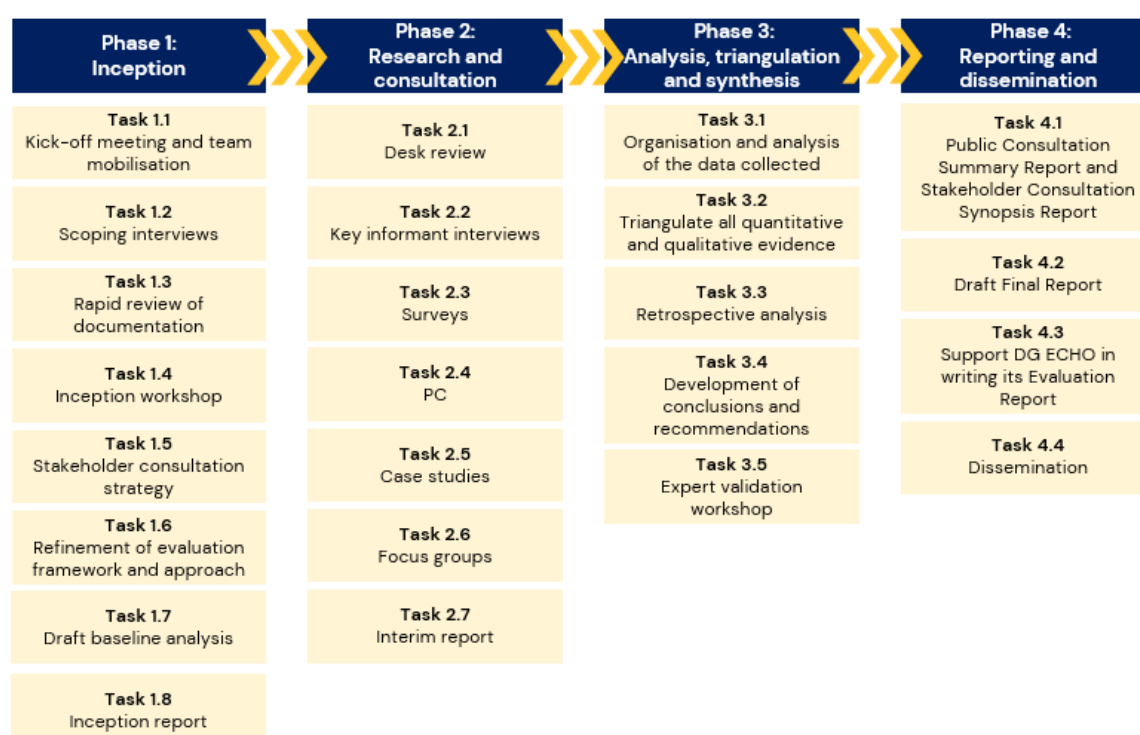


evaluation framework, and a draft baseline analysis. The results of these activities were presented in an Inception Report;

- **Research and consultation phase.** The aim of the research and consultation phase was to collect primary data and gather and analyse secondary data to inform wider evaluation activities. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The evaluation team carried out the following activities: desk review, key informant interviews, surveys, PC, case studies, focus groups. The preliminary findings stemming from initial key informant interviews and desk research were summarised in an Interim Report, which provided preliminary answers to the evaluation questions;
- **Analysis, triangulation, and synthesis phase.** The objective of this phase was to systematically analyse, validate, triangulate, and synthesise the data collected in previous phases to provide robust evidence-based answers to the evaluation questions, draw conclusions, and recommendations. Activities implemented during this phase included: organisation and analysis of the data collected, triangulation of quantitative and qualitative evidence, a retrospective analysis, development of conclusions and recommendations, and an expert validation workshop.
- **Reporting and dissemination phase.** The objective of this phase was to produce the final deliverables and accompanying annexes of the evaluation, and successfully disseminate the results of the evaluation to different audiences at different levels. This phase included the preparation of the Public Consultation Factual Summary Report, Stakeholder Consultation Synopsis Report, this Final Report, as well as support to DG ECHO in writing its Evaluation report (Staff Working Document) and dissemination of results (e.g. through a one page “Flash Report”).

Each phase is detailed in the following sub-sections. Figure 20 provides an overview of the methodological approach.

Figure 20. Overview of methodological approach



Source: ICF elaboration.



#### 4.1.1 Inception phase

The objective of the inception phase was to provide a foundation and finalised approach for subsequent evaluation phases. This was achieved through the following activities:

- **Scoping interviews:** 11 scoping interviews were conducted with relevant DG ECHO, HERA and JRC staff. These interviews provided the evaluation team with an overview of key areas of focus and main stakeholders' expectations, as well as with an overview of stakeholders to contact and documentation to review;
- **Rapid review of documentation:** the evaluation team gathered and examined relevant documentation and data, including publicly available information and internal documents, statistics, and other data provided by DG ECHO. The purpose of this rapid review was to identify any significant data gaps that needed to be addressed by requesting additional information from DG ECHO and other relevant stakeholders. This task paved the way for the full-in depth review of all sources in subsequent phases;
- **Inception workshop:** an inception workshop was held on 20 October 2022 to discuss and refine the intervention logic, ToC, evaluation framework, and selection of case studies. The workshop was attended by the Expert Panel and the Steering Group;
- **Refinement of evaluation framework and approach:** the evaluation team refined the evaluation framework and intervention logic, as well as the methodological approach. Changes and adjustments reflected feedback received during scoping interviews and the inception workshop, as well as insights from other data gathered. This task also entailed the refinement and finalisation of research tools to collect and analyse data (e.g. interview and survey questionnaires);
- **Baseline analysis:** the evaluation team conducted a baseline analysis, primarily informed by the previous UCPM interim evaluation and other relevant documentation. The analysis revolved around the UCPM pillars of prevention, preparedness and response, with an added focus on cross-pillar elements.

#### 4.1.2 Research and consultation phase

The objective of the research and consultation phase was to collect primary data and gather and analyse secondary data to inform the wider evaluation activities. Tasks included an in-depth desk review of available documentation and stakeholder consultations (108 interviews, four surveys, three focus groups, one PC). The evaluation team also undertook six case studies, each informed by an in-depth desk review of relevant documentation and tailored interviews with stakeholders.

##### 4.1.2.1 Desk review

The evaluation team conducted an in-depth analysis of existing documentation, including materials shared by relevant stakeholders. All relevant qualitative and quantitative data were mapped and reviewed.

Findings from the **qualitative** desk research were extracted by evaluation criteria and evaluation questions. Documents reviewed included DG ECHO annual reports, internal meeting minutes, final and progress reports from relevant activities, evaluations, summary documents from the Lessons Learnt Programme's annual and thematic meetings, and other relevant publications (see Annex 4 for full list). The evaluation team also undertook a separate qualitative analysis of the DRM Summary Reports shared by DG ECHO to explore the different methods used by Member and Participating States and assess their compliance with reporting guidelines.

The evaluation team attended the annual Lessons Learnt Programme meeting on 2022 UCPM activations, on 24 and 25 April 2023 in Brussels. The meeting minutes were used to inform the evaluation findings.

The evaluation team also conducted a **quantitative** analysis of data on several UCPM elements: UCPM activations (by year and emergency type), PPP, UCPM Training Programme, Civil Protection Exercises, DRM Summary Reports, transport co-financing, Lessons Learnt Programme, EoE Programme, rescEU, and the ECPP.

#### 4.1.2.2 Stakeholder consultation

The evaluation team conducted extensive stakeholder consultation, including 108 interviews, four online surveys, three virtual focus groups, and one PC.

It ran a **key informant interview campaign** targeting: 1) **national authorities** (including civil protection, marine pollution, and other relevant authorities, such as health authorities); 2) **DG ECHO officers**; 3) **EU stakeholders**; 4) **international organisations/partners**; 5) **professional organisations** involved in supporting the implementation of UCPM activities; and 6) **experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities** (including experts deployed, project coordinators of UCPM-funded projects) (see Annex 5 for full list).

The evaluation team conducted **108 interviews** with the following stakeholders:

- 36 national authorities<sup>59</sup>;
- 24 DG ECHO officers;
- 27 EU stakeholders;
- Eight international stakeholders;
- Three professional organisations supporting the implementation of UCPM activities;
- 10 experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities.

It also conducted **four online surveys** with 1) **national authorities**; 2) **DG ECHO officers**; 3) **trainers**, Training and Exercise Programme contractors and national training coordinators; and 4) **experts** in civil protection participating in UCPM activities. Table 3 presents an overview of the responses to the four surveys.

Table 3. Overview of responses to four surveys

Survey	Responses received	Invitations sent
<b>National authorities</b>	58 <sup>60</sup>	400 <sup>61</sup>
<b>DG ECHO desk officers</b>	38	190
<b>Trainers/Training and Exercise Programme contractors/national training coordinators</b>	59	118
<b>Experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities</b>	21	136

The evaluation team organised and facilitated **three virtual focus groups**. The first engaged national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection, the second targeted DG ECHO officers, and the third engaged researchers from academic institutions, the JRC, and one expert from the World Bank.

<sup>59</sup> These include 33 national civil protection/marine pollution authorities, as well as one representative from the private donations hub established in Belgium, one representative from the Governmental Strategic Reserve Agency in Poland, and one representative from the Polish Ministry of Health.

<sup>60</sup> These include 44 Member States, 4 Participating States, and 10 third countries.

<sup>61</sup> The survey was sent to all national authorities' email addresses by DG ECHO, including national civil protection authorities, marine pollution authorities and other related services (such as firefighting services).

Overall, the goal of the focus groups was to explore aspects of interest emerging from the key informant interviews that warranted further exploration and discussion. They also aimed to discuss topics where data or insights were limited, in order to narrow some data gaps. The key lines of enquiry for each focus group were selected based on participants' expertise and relationship with the UCPM. They were circulated to participants in advance, together with briefing materials, to maximise effectiveness and efficiency.

To capture the view of the general public on the UCPM, the evaluation team developed a tailored questionnaire. This PC was launched by DG ECHO on the European Commission's website on 14 April 2023 and ran until 21 July 2023. The 'Have your say' portal also provided the opportunity for entities to upload position papers.

The Public Consultation Summary Report was submitted as a separate project deliverable.

#### *4.1.2.3 Case studies*

The evaluation team undertook **six case studies** to develop a more in-depth understanding of how the UCPM performed across different, recurring, internal and unexpected challenges (see Figure 21).

Two case studies focused on emergencies that traditionally led to a UCPM activation – **forest fires** and **floods**. Three case studies focused on unexpected emergencies for which the UCPM was activated, namely the **Beirut port explosion**, the **COVID-19 pandemic**, and **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**. The final case study explored the integration between **UCPM preparedness activities**<sup>62</sup>, given the numerous changes between 2017 and 2022.

The evaluation team worked with DG ECHO to prevent overlaps with case studies conducted in the context of the parallel 'Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations (2018-2022) and the evaluation of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation'. Accordingly, the scope of two case studies was adjusted: the case study on the COVID-19 UCPM activation was revised to focus on in-kind assistance, while the case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine was refocused on cross-sectoral cooperation in the hubs established in Romania, Slovakia and Belgium. The case studies described here complement those developed in the parallel evaluation of humanitarian logistics.

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<sup>62</sup> As this case study includes an assessment of the Framework Contract on the provision of ad hoc training that ICF recently signed on behalf of the Civitas Soteria consortium with DG ECHO, in particular the first specific contract in November 2022 (a workshop on the certification process of the ECPP), the analysis was conducted by an external expert.

Figure 21. Overview of case studies

	TYPE(S) OF EMERGENCY	RATIONALE	UCPM PILLAR(S)	INFORMS QUASICOUNTERFACTUAL ASSESSMENT
<b>TYPES OF EMERGENCIES TRADITIONALLY LEADING TO UCPM ACTIVATIONS</b>				
1 Forest fires	Climate risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; High number of UCPM activations</li> <li>&gt; Recent UCPM developments (rescEU)</li> <li>&gt; Covered in 2017 Evaluation</li> </ul>	   	✓
2 Floods	Hydro-meteorological climate risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Among costliest disasters</li> <li>&gt; Rapidly increasing in intensity and frequency</li> </ul>	   	✓
<b>UNEXPECTED EMERGENCIES</b>				
3 Beirut port explosion	Accident (explosion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Man-made disaster;</li> <li>&gt; Activation outside of Europe</li> </ul>	   	✗
4 COVID-19	Biological / medical; Consular support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; EU-wide, simultaneous emergency</li> <li>&gt; Led to significant UCPM developments</li> <li>&gt; Focus on in-kind assistance</li> </ul>	 	✗
5 Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine	Conflicts, migration flows; Consular support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Largest UCPM activation</li> <li>&gt; Rare opportunity to observe UCPM response in real time</li> <li>&gt; Focus on cross-sectoral cooperation and SI, RO and BE hubs</li> </ul>	 	✗
<b>PREPAREDNESS / CROSS-PILLAR ACTIVITIES</b>				
6 Integration between preparedness activities	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Gap highlighted in previous evaluation</li> <li>&gt; Several measures adopted during the evaluation period</li> </ul>	 	✓

Source: ICF elaboration.

Notes: Legend -

 Prevention
  Preparedness
  Cross-pillar / horizontal
  Response

For each case study, tailored questionnaires were used to interview relevant stakeholders. Table 4 presents a summary of the interviews for each case study.

The answers to the evaluation questions are corroborated by the case studies findings. Where a case study is mentioned in the footnotes, it can be taken that the conclusions drawn from that case study mirror stakeholders' consultations and relevant documents reviewed in the case study in question.

Table 4. Interviews for each case study

Case study	Interviews conducted
Forest fires	12 interviews
Floods	9 interviews
Beirut port explosion	16 interviews
COVID-19	11 interviews
Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine	17 interviews
Integration between preparedness activities	13 interviews

#### 4.1.3 Analysis, triangulation and synthesis phase

The objective of the analysis, triangulation and synthesis phase was to systematically assess the evidence base generated during the interim evaluation with a view to answering the evaluation questions, formulating robust conclusions and recommendations, and reporting on interim evaluation activities and results. The evaluation team analysed, triangulated and synthesised the data collected in the previous phases to provide robust evidence-based answers to the evaluation questions. Steps included:

- **Organisation and analysis of the data:**
  - Using '**outcome harvesting**', the evaluation team examined the extent to which the changes (outcomes in the ToC) were the result of the UCPM intervention (inputs in the ToC);
  - In the context of three case studies, the evaluation team carried out a qualitative **quasi-counterfactual assessment** to assess the added value of the UCPM compared to assistance provided through bilateral agreements (see Section 4.1.2.3);
  - The evaluation team carried out a **cost-benefit analysis (CBA)** to analyse how costs and benefits compared and evolved over time in order to assess the efficiency of the UCPM (see Annex 6);
- **Triangulation and synthesis:** the evaluation team reviewed and triangulated all qualitative and quantitative evidence collected. This included a cross-examination of evidence gathered through different data collection tools (see Section 4.1.2.1 and Section 4.1.2.2) and results from the analytical exercises. It held an internal workshop to discuss the findings and streamline the approach for the reporting phase;
- **Retrospective analysis:** the evaluation team produced a detailed analysis of the findings of the interim evaluation for each evaluation question and judgement criterion;
- **Development of conclusions and recommendations:** based on the evaluation findings, the team drafted key conclusions (see Section 6) and lessons learnt (see boxes across the document), as well as seven strategic recommendations with related operational recommendations (see Section 7).

Finally, the evaluation team organised an **expert validation workshop** with the Expert Panel in order to refine and validate the main findings, lessons and conclusions, as well as to draft recommendations. Similarly, the **Draft Final Report meeting with the Steering Group** provided an opportunity to discuss the conclusions and recommendations and gather views on their relevance, feasibility, and acceptability.

#### 4.2 Methodological limitations and mitigation measures

The interim evaluation was characterised by some methodological challenges and limitations. These are discussed below, alongside the mitigation measures and strategies adopted.

- **Lack of comprehensive data and data discrepancies in respect of some UCPM activities.** Missing or contradictory data were encountered, particularly in budget-expenditure, breakdown of deployments (i.e. numbers of requests for services/deployments by classic/ECPP/rescEU), financial classification of activities (e.g., Lessons Learned Programme), and UCPM activations. Discrepancies were identified between the analysis of raw CECIS data provided by the ERCC to the evaluation team and figures on UCPM activations reported in DG ECHO annual reports. To mitigate against the impact of these inconsistencies in available data, the evaluation team:
  - Communicated the main data gaps to DG ECHO and sent a data gaps document, which DG ECHO disseminated across its units. The data gaps document was regularly updated, reflecting any new gap;

- Conducted targeted interviews with stakeholders to identify additional information and/or clarify some of the information received;
  - Prioritised use of DG ECHO annual reports and lessons learnt meeting outcome documents and slides in order to have consistent data on the number of UCPM activations between 2017 and 2022, as well as breakdowns of deployments;
  - Prioritised use of internal DG ECHO documents and figures on breakdown of deployments (between rescEU, ECPP, and classic deployments).
- **Low response rate from stakeholders during consultation activities.** This was due to the unavailability of national civil protection authorities, experts and DG ECHO stakeholders, given multiple ongoing emergencies during the course of the interim evaluation. This issue may have been exacerbated by stakeholder fatigue (i.e. when stakeholders have been consulted too frequently for too many overlapping projects).
    - Several evaluation stakeholders were deployed/busy with ongoing emergencies during the data collection phase (e.g. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, Türkiye-Syria earthquake of February 2023, floods in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy in May 2023). These circumstances saw some interviews cancelled or rescheduled and had an impact on survey response rates;
    - Low response rate was also associated with stakeholder fatigue, given the simultaneous rollout of consultation activities for the 'Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations (2018-2022) and the evaluation of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation (2020-2022)'.
  - **Limitations to stakeholders' knowledge and understanding of full range of UCPM activities.** The UCPM covers a wide range of activities, funding opportunities, and programmes, meaning that, inevitably, some stakeholders were very familiar with some, but not all, of them. As a result, data on certain UCPM activities could be collected only from a minority subset of stakeholders directly involved or exposed. Certain findings are substantiated by interviews with a small number of stakeholders – either the sole contributors offering insights on specific UCPM activities or those holding key positions significantly impacting UCPM development (e.g. national civil protection authorities with extensive involvement in the UCPM over the evaluation period).
  - **Delayed conclusion of case studies.** Low response rates delayed the completion of several case studies, as some stakeholders possessed key data sources necessary for their analysis. Several mitigation measures were taken:
    - All consultation activities were extended, providing stakeholders sufficient time to submit data to inform the interim evaluation. Surveys were closed on 2 May 2023, with final interviews carried out in the week of 22 May 2023;
    - To increase response rates, DG ECHO sent reminders and regularly encouraged stakeholders to participate;
    - The evaluation team followed up with stakeholders who did not respond to initial invitations, sending reminders via email and making phone calls as necessary.
  - **Delayed receipt of contact details for civil protection experts.** This resulted in a smaller number of experts interviewed compared to what was initially envisioned. To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team extended the timeframe for consultation activities to allow sufficient time to schedule interviews with experts once their contact details were received.
  - **Inability to undertake a comprehensive CBA,** given the availability of predominantly qualitative data rather than quantitative data. DG ECHO and the evaluation team agreed to:
    - a) carry out a qualitative assessment of the costs and benefits, how they compare to one



another, and level of efficiency for the whole UCPM; and b) a full-fledged CBA of some UCPM components in the framework of the case studies, namely forest fires, floods, the Beirut port explosion, COVID-19, and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (see Annex 6).

- **Delay in the timeline of two case studies.** The case studies on COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine were delayed while their scope was adjusted to avoid overlaps with parallel evaluations. The evaluation team actively requested information on the case studies conducted by other contractors involved with these evaluations, allowing them to adjust the scope and avoid unnecessary duplication of work.

## 5 EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section presents the interim evaluation findings across the BRG criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value.

Each subsection opens with a box introducing the key findings and judgement criteria for each evaluation question. Findings and evidence are then presented in a narrative form, supported by boxes illustrating specific examples, graphs and tables. Throughout the sections, bold text highlights main findings and/or important evidence.

### 5.1 *Effectiveness*

This subsection assesses the extent to which the UCPM has effectively achieved and/or is on track to achieve its general and specific objectives (see Section 1.1), highlighting key success areas and room for improvement, as well as the internal and external factors that hindered or facilitated its effectiveness during the evaluation period.

- 5.1.1 EQ1: To what extent did the UCPM achieve its specific objectives (Article 3(1) of the Decision) further supporting, complementing and facilitating Member States' action for civil protection in the areas of prevention, preparedness for and response to natural and man-made disasters?

Overall, the UCPM has progressed towards the specific objectives set in Article 3(1) of the Decision. These are:

- **Prevention:** to achieve a high level of protection against disasters by preventing or reducing their potential effects, fostering a culture of prevention, and improving cooperation between the civil protection and other relevant services;
- **Preparedness:** enhance preparedness at national and Union level to respond to disasters, and increase the availability and use of scientific knowledge on disasters;
- **Response:** facilitate rapid and efficient response in the event of disasters or imminent disasters and mitigate their immediate consequences;
- **Cross-pillar/horizontal:** increase public awareness and preparedness for disasters.

The following subsections describe the key evaluation findings on the extent to which the UCPM progressed towards its specific objectives (per pillar). The key findings will be discussed by sub-question. Across the section, the term 'mitigation measures' refers to measures taken by DG ECHO, where applicable, to ensure that the UCPM continued to progress across its general and specific objectives, notwithstanding the challenges faced (e.g. introducing digital options for activities during COVID-19).

5.1.1.1 EQ1.1 To what extent did the UCPM achieve its specific objectives in the field of **prevention** within the timeframes set by the Decision? To what extent are suitable mitigation measures in place in case objectives will not be met in the set time?

#### Key findings

- Overall, projects and activities funded by UCPM effectively contributed to preventing disasters, reducing their potential effects, and promoting a culture of prevention;
- There is some disagreement on the extent to which progress towards **prevention activities** can be measured, given the long-term and cross-sectoral nature of prevention work and the lack of investment at national level. These factors impede assessments of the links between risk reduction and the prevention measures in place;
- Risk mapping activities including DRM Summary Reports have the most significant impact on enhancing prevention, followed by **prevention projects** funded under the PPP;
- Whilst most Member and Participating States submit DRM Summary Reports to DG ECHO, the quality and harmonisation of these reports has significant margins for improvement if they are to be comparable at EU level;
- Advisory missions in the field of **prevention** and the DRMKC foster a culture of prevention, albeit to a more limited extent;
- The impact of advisory missions in the field of prevention was mostly felt in third countries. However, their effectiveness is limited by a lack of awareness of these advisory missions;
- The impact of the DRMKC is limited by data availability and applicability of outputs for the civil protection community.

#### Judgement criteria:

- JC1.1: UCPM funded projects and other activities aiming to increase awareness of disasters were overall implemented as planned;
- JC1.2: Increased civilian and institutional awareness of disaster prevention at EU, MS, PS and TC level can at least be partly attributed to UCPM activities;
- JC1.4: The (prevention) mitigation measures in place were effective and suitable.

Judgment criteria JC1.1 and JC1.2 will be addressed collectively, as activities contributed to progress on both. Similarly, mitigation measures will be discussed when relevant activities are mentioned (JC1.4).

**During the evaluation period, the UCPM progressed towards achieving a high level of protection against disasters by preventing or reducing their potential effects and fostering a culture of prevention. UCPM prevention activities and projects were implemented as planned.**

**Projects and activities funded by the UCPM effectively contributed to preventing disasters, reducing their potential effects and promoting a culture of prevention. However, there is still room for improvement in raising risk awareness.** The majority of stakeholders agreed that the UCPM contributed to preventing and reducing potential disasters by fostering a culture of prevention<sup>63</sup>. UCPM prevention activities also generated momentum, prompting further activities in prevention<sup>64</sup>. Two EU stakeholders noted that the World Bank study commissioned by DG ECHO, 'Understanding the needs of civil protection agencies and opportunities for scaling-up disaster risk management

<sup>63</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (14); DG ECHO (6); EU stakeholders (9); international stakeholders (4). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (21/27); national authorities (41/49); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (18/21).

<sup>64</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (6); international stakeholders (2). See case study on forest fires in Annex 7.

investments', was an important tool to help national authorities to ground further investments in prevention<sup>65</sup>. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement on the extent to which UCPM prevention activities effectively raise awareness of disaster prevention at civilian and, to a lesser extent, institutional level<sup>66</sup>. One DG ECHO Desk Officer noted that this could be better addressed by empowering national and regional authorities to raise awareness and understanding of disaster risk prevention<sup>67</sup>.

**There is some disagreement on the progress made by UCPM in achieving its prevention objectives. As a support competence, the UCPM's room for manoeuvre is more limited and there are diverging views on how to accurately assess progress, partly because prevention work spans multiple sectors and operates on a long-term basis.** A minority of (mostly national) stakeholders disagreed that the UCPM has progressed in preventing or reducing the effects of disasters by fostering a culture of prevention<sup>68</sup>. Stakeholders observed that the outcomes of prevention efforts take place over a long period, making them less visible and challenging to quantify, affecting their measurability<sup>69</sup>. Two national authorities actively engaged with the UCPM emphasised that the work of prevention is fragmented across various areas of expertise, such as agriculture, the environment and civil protection. They pointed out that the UCPM alone cannot make substantial contributions in supporting Member and Participating States on their preventive measures, given the dispersed nature of responsibilities<sup>70</sup>. The complex stakeholder landscape and long feedback loops limit the ability to measure the direct influence of prevention measures on disaster risk reduction. The literature highlights that the accuracy of measurement can be improved by tailored, long-term monitoring frameworks, with data collection responsibilities shared across sectors<sup>71</sup>.

**The following activities largely contributed to the achievement of specific prevention objectives:**

1. **The UCPM's risk mapping** (national risk processes and compilation in DRM Summary Reports, analysis of DRM Summary Reports, together with EU policy analysis and EU-level risk assessments in the overview document of disaster risks in the EU) **and tools for risk assessments** (guidelines and standards for DRM Summary Reports);
2. Prevention projects funded under the PPP;
3. Advisory missions in the field of prevention;
4. DRMKC.

The **UCPM's risk mapping and contribution to establishing a disaster prevention framework by creating tools for risk assessment** had the biggest impact on fostering a culture of prevention. The majority of stakeholders agreed that the UCPM's risk mapping, achieved through supporting national risk assessment processes and the collection and consolidation of DRM Summary Reports from Member and Participating States (submitted every three years) contributed significantly to fostering a culture of disaster prevention<sup>72</sup>. Only a small number of national authorities disagreed, instead

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<sup>65</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (1). DG ECHO and World Bank, *Understanding the needs of civil protection agencies and opportunities for scaling up Disaster Risk Management Investments*, 2021.

<sup>66</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (9); international stakeholders (2). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (1/5); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (2/21). European Commission, *Science for Disaster Risk Management 2020. Acting today, protecting tomorrow*, 2020.

<sup>67</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>68</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (4); DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (9); international stakeholders (2). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (1/27); national authorities (1/49).

<sup>69</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (8); DG ECHO (4); EU stakeholders (8); international stakeholders (1).

<sup>70</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2).

<sup>71</sup> Sarabia, M., Kagi, A., Davison, A. Banwell, N., Montes, C., Aebischer, C. and Hostettler, S., *The challenges of impact evaluation: Attempting to measure the effectiveness of community-based disaster risk management*, 2020; Marczak, J., Wistow, G. and Fernandez, J-L., *The development of a local framework for evaluating prevention effects in England*, 2019.

<sup>72</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (11); DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (8); international stakeholders (3). Surveys of DG ECHO Desk Officers (9/10); national authorities (34/46). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

pointing to the resource demands of these reporting obligations<sup>73</sup>. However, data from 2019 to 2022 suggest that most Member and Participating States submitted DRM Summary Reports to DG ECHO. Between 2020 and 2022, DG ECHO received 32 DRM Summary Reports from all Member States and all but one Participating States.

**Although DG ECHO has taken effective measures to enhance the quality and harmonisation of DRM Summary Reports, there are still opportunities to improve this.** The following changes implemented had a positive impact, helping to increase the **harmonisation** and **quality** of DRM Summary Reports:

- Updated reporting guidelines on disaster risk management to support Member States' reporting, introduced in 2019<sup>74</sup>;
- Amendments to Article 6 of the Decision, introduced in 2021 (Regulation (EU) 2021/836) introducing cross-boundary disaster risk mapping in DRM Summary Reports. These were highlighted as an area of improvement in a previous evaluation<sup>75</sup>.

Some improvements were noted in the **harmonisation of DRM Summary Reports**. Across 2020-2022, the majority of DRM Summary Reports submitted fully or partially aligned with the updated guidelines introduced in 2019: 59% (19 reports) followed the Article 6 Reporting Guidelines, 9% (3 reports) partly followed the Article 6 Reporting Guidelines, 31% (10 reports) did not follow the Article 6 Reporting Guidelines.

**The heterogeneity of DRM Summary Reports continues to limit their potential effectiveness in fostering pan-European situational awareness and a culture of prevention.** DRM Summary Reports continue to differ significantly in their methodologies (including typology of data) and degree of cooperation with other sectors in their compilation. Stakeholders observed that the diversity of methodologies and sectors involved in DRM Summary Reports limits their potential impact<sup>76</sup>. This diversity of approaches poses a challenge and limits their comparability, especially with a view to generating DG ECHO's overview document of disaster risks in the EU. Several differences in DRM Summary Reports were highlighted by stakeholders:

- The **methodologies** employed and the level of detail on the methodological approach differ significantly across the DRM Summary Reports of Member and Participating States. Approximately 50% relied primarily on quantitative data (two used risk mapping models), while approximately 40% relied on qualitative data<sup>77</sup>. Difference in approach and robustness of the DRM Summary Report methodologies is also reflected in the complexity and comprehensiveness of reports submitted and the accompanying documentation. The length varied significantly, ranging from 4 to 292 pages. Only four Member States provided additional files containing detailed risk matrices. Similarly, only four Member States detailed the process used to develop the DRM Summary Report<sup>78</sup>;
- **Cross-sectoral contribution to DRM Summary Report preparation:** Approximately half of Member States and one-third of Participating States noted that their DRM Summary Reports were prepared in collaboration with other stakeholders and institutions (see Figure 22).

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<sup>73</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1). Surveys of: national authorities (3/46).

<sup>74</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (2); international stakeholders (2). European Commission, *Recommendations for National Risk Assessment for Disaster Risk Management in the EU*, JRC, 2021.

<sup>75</sup> Interviews with: national civil protection authorities (2); DG ECHO (2); international stakeholders (1). Surveys of: national authorities (28/49). Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services, *Evaluation study of definitions, gaps and costs of response capacities for the Union Civil Protection Mechanism*, 2019.

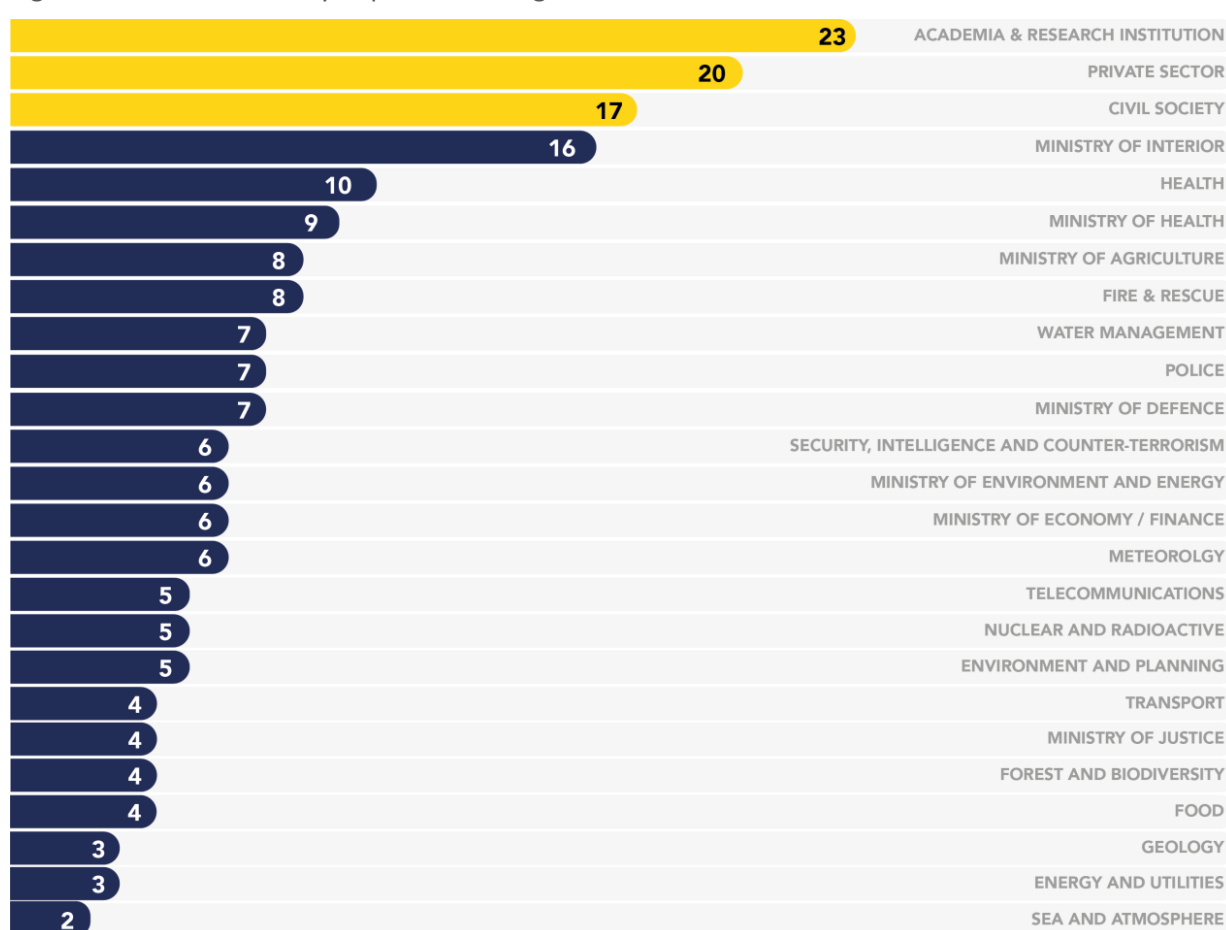
<sup>76</sup> Interviews with: national civil protection authorities (3); EU stakeholders (4); international stakeholders (1). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>77</sup> Not all DRM Summary Reports report on this particular element, thus the figures do not add up to 100%.

<sup>78</sup> Findings are from an analysis of the DRM Summary Reports provided by DG ECHO.

Nevertheless, taking a holistic approach to the development of national risk assessments and compiling DRM Summary Reports is noted as a key challenge for national authorities<sup>79</sup>. The feasibility of involving other sectors was found to be highly contingent on the institutional set up of civil protection authorities, and a function of the links and hierarchical organisation of civil protection institutions vis-à-vis other ministries and agencies). Such cooperation can be cumbersome. For example, different institutions may have diverging perspectives on what constitutes a risk, requiring significant mediation and harmonisation work. National civil protection authorities tasked with preparing DRM Summary Reports may need to invest significant resources in gathering inputs and actively engaging other stakeholders who may view the DRM Summary Report as outside their mandate or priorities<sup>80</sup>. For one Member State, the DRM Summary Report preparation process added value in forging and formalising links between the civil protection department and other stakeholders and institutions<sup>81</sup>.

Figure 22. DRM Summary Reports involving different sectors



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO analysis of DRM Summary Reports.

Notes: National sectors in **blue**; non-governmental actors in **yellow**.

**The quality of DRM Summary Reports has improved somewhat, but there is scope to improve the underlying data and guidance.** Stakeholders agreed that the quality of DRM Summary Reports

<sup>79</sup> European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face*, 2018; European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made risks the EU may face*, 2020; Interviews with: national civil protection authorities (4); EU stakeholders (3); international stakeholders (2). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>80</sup> Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>81</sup> Interviews with: national civil protection authorities (1).

improved during the evaluation period<sup>82</sup>. DG ECHO's changes have improved the assessment of cross-border risks, the consideration of Hi-Lo risks, emerging risks, and the assessment of the combined impacts of climate change and its effects. These changes were accomplished by incorporating standalone questions in the DRM Summary Report template<sup>83</sup>. A large majority of DRM Summary Reports reported the key risks linked to climate change impacts (100% of reporting Member States/Participating States) and which could have a low probability and high impact (88% of Member States/Participating States)<sup>84</sup>.

Suggested improvements to enhance the quality of DRM Summary Reports included:

- Incorporating more data sources, in particular more quantitative data, as most DRM Summary Reports rely on qualitative data (primarily cost data to emphasise the benefits of preventive measures)<sup>85</sup>;
- Introducing updated guidelines to simplify and facilitate national authorities' ability to compile DRM Summary Reports (e.g. including indicators)<sup>86</sup>. Alternatively, the Technical Assistance for Disaster Risk Management (Track 1) (single country grants under the PPP) have an increased focus on supporting Member States to improve disaster risk management and could play a greater role here<sup>87</sup>;
- There were diverging opinions on the possibility of incorporating foresight methodologies and on making DRM Summary Reports publicly available. In both cases, EU stakeholders were in favour of such adjustments, but national stakeholders viewed them as a potential additional burden<sup>88</sup>.

**Prevention projects funded under the PPP are an effective tool to enhance prevention activities.**

The majority of stakeholders agreed that these UCPM-funded projects effectively raised the level of prevention in Member and Participating States and, to a lesser extent, in eligible third countries<sup>89</sup>. This was achieved through the reinforcement of cooperation and awareness-raising activities<sup>90</sup>. Prevention projects funded under single-country grants (Track 1) were helpful in leveraging further national work on prevention. Multi-country grants (Track 2) helped to strengthen understanding of how to prevent cross-border risk<sup>91</sup>.

**The effectiveness of prevention projects under the PPP could be enhanced by implementing more follow-up monitoring practices to track and evaluate results.** A minority of DG ECHO and national stakeholders expressly disagreed that these projects effectively enhanced prevention<sup>92</sup>. To enhance

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<sup>82</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (1); EU stakeholders (3); national authorities (2).

<sup>83</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1); EU stakeholders (2); DG ECHO (2); international stakeholders (2).

<sup>84</sup> Findings from an analysis of DRM Summary Reports provided by DG ECHO.

<sup>85</sup> Interviews with: national civil protection authorities (1); EU stakeholders (2); international stakeholders (1). European Commission, Fifth Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre (DRMKC) Annual Seminar, 2022.

<sup>86</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (4). European Commission, *Lessons from the First COVID-19 Wave in Europe*, 2023.

<sup>87</sup> European Commission, *Note to DG ECHO Management: Prevention and Preparedness Programme 1: findings of recent evaluations and future outlook for the programme*, 2022.

<sup>88</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); DG ECHO (1). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>89</sup> EU Neighbourhood countries and IPA beneficiary countries that are not Participating States.

<sup>90</sup> Interviews with: national civil protection authorities (6); EU stakeholders (1); international stakeholders (3); DG ECHO (3). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (19/19), Participating States (15/19) and third countries (8/19); national authorities (30/48); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities – Member States (17/18), Participating States (15/15) and third countries (6/9). DG ECHO and World Bank, *Understanding the needs of civil protection agencies and opportunities for scaling-up disaster risk management investments*, 2021; European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil protection prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020)*, 2021.

<sup>91</sup> Interviews with: national civil protection authorities (2). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (1/10). DG ECHO and World Bank, *Understanding the needs of civil protection agencies and opportunities for scaling-up disaster risk management investments*, 2021.

<sup>92</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (3/19); national authorities (3/48).



the effectiveness of projects, stakeholders highlighted the need for additional follow-up activities to ensure that the outputs consistently and sustainably reached intended end-users<sup>93</sup>. The inclusion of all UCPM-funded project outputs in the Knowledge Network online platform is expected to help<sup>94</sup>. Several stakeholders noted that prevention projects' outputs could be more applicable and accessible for use by targeted end users eventually<sup>95</sup>.

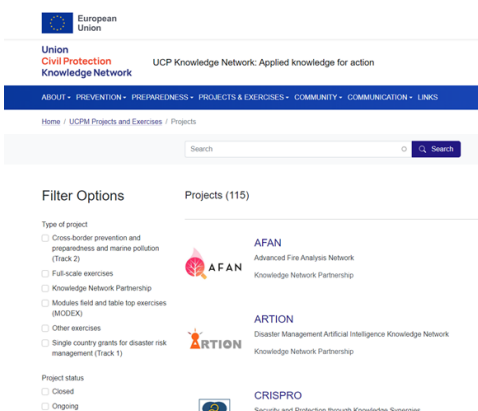
In view of the findings on the cross-sectoral cooperation challenges for national authorities, it is useful to note that, as cross-pillar tools, the PPP and Peer Review Programme were highlighted as effective tools to increase awareness, especially across sectors. The new PRAF is expected to raise awareness by introducing a standardised approach and sharing interdisciplinary best practices (see Section 5.1.1.4).

Figure 23. Lesson: Knowledge Network online platform project spaces

**Lesson learnt**

**Introduction of the project spaced in the Knowledge Network online platform**

The Knowledge Network online platform introduced a publicly accessible 'project spaces', which includes the outputs and information on the projects. This increases the impact of UCPM-funded projects by facilitating dissemination efforts to end users and ensuring the projects have an effect beyond their duration. In the evaluation of PPP in 2020, the establishment of a library was identified as a crucial recommendation. Stakeholders who were interviewed for the case study on the integration of preparedness activities highly appreciated this development as a valuable means to enhance effectiveness.



Source: ICF elaboration, based on case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities (see Annex 7).

The UCPM contributed (albeit to a lesser extent) to increasing awareness on disaster prevention through the **dissemination of scientific knowledge via the DRMKC**. A slight majority of stakeholders agreed that the DRMKC is a useful prevention initiative, especially in establishing links between the work of the scientific community and disaster risk reduction professionals<sup>96</sup>, primarily through the Risk Data Hub. Nevertheless, stakeholders agreed that its impact has been limited and it is not used to its full potential<sup>97</sup>. The Hub is characterised by limited applicability and accessibility of findings to the civil protection community<sup>98</sup>. Almost half of the experts surveyed who were involved in DRMKC

<sup>93</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (2); EU stakeholders (2). European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil protection prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020)*, 2021; see Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>94</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>95</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (2). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>96</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (1). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (10/12); national authorities (25/47); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities – Member States (3/5), Participating States (4/5), and third countries (3/5); European Commission, *Recommendations for National Risk Assessment for Disaster Risk Management in the EU*, JRC, 2021; European Commission, *Fifth Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre (DRMKC) Annual Seminar*, 2022. European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2019.

<sup>97</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (1). Surveys of: national authorities (3/47); DG ECHO Desk Officers (1/12).

<sup>98</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (1). European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2019; European Commission, *Recommendations for National Risk Assessment for Disaster Risk Management in the EU*, 2021; European Commission, *Fifth Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre (DRMKC) Annual Seminar*, 2022.

activities neither agreed or disagreed that the DRMKC was effective, suggesting a low level of engagement with the initiative<sup>99</sup>.

**Advisory missions in the field of prevention** appear to have been effective, although only limited data is available and key stakeholders had only limited awareness. During the evaluation period, three advisory missions took place, in Portugal, Georgia and Cuba (see Section 2). A freeze on advisory missions was in place between 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Approximately half of the stakeholders who commented on advisory missions agreed that they enhance prevention, especially in third countries<sup>100</sup>. Similarly, the advisory mission of 2018 in Portugal was found to have a significant impact on helping Portugal to learn more about forest fire prevention<sup>101</sup>. Only a very small minority disagreed<sup>102</sup> that these advisory missions contribute to enhancing prevention in target countries, but one-third of national authorities<sup>103</sup> expressed no opinion. This may suggest a potential lack of awareness or knowledge among those authorities on the impact of such missions<sup>104</sup>.

Looking ahead, the **Union Disaster Resilience Goals** adopted in February 2023 and the 2022 **Wildfire Action Plan** are perceived as tools with the potential to foster a higher level of prevention. The Goals are seen as a **key instrument that will increase the visibility of disaster prevention and make disaster risk reduction outputs more accessible**<sup>105</sup>. The Wildfire Action Plan was implemented in response to requests from Member States following the 2022 wildfire season, which had an alarming increase in the intensity and frequency of wildfires<sup>106</sup>. The Action Plan seeks to build on other UCPM prevention initiatives, including the Union Disaster Resilience Goals, and to increase awareness of good prevention measures in combating wildfires, including developing good practice guides and funding prevention projects.

*5.1.1.2 EQ1.2 To what extent did the UCPM achieve its specific objectives in the field of preparedness within the timeframes set by the Decision? To what extent are suitable mitigation measures in place in case objectives will not be met in the set time?*

#### Key findings

- The UCPM has contributed significantly to enhancing preparedness by supporting the development of capacity and, to a lesser extent, by sharing and facilitating access/use of (scientific) knowledge and best practice;
- The main activities that enhanced preparedness through the sharing of information and best practices were UCPM training and exercises, EWS, preparedness guidelines on host nation support, and (to a lesser extent) advisory missions in the field of preparedness;
- UCPM training and exercises are high quality and are implemented effectively, with tangible impacts at EU and national level;
- UCPM training continues to train experts who are not then deployed on missions and operations, while simultaneously deploying experts with insufficient training;

<sup>99</sup> Surveys of: experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (2/5).

<sup>100</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); international stakeholders (1); experts in civil protection (1). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (4/7); Participating States, (3/7) and third countries (5/7); national authorities (25/47).

<sup>101</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>102</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (1/7); Participating States (1/7); national authorities (6/47).

<sup>103</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (17/47).

<sup>104</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>105</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (4); EU stakeholders (5); international stakeholders (2); national authorities (5). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (11/14); national authorities (31/48).

<sup>106</sup> Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023; European Commission, *Overview of the Wildfire Prevention Action Plan*, 2022, [https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/Wildfire Prevention Action Plan.pdf#:~:text=a%20new%20wildfire%20prevention%20action%20plan%20This%20plan,EU%20initiatives%2C%20such%20as%20the%20EU%20Forest%20Strategy](https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/Wildfire%20Prevention%20Action%20Plan.pdf#:~:text=a%20new%20wildfire%20prevention%20action%20plan%20This%20plan,EU%20initiatives%2C%20such%20as%20the%20EU%20Forest%20Strategy)

### Key findings

- The new Training and Exercises Programme (to be implemented in September 2023) is expected to have a positive impact on enhancing preparedness;
- EU EWS effectively complement Member and Participating State EWS, applying effective innovations and integrating scientific knowledge and approaches. There is potential to enhance this system by developing additional functionalities and fostering greater interoperability of systems;
- Preparedness projects implemented through the PPP had a positive impact but could benefit from more follow-up to track and evaluate impacts after project completion;
- The impact of advisory missions in the field of prevention were primarily noted in third countries. Awareness of their impact may be limited by a potential lack of knowledge about these activities;
- The guidelines on host nation support were increasingly useful for national authorities during the evaluation period, but their applicability could be improved;
- The introduction and development of rescEU was one of the key successes in preparedness across the evaluation period;
- The ECPP and rescEU had a significant impact in enhancing preparedness through the development of capacity. There is a need to better connect capability development with needs assessment. rescEU should remain a last resort tool;
- Member States made use of adaptation grants to upgrade and repair their national resource capacity.

### Judgement criteria:

- JC1.5: UCPM preparedness activities contributed to an increased sharing, availability and use of (scientific) knowledge and best practices on disaster response (at EU/MS/PS/TC level);
- JC1.6: MS, PS and TC have achieved a higher level of preparedness;
- JC1.7: The (preparedness) mitigation measures in place were effective and suitable.

Judgement criteria (JC1.5 and JC1.6) will be answered jointly here. Similarly, due to the limited data on mitigation measures, these will be discussed when relevant activities are mentioned (JC1.7) in the coming subsections.

**During the period evaluated, UCPM activities and funded projects have enhanced preparedness through the increased sharing, availability, and use of (scientific) knowledge<sup>107</sup> and best practices, as well as by supporting the development of capabilities to respond to disasters.**

**The UCPM has contributed significantly to enhancing preparedness. This was achieved by supporting the development of capacity and, to a lesser extent, through the sharing, availability, and use of (scientific) knowledge and best practices.** The great majority of stakeholders agreed that the UCPM made significant progress towards its specific objectives in the field of preparedness<sup>108</sup>. A slight majority believed that the UCPM was slightly more effective in enhancing preparedness by supporting capacity development, rather than through the sharing, availability and use of scientific

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<sup>107</sup> While the Decision refers to 'scientific knowledge on disasters', the report refers to the entire knowledge base relevant for the management of disasters and is accordingly noted as '(scientific) knowledge' for clarity.

<sup>108</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (24); DG ECHO (11); EU stakeholders (13); international stakeholders (6); professional organisations (1); experts in civil protection (5). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (30/33); national authorities (45/50); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (17/19).

knowledge<sup>109</sup>. Based on the limited data available, stakeholders generally agreed that the UCPM is more effective in enhancing preparedness within than outside the EU. This observation is linked to discussions and considerations about the present and future role of the UCPM in third countries (see Section 4.3)<sup>110</sup>.

**UCPM activities played a significant role in enhancing preparedness through 1) increased sharing, availability and use of (scientific) knowledge and best practices on disasters, and 2) by complementing and supporting the development of response capacity.**

Several UCPM activities enhanced preparedness by contributing to the increased sharing, availability and use of (scientific) knowledge and best practices on disaster response. These include (in order of impact):

1. Training and Exercises Programme;
2. EWS;
3. Preparedness projects funded under the PPP;
4. Guidelines on host nation support;
5. Advisory missions in the field of preparedness.

**The Training and Exercises Programme enhanced preparedness by increasing the knowledge base and preparedness of key stakeholders participating in civil protection activities at both EU and national level** (see Section 1.1.4). The great majority of stakeholders highlighted the role of the Training and Exercises Programme in enhancing preparedness through the sharing of knowledge and best practices<sup>111</sup>. The main impacts achieved by UCPM training and exercises include:

- **EU level.** UCPM training and exercises have improved the effectiveness of EUCPT deployments. Deployed in response to a UCPM activation, the EUCPT typically plays a coordinating role. Experts and national authorities observed that EUCPT members who participated in training and exercises (particularly in-person training and EU MODEX) collaborated with one another more effectively<sup>112</sup>, as their prior acquaintance and familiarity eased their communication. The exercises for civil protection modules (EU MODEX) are designed to test specific modules or other response capacities, components of the UCPM and their coordination procedures<sup>113</sup>. Limited data show that closer cooperation and enhanced preparedness were achieved in the UCPM response to the February 2023 earthquake near the Turkish-Syrian border<sup>114</sup>;
- **National level.** UCPM training and exercises had an impact on the development of resources and dissemination of knowledge and best practices. The great majority of stakeholders involved in UCPM training and exercises helped to establish and develop national-level

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<sup>109</sup> **Developing capacity** – surveys of: national authorities (41/50); DG ECHO Desk Officers (30/33); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (17/19). **Sharing knowledge** – surveys of: national authorities (45/50); DG ECHO Desk Officers (28/33); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (17/20).

<sup>110</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (2). Surveys of: experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities – 73% (14/19) agreed for third countries and 85% (17/20) agreed for Member States; DG ECHO Desk Officers – 59% (10/17) agreed for third countries and 85% (28/33) agreed for Member States.

<sup>111</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (21); DG ECHO (3); EU stakeholders (1); international stakeholders (4); professional organisations (1); experts in civil protection (6). Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (training – 35/39; table-top exercises – 30/34; field exercises – 34/37). Annex 7 on case study on forest fires; Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023; European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019; EUROMODEX, *Final Consolidated Report Lot 2 / cycle 10 January 2019 – July 2020*, 2020.

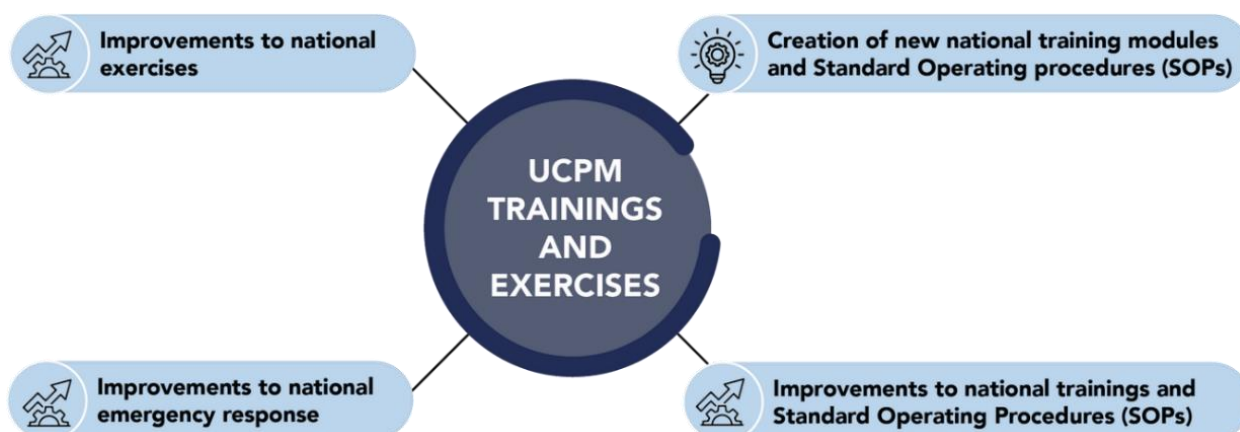
<sup>112</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (4); experts in civil protection (1); EU stakeholders (1); international stakeholders (1). Surveys of: training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (online training – 25/37, in-person training – 38/41, table-top exercises – 26/30, EU MODEX – 30/33). European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019.

<sup>113</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); experts in civil protection (1). Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (online training – 25/37, in-person training – 38/41, table-top exercises – 26/30, EU MODEX – 30/33).

<sup>114</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (1).

capacity-building initiatives<sup>115</sup>. Figure 24 presents an overview of how UCPM training and exercises fostered the improvement and creation of national disaster management activities. While national experts disseminate the knowledge learned during UCPM training and exercises, this could be more systematic in future<sup>116</sup>.

Figure 24. Examples of how UCPM trainings and exercises have influenced national level capacity building initiatives



Source: ICF elaboration, based on interim evaluation survey data<sup>117</sup>.

**UCPM training and exercises were delivered to a high quality level. However, the materials and methodological approach could be refined and improved, as could the content of online training.** Figure 25 shows that stakeholders valued the quality of UCPM training and exercises. The content of training sessions, their delivery, and the expertise and experience of trainers received the highest ratings in both training and exercises. Nevertheless, stakeholders noted that the materials for in-person training and table-top exercises could be improved. Similarly, the methodology and (to a lesser extent) content of online training could be refined<sup>118</sup>. Stakeholders made several suggestions for improvements to UCPM training and exercises:

- Materials provided to participants in training and exercises could be improved by **introducing an online ‘toolbox’**<sup>119</sup>;
- Future training could consider taking a **multi-hazard approach** and explore potential innovations. A small majority agreed<sup>120</sup> that a multi-hazard approach would be beneficial, with a minority<sup>121</sup> arguing that it could be overly complex;
- Training and exercises could be **modernised** (e.g. current overreliance on PowerPoint)<sup>122</sup>. The introduction of an online database and registration tool for training, along with the use of

<sup>115</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (18/21). Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1). European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism’s Training Programme*, 2019.

<sup>116</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (7/17). European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism’s Training Programme*, 2019.

<sup>117</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders - improvements to national training (6/17), creation of new training modules – (2/17), improvements to SOPs (6/17), creation of new SOPs (2/17), improvements to national emergency response (2/17), improvements to national exercises (3/17).

<sup>118</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders were somewhat/very dissatisfied with: material provided in online training (3/35), content of online training (2/36), method of online training (5/36).

<sup>119</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders were somewhat/very dissatisfied with: material provided in in-person training (1/38), material provided in table-top exercises (1/24), material provided in online training (3/35).

<sup>120</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (4/9).

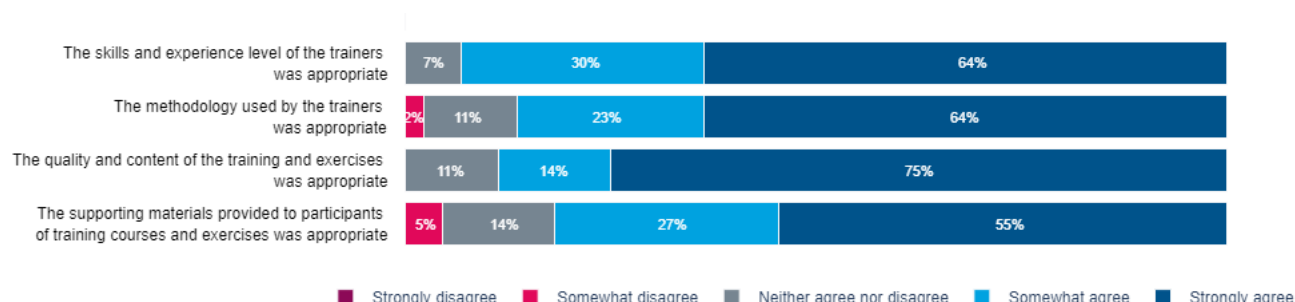
<sup>121</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (3/9).

<sup>122</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (4/44). Interviews with: expert in civil protection (1/10).



virtual reality during the recent discussion-based MODEX exercise on marine pollution, were highly valued by stakeholders<sup>123</sup>.

Figure 25. Training stakeholders: quality of UCPM training and exercises



Source: ICF elaboration, based on survey results for Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders.

**UCPM training and exercises were carried out successfully and were well-attended during the evaluation period. Appropriate mitigation measures were implemented to address challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.**

While there was a slight decrease in the volume of **UCPM exercises** implemented, the effectiveness of each exercise has increased. Figure 26 shows that the number of exercises decreased compared to the 2014-2016 period, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health measures. Nevertheless, key stakeholders agreed that the exercises during the evaluation period were effectively implemented<sup>124</sup>. Only a very small minority of stakeholders disagreed<sup>125</sup>. Most agreed that the UCPM was especially effective in implementing module (EU MODEX) exercises, which helped to foster interoperability between teams and test the capacity of the ECPP<sup>126</sup>. Stakeholders also noted that the implementation of exercises improved significantly since 2017, incorporating more interaction with different sectors<sup>127</sup>. There is room for improvement, however, including a more prominent focus on risk analysis in exercises<sup>128</sup>, ensuring greater interoperability between modules,<sup>129</sup> and ensuring more targeted content and approach<sup>130</sup>. A minority of stakeholders pointed out that there could be a more balanced representation of countries, particularly in EU MODEX<sup>131</sup>.

<sup>123</sup> European Commission, *DBX EU MODEX on Marine Pollution Conference*, 2023, <https://www.marine-pollution.eu-modex.eu/>; See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>124</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – EU MODEX (36/43), table-top exercises (31/41). Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1); national authorities (6).

<sup>125</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – EU MODEX (3/43), table-top exercises (2/41).

<sup>126</sup> Surveys of Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – EU MODEX (36/43). Interviews with: international stakeholders (1); national authorities (2).

<sup>127</sup> Interviews with: professional organisations (1); EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (1).

<sup>128</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).

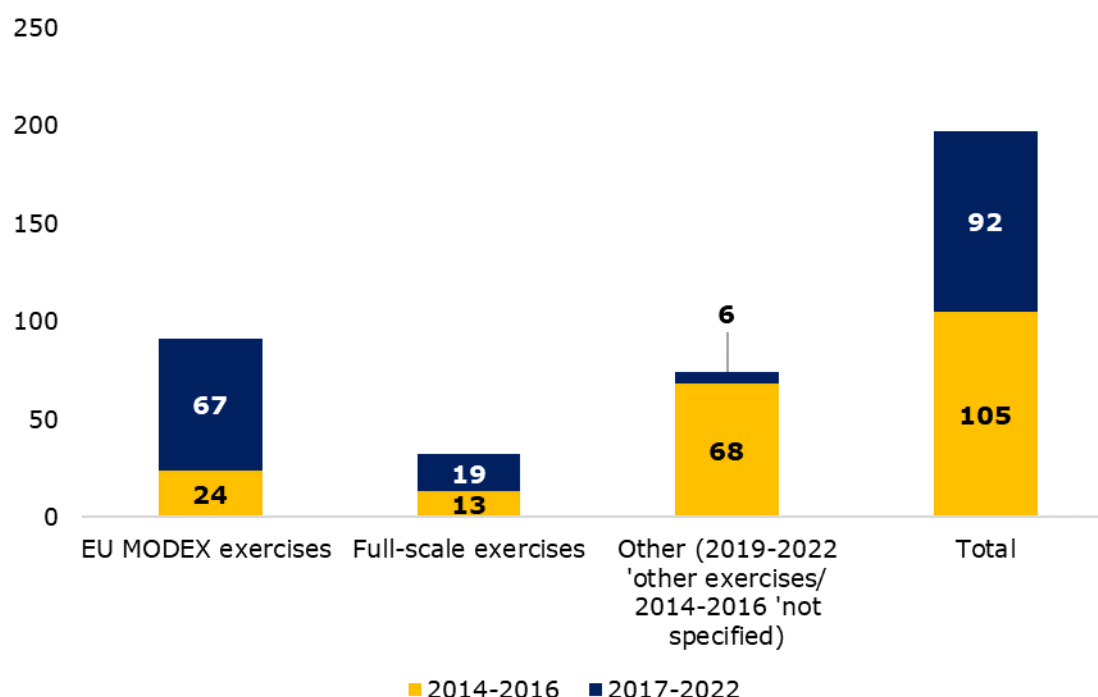
<sup>129</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2).

<sup>130</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).

<sup>131</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – somewhat/strongly disagree that the representation of countries was appropriate: EU MODEX (4/28), table-top exercises (2/29).



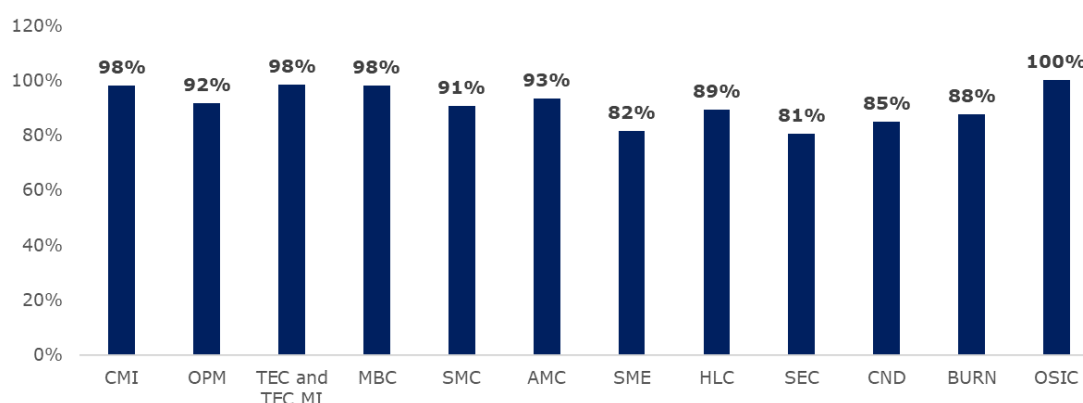
Figure 26. Overview of exercises implemented before/during the evaluation period



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

Notwithstanding the challenges associated with COVID-19, approximately 3,800 experts have attended at least one **UCPM training** course since 2017. Training stakeholders argued that UCPM in-person and, to a lesser extent, online training were effectively implemented<sup>132</sup>. However, key stakeholders expressed less appreciation for the online format, as it limited opportunities for networking and interaction with peers and trainers, affecting engagement<sup>133</sup>. Figure 27 shows that courses were well attended throughout the evaluation period and neared full capacity. Key stakeholders acknowledged that the number of participants was appropriate<sup>134</sup>, but a small minority identified a need for a more balanced representation of countries, especially in in-person training<sup>135</sup>.

Figure 27. Average participants and training places available, 2017-2022



<sup>132</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – in-person training (46/50); online (34/47).

<sup>133</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – in-person training (46/50); online (34/47). Interviews with: professional organisations (1); DG ECHO (1); experts in civil protection (1).

<sup>134</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – (38/43).

<sup>135</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – online training (2/38); in-person training (5/39).

Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

Notes: CMI: Union Civil Protection Mechanism Introduction Course; OPM: Operational Management Course; TEC: Technical Expert Course (including for TEC MI for Maritime Incidents); SMC: Staff Management Course; AMC: Assessment Mission Course; SME: Seminar for Mechanism Experts; HLC: High Level Coordination Course; SEC: Security Course; CND: Course on Negotiation and Decision-Making; BURN: Burns Assessment Team Training Course; OSIC: On-site Integration Course.

**UCPM training still faces challenges in reaching the target audience.** While the number of experts trained is sufficient, the UCPM continued to train experts who were not subsequently deployed, while simultaneously deploying experts who have not received all necessary training<sup>136</sup>. This is consistent with findings of the previous UCPM interim evaluation. In addition, stakeholders raised concerns about participants' English proficiency<sup>137</sup> and prior knowledge/understanding of the Mechanism<sup>138</sup>. Three national civil protection authorities suggested that training and exercises in general could be more targeted, with invites sent to members of more specialised communities<sup>139</sup>.

**The forthcoming merging of UCPM exercises and training under the new Training and Exercises Programme is expected to introduce changes that will increase the effectiveness of these activities.** It will merge the previously separate UCPM training programme and civil protection exercises (see Section 2.2; case study on the integration of preparedness activities in Annex 7). Stakeholders agreed that the new Training and Exercises Programme, implemented from September 2023, will likely increase the effectiveness of UCPM training and exercises, enhancing preparedness<sup>140</sup>. A small minority of respondents disagreed, citing concerns about the increasing role of online training compared to in-person training<sup>141</sup>. The following elements of the new Programme will likely have the most impact on improving the effectiveness of UCPM training and exercises:

- A **'deployable training path'** with a limited number of places per Member State. It will require experts' participation in an EU MODEX exercise. Upon completion of the deployable training path, participants may be included in a 'pool of deployable experts' within the ECPP<sup>142</sup>. This could have a significant impact on addressing the reported mismatch between participants receiving UCPM training and those deployed on missions and operations. the path will also include a layer of assessment, with feedback and recommendations on whether the participant has obtained the knowledge and skills to move to the next step in the Programme<sup>143</sup>;
- A **new framework contract for ad hoc training run by external contractors**. This will provide access to external expertise that is compatible with, and also different from, the current pool<sup>144</sup>. Stakeholders expect this to provide access to more practice-driven and hands-on courses (e.g. on cultural awareness)<sup>145</sup>.

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<sup>136</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); national authorities (1). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities. European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019.

<sup>137</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); experts in civil protection (1); professional organisations (2). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>138</sup> Interviews with: professional organisations (2); international organisations (1); DG ECHO (2). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>139</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3).

<sup>140</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (1); international organisations (1); national authorities (5). Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – agreed (17/39), did not agree/disagree (17/39), disagreed (5/39). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>141</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – (2/5).

<sup>142</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>143</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities. European Commission, *UCPM Training and Exercises – Participant performance Assessment and Evaluation in the UCPM Training Courses*, 2021.

<sup>144</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>145</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities. Assessment of the Framework Contract on the provision of ad hoc training that ICF recently signed (on behalf of the Civitas Soteria consortium) with DG ECHO has been conducted by an external expert to avoid a conflict of interest.

**EU-level EWS effectively complement national systems to enhance preparedness, especially in Member and Participating States.** Stakeholders agreed that EWS effectively contributed to enhancing preparedness by providing the ERCC with situational awareness and understanding, and complementing national systems<sup>146</sup>. National stakeholders from Member and Participating States underlined that while EU-level EWS are not their primary tool, they effectively complement the existing national tools<sup>147</sup>. Stakeholders predominantly rely on the Copernicus Emergency Management Service<sup>148</sup>, chiefly EFFIS<sup>149</sup> and EFAS<sup>150</sup>. They also use GDACS, the Aristotle (All Risk Integrated System towards Trans-boundary holistic Early-warning) system and GNSS, based on the EU Space Programme Galileo<sup>151</sup>.

**Since 2017, EWS have introduced improvements to strengthen their contribution to enhancing preparedness.** They built on recommendations in the 2016 interim evaluation of the UCPM to incorporate more scientific expertise, build closer synergies between systems, and improve functionality<sup>152</sup>, including:

- Building on the longstanding relationship with the JRC to incorporate science into its EWS (such as Aristotle). EWS included **scientific expertise** through the establishment of a European Anthropogenic Hazard Scientific Partnership (EAHSP) in April 2022<sup>153</sup>. This trend is set to continue, with Member and Participating States allowed to ask the ERCC to receive expert judgement from the EAHSP<sup>154</sup>. In addition, the setting up of a Scientific and Technical Advisory Facility (STAF) to enhance capabilities for early warning to include strategic foresight will enhance the incorporation of scientific expertise into EWS<sup>155</sup>;
- Efforts to **ensure closer synergies** between EWS, in particular between Copernicus and GDACS on multi-hazard mapping<sup>156</sup>;
- Continuous efforts to **improve the accuracy of data and information**. Improvements include increasing systems' capacity, enhancing systems regularly, and adding new functionality, such as Copernicus' introduction of exposure mapping, with information on exposed population, housing and other assets from satellite and census data<sup>157</sup>. Improvements underway include the introduction of multi-hazard monitoring in the Global Situation System Dashboard to give more comprehensive mapping of the interlinking effects of disasters.

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<sup>146</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers - Member States (6/7), Participating States (6/7), third countries (3/7); national authorities (38/38); DG ECHO (3/24). Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); experts in civil protection (2); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (16). See Annex 7 for case study on floods.

<sup>147</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (16). European Commission, *Early Warning System e-Meeting Minutes (online)*, 2020; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020, 2021*; European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>148</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); experts in civil protection (1); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (8).

<sup>149</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3). See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>150</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1). See Annex 7 for case study on floods.

<sup>151</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (8).

<sup>152</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*; European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2018; European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2019; European Commission, *Early Warning System e-Meeting Minutes (online)*, 2020; European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2021.

<sup>153</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) Strategic crisis management in the EU*, 2022.

<sup>154</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>155</sup> European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022.

<sup>156</sup> European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2021.

<sup>157</sup> European Commission, *Early Warning System e-Meeting Minutes*, 2020; European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2021; European Commission, *Early Warning Systems (EWS) Expert Group Meeting*, 2022; European Commission, *Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) Strategic crisis management in the EU*, 2022.

**There is room for improvement to make EWS more effective in enhancing preparedness.**

Stakeholders agreed that EWS should be improved to ensure they more effectively support national and EU-level preparedness<sup>158</sup>. In particular, they could be revised to:

1. **Ensure that information is less fragmented across EU and domestic EWS.** Several stakeholders highlighted the challenge of managing a vast amount of information from various systems, making it difficult to conduct expert assessments promptly during major events<sup>159</sup>. In addition, EU-level EWS could influence national EWS more systematically<sup>160</sup>. For example, one national authority pointed out that certain countries have better alignment between their national systems and the EU EWS. It highlighted a significant example during the 2021 flash floods in Germany, where early warning information was available at European level, but local and regional authorities were unaware of the system and the extent of the anticipated floods<sup>161</sup>;
2. **Cover more hazards.** The hazard most effectively covered by early warning and monitoring systems is forest fires, thanks to near real-time monitoring. However, the monitoring of floods, health emergencies and other human-induced or anthropogenic disasters could be improved and made more effective<sup>162</sup>;
3. **Include more innovative data sources.** Discussions on how to improve EWS assessments centred on the importance of including more innovative data sources, such as social media and data from mobile operators, as well as incorporating artificial intelligence (AI)<sup>163</sup>. The following H2020-funded projects represent current progress:
  - a) CLINT – Climate Intelligence project, which seeks to develop an AI framework to process big climate datasets to improve climate science in the detection, causation and attribution of extreme events<sup>164</sup>;
  - b) XAIDA – eXtreme events: Artificial Intelligence for Detection and Attribution, which brings together research institutes and climate risk practitioners to better assess and predict the influence of climate change on extreme weather using AI<sup>165</sup>;
4. **Ensure more quality control.** More quality control systems could be put in place to check the forecasts and report results from EWS<sup>166</sup>.

**Similar to prevention projects (see EQ1.1), preparedness projects funded under the PPP were an effective tool to share (scientific) knowledge and best practices on disasters and raise preparedness at national and Union level.** The majority of stakeholders agreed that these UCPM-funded projects effectively enhanced preparedness in Member and Participating States and, to a lesser extent, in eligible third countries. This was achieved through the reinforcement of cooperation

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<sup>158</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (3).

<sup>159</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1); experts in civil protection (1).

<sup>160</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on floods. Interviews with: national authorities (1).

<sup>161</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).

<sup>162</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1). European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2018 Forest Fire Season*, 2019; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021, 2022*; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020, 2021*; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2022.

<sup>163</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2019; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020, 2021*; European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2021.

<sup>164</sup> CLINT, Our Mission, 2023, <https://climateintelligence.eu/>

<sup>165</sup> XAIDA, XAIDA – eXtreme events: Artificial Intelligence for Detection and Attribution, 2023, <https://xaida.eu/>

<sup>166</sup> European Commission, *Early Warning System e-Meeting Minutes*, 2020; Casajus Valles, A., Marin Ferrer, M., Poljanšek, K. and Clark, I., *Science for Disaster Risk Management 2020: acting today, protecting tomorrow*, 2020.

and sharing of best practices<sup>167</sup>. As for prevention, the single country grants (Track 1) help to leverage further work on preparedness at national level.

**As with EQ1.1, the applicability and lack of follow-up monitoring of the results of preparedness projects funded under the PPP could be tackled to improve their effectiveness.** A small minority of stakeholders disagreed that the preparedness projects funded under the PPP contributed to enhancing preparedness, primarily highlighting a lack of effectiveness for third countries<sup>168</sup>. The sustainability of the impact of preparedness projects is limited, due to a lack of follow-up on project results (e.g. checking whether a network created by a project is still running), undermining overall effectiveness<sup>169</sup>. In some cases, for example, project website domains expired on the conclusion of a project<sup>170</sup>. The Knowledge Network online platform, which now includes all project outputs (and the ability to filter the project spaces by set criteria), will likely significantly extend their impact (see Figure 23)<sup>171</sup>. Some preparedness project outputs could be made more accessible and applicable to civil protection authorities<sup>172</sup>. For example, involving end users in the project proposal and design, or creating simulation tools, databases and platforms that can be easily used after the project finishes<sup>173</sup>.

**The guidelines on host nation support were an increasingly useful tool for national authorities, with further scope to improve their applicability.** The guidelines provide a framework to facilitate and coordinate the reception, deployment, and provision of assistance to teams and assets during UCPM activations. Stakeholders recognised the guidelines as a beneficial tool that has significantly improved since 2017<sup>174</sup>. Four national authorities reported using the guidelines to develop their own national guidelines for response efforts delivered under UCPM activations and/or bilateral schemes<sup>175</sup>. Stakeholders prefer guidelines that remain flexible and non-binding, as an adaptable reference for the development of national practices and tools<sup>176</sup>. There are areas that could be improved, however, such as updating the guidelines (to include good practice examples, e.g. on waving custom fees, or exemptions for the equipment brought to a country) and raising awareness of their existence<sup>177</sup>. The guidelines are due to be updated in 2023<sup>178</sup>.

As discussed under EQ1.1, **advisory missions in the field of preparedness** appear to have been effective, primarily in third countries, despite a lack of awareness and limited data. Several stakeholders agreed that advisory missions are increasingly effective in enhancing preparedness<sup>179</sup>.

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<sup>167</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (1/19), Participating States – (1/19) and third countries (8/19); national authorities (38/50); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities – third countries (1/15). Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (1); experts in civil protection (1); international stakeholders (3); national authorities (9).

<sup>168</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (18/19), Participating States – (14/19) and third countries (4/19); national authorities (3/50); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities – Member States (12/17), Participating States (16/16), third countries (7/9).

<sup>169</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (2); EU stakeholders (2). European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil protection prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020)*, 2021. See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>170</sup> European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil protection prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020)*, 2021.

<sup>171</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>172</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (2). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>173</sup> European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil protection prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020)*, 2021.

<sup>174</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); experts in civil protection (1); international stakeholders (2); national authorities (17). European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>175</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (1); national authorities (4).

<sup>176</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3).

<sup>177</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (5).

<sup>178</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). Where relevant, the evaluation team mentions activities taking place beyond the evaluation period where they (will/may) have an impact on evaluation findings.

<sup>179</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); experts (1); international stakeholders (1); professional organisations (1). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (3/7), Participating States (3/7), third countries (6/7); national authorities (17/48).

In fact, DG ECHO stakeholders argued that this is the most effective UCPM activity in terms of enhancing preparedness in third countries<sup>180</sup>. One professional organisation supporting the implementation of UCPM activities (training, exercises, EoE Programme) similarly claimed that holding more advisory missions in third countries would improve preparedness for UCPM deployment to third countries<sup>181</sup>. A DG ECHO officer also suggested that advisory missions could include elements of training citizens as first responders<sup>182</sup>. An overall lack of opinions collected on advisory missions might be an indicator of a lack of awareness of their implementation.

The **pre-positioning of firefighters** in 2021 had a positive impact on knowledge sharing between firefighters in regions dealing with forest fires and were well received as a tool to make responses more effective<sup>183</sup>. In 2021, firefighters were positioned in Greece to help with the summer forest fire season. After positive Member and Participating State feedback, this effort has been renewed, with 11 Member States to send almost 450 firefighters to France, Greece and Portugal ahead of the forest fire season<sup>184</sup>. There are limited data on how this activity should be continued and reinforced<sup>185</sup>.

Looking ahead, the following **UCPM activities adopted towards the end/after the evaluation period** are expected to have a positive impact on enhancing preparedness. They will likely do so by increasing the sharing, availability and use of (scientific knowledge) and best practices on disaster response:

1. The **Knowledge Network** is expected to have an impact on enhancing preparedness<sup>186</sup>, notably by bringing science further into the fabric of UCPM preparedness activities<sup>187</sup>. The Knowledge Network's Science Pillar aims to 'identify, promote and feed the needs of the civil protection community into the national and international scientific agendas (e.g. research programmes) and to enhance the use and dissemination of existing and developing scientific knowledge in all DRM phases'<sup>188</sup>. Nevertheless, several national authorities noted a lack of clarity on how the Knowledge Network will operate and make an impact<sup>189</sup>;
2. Stakeholders expressed their positive views on the **scenario building** exercises to date, highlighting their potential in enhancing preparedness<sup>190</sup>. Areas for improvement include linking scenarios with capability requirements (e.g. how findings from scenarios can inform which capabilities are developed in the ECPP and/or rescEU)<sup>191</sup> and taking sufficient time to discuss the scenarios in-depth (one national authority found them rushed)<sup>192</sup>;

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<sup>180</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (6/7).

<sup>181</sup> Interviews with: professional organisations (1).

<sup>182</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>183</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*. Interviews with: national authorities (1). See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>184</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2). European Commission, *Success is based on preparation – ERCC ready for the 2023 wildfire season*, 2023, <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/news/success-based-preparation-ercc-ready-2023-wildfire-season>; European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>185</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>186</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (6); experts in civil protection (2); international stakeholders (2); national authorities (1). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>187</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); experts in civil protection (1). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>188</sup> European Commission, *Concept paper: Building the Science Pillar of the Union Civil protection Knowledge Network*, 2021.

<sup>189</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1). See Annex 7 for three case studies on integration of UCPM preparedness activities, forest fires and floods.

<sup>190</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (2); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (5). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (9/14), Participating States (9/14).

<sup>191</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); national authorities (1).

<sup>192</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).



3. In addition to contributing to a culture of prevention (EQ1.1), DG ECHO and national stakeholders noted that the **Union Disaster Resilience Goals** could have an impact on enhancing preparedness, especially in Member and Participating States<sup>193</sup>;
4. Two DG ECHO stakeholders mentioned that the **ERCC 2.0 initiative** is likely to enhance preparedness at EU and national level, given its focus on horizon scanning and foresight<sup>194</sup>.

**UCPM's preparedness activities enhance preparedness by supporting the development of national capacity. UCPM activities with this impact include:**

1. rescEU;
2. ECPP, including its adaptation grants.

**rescEU and the ECPP (formerly the EERC and Voluntary Pool) have been instrumental in supporting the development of national capacity.** The large majority of stakeholders agreed that rescEU<sup>195</sup> and the ECPP<sup>196</sup> contributed to enhancing preparedness. National authorities noted that both the ECPP and rescEU helped to identify and address (potential) capacity shortcomings<sup>197</sup>. A small minority of stakeholders, mostly from national authorities, disagreed that the ECPP<sup>198</sup> and rescEU<sup>199</sup> contributed to enhancing preparedness, but did not justify that assessment.

**The development of capacity in the ECPP and rescEU could be better linked to needs assessment.** Stakeholders would like to see better use of strategic and analytical assessments to drive decision-making prior to the development of capacity in both the ECPP and rescEU<sup>200</sup>. They suggested that the development of capacity in the ECPP and rescEU could be informed by findings from risk mapping and scenario building (see Section 4.4). One DG ECHO Desk Officer suggested that this could be an opportunity for DG ECHO to drive technology development for improved and innovative capacities, as with some shelter capacity<sup>201</sup>.

**Stakeholders perceive that greater efforts should be made to ensure that rescEU remains a last resort tool when ECPP capacity is insufficient.** rescEU was established to fill capacity gaps in the ECPP as a last resort safety net.<sup>202</sup> In the case of a request for assistance, the ERCC always check for spontaneous offers from other countries, as well as the ECPP, before turning to rescEU. Nevertheless, the majority of stakeholders, primarily from national authorities, noted an excessive reliance on rescEU since 2019. While this is understandable as rescEU has been in the first years of its implementation in a context characterised by severe crises, in the future authorities noted that they would expect rescEU to remain a "last resort tool" to be triggered only when ECPP capacities are not sufficient<sup>203</sup>. While national authorities emphasised that the ECPP should remain the core tool for

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<sup>193</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (4). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (11/14), Participating States (11/14), third countries (4/14); national authorities (31/48).

<sup>194</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>195</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (24); international stakeholders (6); EU stakeholders (11); DG ECHO (11); experts in civil protection (2). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (12/12); national authorities (36/46). See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>196</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (14); international stakeholders (3); EU stakeholders (2); DG ECHO (2). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers - Member States (9/11), Participating States (8/11); national authorities (36/48). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>197</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (7).

<sup>198</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (1/11), Participating States (1/11); national authorities (4/48).

<sup>199</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (2/46).

<sup>200</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (5). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. European Committee of the Regions, *Preparing for and dealing with crises: strengthening the resilience of the Union, its regions and cities*, COM(2021) 576 final.

<sup>201</sup> Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.

<sup>202</sup> European Commission, *Annual Activity Report 2021, 2022*.

<sup>203</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (8); DG ECHO (3). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

capacity development of the UCPM, a small minority of EU-level stakeholders argued that the current balance is already adequate<sup>204</sup> or that rescEU could be grown further<sup>205</sup>.

**The establishment and development of rescEU had a significant impact on supporting Union and national preparedness during the evaluation period and is set to grow in the coming years.** The large majority of stakeholders agreed that rescEU was an important innovation that contributed to enhancing UCPM, Member and Participating State preparedness<sup>206</sup>. As discussed in Section 1.2.3.2, rescEU transition was first introduced to quickly build aerial forest fire fighting capacities for forest fire summer seasons in Europe. rescEU proper has then been building on this by expanding significantly across sectors covered and number of grants awarded (see Figure 28). A wide range of Member States made use of rescEU proper, with 15 Member States obtaining at least one rescEU proper grant across the evaluation period (see Figure 29). Stakeholders highlighted that, overall, rescEU had an impact on enhancing preparedness for health emergencies (especially medical stockpiling in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic)<sup>207</sup>, forest fires<sup>208</sup> and energy security<sup>209</sup>, particularly in light of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. As illustrated in Figure 28, the number of areas covered by rescEU proper already exceeded the target of six areas for rescEU to cover set for 2024.<sup>210</sup> In the evaluation period, rescEU proper awarded most grants for medical stockpiling, followed by aerial forest fire plane. However, grants are also increasingly covering a wider range of capacities, including for shelters, CBRN stockpiles, decontamination and detection, transport, and emergency energy supply.

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<sup>204</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (1).

<sup>205</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholder (1). European Committee of the Regions, *Preparing for and dealing with crises: strengthening the resilience of the Union, its regions and cities*, COM(2021) 576 final.

<sup>206</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (24); international stakeholders (6); EU stakeholders (11/27); DG ECHO (11); experts in civil protection (2). Surveys of DG ECHO Desk Officers (12/12); national authorities (36/46). See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

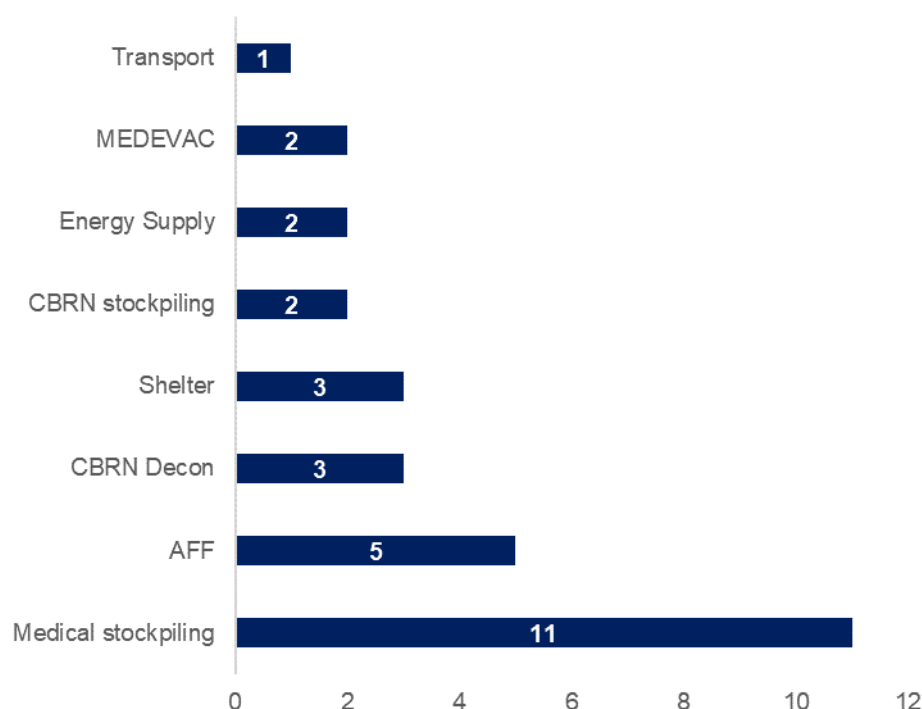
<sup>207</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); international stakeholders (1); experts in civil protection (1); DG ECHO (3).

<sup>208</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3). European Commission, *Annual Activity Report 2019, 2020*; European Commission, *Forest fires in Europe, Middle East and North Africa*, 2021. See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>209</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3).

<sup>210</sup> European Commission, *Annual Activity Report 2021, 2022*.

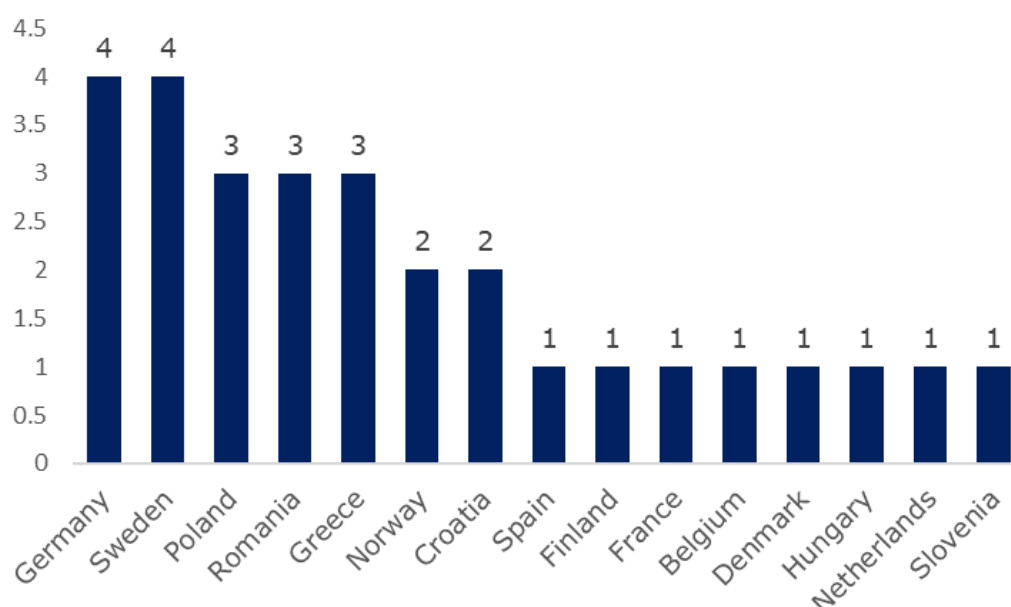
Figure 28. Number of grants awarded by rescEU proper, 2017-2022 proper



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

Notes: As the interim evaluation covers 2017 to 2022, the grants discussed in 2022 but signed in January 2023 or later are not included; transport grants correspond to three planes, while stockpiling, energy supply, and shelter comprise a wide range of categories of items.

Figure 29. Overview of grants awarded by rescEU proper, by Member State



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

**The redefinition of the ECPP and, to a lesser extent, the integration of the European Medical Corps (EMC) were considered developments that positively enhanced preparedness.** In particular:

- **Redefinition of the ECPP.** In 2019, the European Emergency Response Capacity (EERC), also known as the voluntary pool, was strengthened and transformed into the ECPP. Stakeholders

agreed that this redefinition and reinforcement of the ECPP enhanced its preparedness, and by extension that of the Union, establishing it as a critical actor<sup>211</sup>. For example, since 2021, the UCPM also covers operational costs in case of deployment within and outside the Union<sup>212</sup>;

- **Redefinition of the EMC in the ECPP.** The EMC consists of various medical and public health teams, including doctors, nurses, paramedics, epidemiologists, and other healthcare professionals. Personnel for the EMC are provided by Member and Participating States and are certified to ensure that they meet WHO quality standards<sup>213</sup>. In 2018, the EMC was defined as part of the ECPP (then EERC) to be deployed as response capacity<sup>214</sup>. Stakeholders agreed that this development, and the role of the EMC, had a positive impact on enhancing preparedness for health emergencies<sup>215</sup>. One international stakeholder highlighted the positive contribution of the EMC in medical evacuation processes in the context of the Türkiye -Syria earthquake<sup>216</sup>. Stakeholders noted, however, that the EMC is underutilised and could be more visible<sup>217</sup>.

**Despite difficulties (such as COVID-19), the ECPP enhanced preparedness through a moderate increase in capacity across the evaluation period.** As of February 2023, there were 123 committed or offered ECPP capacities, of which 85 are full pool capacities registered in CECIS (see Section 1)<sup>218</sup>. Member and Participating States committed 69 capacities, of which 54 were registered across the evaluation period (see Figure 30). This is compared to a total of 77 capacities committed between 2014 and 2016. In addition, the evaluation period saw the withdrawal of some capacities (i.e. commitment was not renewed by Member States), thus the ECPP did not show linear growth. A contraction in the volume of capacity committed for the first time was evident in 2018, 2019 and 2021. Conversely, a significant increase in capacity was reported in 2020, despite the difficulties in certifying capacity remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and thus the slowing of registering capacity in CECIS<sup>219</sup>. DG ECHO applied suitable mitigation measures to ensure that more capacity was certified in 2021, such as introducing the possibility to conduct some certification steps online<sup>220</sup>. Some capacity was deployed before being certified and registered, in case where they were necessary for response efforts, showing the UCPM's flexibility<sup>221</sup>. Another mitigation measure was the April 2022 introduction of the possibility to certify 'twin capacities' (i.e. when Member States develop and commit ECPP response capacities of the same type and with identical features, procedures, equipment and management), thereby expediting the process<sup>222</sup>.

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<sup>211</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (5).

<sup>212</sup> Decision (EU) 2019/420 amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

<sup>213</sup> European Commission, *European Medical Corps – factsheet*, 2023, [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/european-medical-corps\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/european-medical-corps_en)

<sup>214</sup> Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/142 amending implementing Decision 2014/762/EU laying down rules for the implementation of Decision No 1313/2013/EU.

<sup>215</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (2); DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (3).

<sup>216</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (1).

<sup>217</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (1).

<sup>218</sup> As of December 2022, the committed/offered capacities were 124. Germany withdrew its Standing Engineering Capacity (SEC) in January 2023.

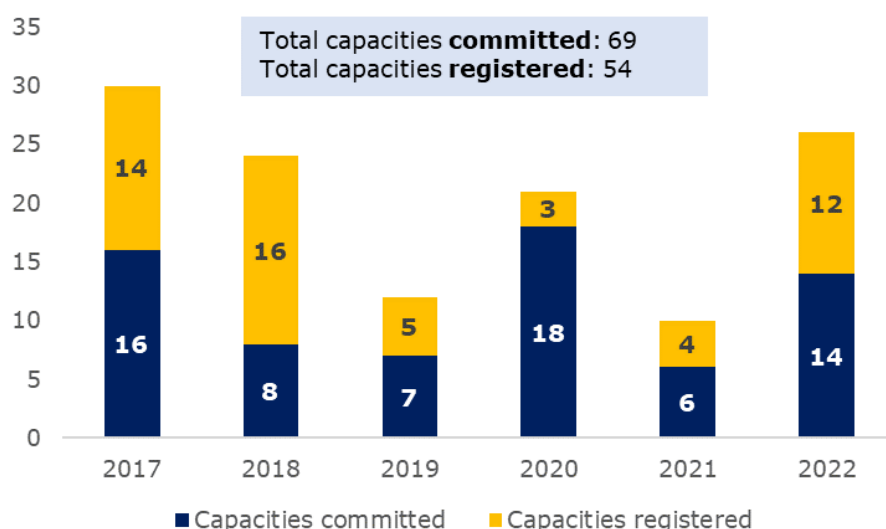
<sup>219</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>220</sup> European Commission, *Annual Activity Report 2021, 2022*.

<sup>221</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>222</sup> European Commission, *Guidelines for a streamlined certification and re-certification process for 'twin' ECPP capacities*, 2022.

Figure 30. Overview of ECPP capacities, newly committed and registered annually, 2017-2022



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

**The majority of ECPP capacity registered have not met set capacity goals, with four making no progress since 2014.** Table 5 shows that approx. 60% of capacity goals were not met during the evaluation period, with no progress registered for nine goals. This was a recurring trend since 2014, at least for module capacities, with four capacities making no progress: CBRNUSAR (USAR in CBRN conditions); FFFH (aerial forest firefighting module using helicopters – which could be due to the capacities developed in rescEU), ETC (emergency temporary camp), FHOS (field hospital) (2017-2019, replaced by EMT3 in 2019) and MEVAC (medical aerial evacuation of disaster victims). Nevertheless, 14% (four) of capacity goals were met and 24% (seven) of capacity goals were exceeded. In one case of heavy urban search and rescue (HUSAR), the capacity goal was exceeded by 500%. Limited stakeholder feedback suggests that the ECPP capacity goals could be redrafted to reflect developments from climate change<sup>223</sup>, have a stronger evidence based (e.g. involving the scientific community)<sup>224</sup>, and be more closely linked to scenario building<sup>225</sup>.

Table 5. Progress of ECPP registered capacities towards set goals

		2014-2016 (baseline)	2017-2022 (evaluation period)		
Capacity		Progress	Registered	Goal	Progress
ORCs	CBRNDET (CBRN detection and sampling)	200%	4	2	200%
	CBRNUSAR (USAR in CBRN conditions)	0%	0	1	0%
	EMT type 1 (emergency medical team type 1: outpatient emergency care)	100%			
	AMP (advanced medical post) was replaced by EMT1 in December 2019.		3	7	43%
	EMT type 2 (emergency medical team type 2: inpatient surgical emergency care)	200%			
	AMP-S (advanced medical post with surgery) was replaced by EMT2 in December 2019.		6	3	200%

<sup>223</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).

<sup>224</sup> Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.

<sup>225</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

Interim Evaluation of the implementation of Decision No. 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2017-2022

		2014-2016 (baseline)	2017-2022 (evaluation period)		
Capacity		Progress	Registered	Goal	Progress
	EMT type 3 (emergency medical team type 3: inpatient referral care) <i>FHOS (field hospital) was replaced by EMT3 in December 2019.</i>	0%	0	1	0%
	ETC (emergency temporary camp)	0%	1	2	50%
	FC (flood containment)	200%	1	2	50%
	FFFH (aerial forest firefighting module using helicopters)	0%	0	2	0%
	FFFP (aerial forest fire fighting module using planes)	50%	2	2	100%
	FRB (flood recue using boats)	150%	3	2	150%
	GFFF (ground forest fire fighting)	200%	5	2	250%
	GFFF-V (ground forest fire fighting using vehicles)	150%	7	2	350%
	HCP (high-capacity pumping)	233%	14	6	233%
	HUSAR (heavy urban search and rescue)	350%	10	2	500%
	MEVAC (medical aerial evacuation of disaster victims)	0%	0	1	0%
	MUSAR (medium urban search and rescue - one for cold conditions)	83%	5	6	83%
	WP (water purification)	200%	2	2	100%
	WSAR (water search and rescue)	-	1	2	50%
	Additional capacity shelter-kit:	-	0	6	0%
	Additional shelter capacity: units for 250 persons (50 tents) incl. self-sufficiency unit for the handling staff	-	10	100	10%
	CBRN decontamination teams	-	0	2	0%
	Communication teams or platforms to quickly re-establish communications in remote areas	-	1	2	50%
	Emergency medical teams for specialised care	-	0	8	0%
	Evacuation support: including teams for information management and logistics	-	0	2	0%
	Firefighting: advisory/assessment teams	-	2	2	100%
	Marine pollution capacities	-	1	As necessary	100%
	Medical evacuation jets air ambulance and medical evacuation helicopter separately for inside Europe or worldwide	-	0	2	0%
	Mobile biosafety laboratories	-	1	4	25%
	Mobile laboratories for environmental emergencies	-	1	2	50%
	Other response capacities necessary to address identified risks	-	0	As necessary	100%
	Power generators above 150 kW	-	0	10	0%
	Power generators of 5-150 kW	-	0	100	0%
	Standing engineering capacity	-	0	1	0%
	Structural engineering teams	-	1	2	50%
	Teams for cave search and rescue	-	2	2	100%



		2014-2016 (baseline)	2017-2022 (evaluation period)		
Capacity		Progress	Registered	Goal	Progress
	Teams for maritime incident response	-	1	2	50%
	Teams for mountain search and rescue	-	1	2	100%
	Teams with specialised search and rescue equipment, e.g. search robots	-	0	2	0%
	Teams with unmanned aerial vehicles/Remoted Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS)	-	3	2	150%
	Water pumps with minimum capacity to pump 800 l/min	-	1	100	1%
	TAST	-	4	2	200%

Source: ICF elaboration, based on European Commission, European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP) Snapshot report 2022, 2023 and European Commission, Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016, 2017.

Notes: Cells marked with ‘-’ do not mean that no capacity was in the ECPP between 2014-2016, but, rather, that the evaluation team did not have access to these data.

**Adaptation grants are a resourceful tool to help national authorities to upgrade and repair the response capacities formally committed to the ECPP.** National stakeholders agreed that adaptation grants had an impact on enhancing Union and national preparedness<sup>226</sup>. Figure 31 and Figure 32 show that DG ECHO signed an increasing number of adaptation grants with a variety of Member States for the upgrade and repair of response capacity. During the evaluation period, the UCPM awarded 46 adaptation grants to 16 Member States, totalling EUR 23 million. Adaptation grants were typically given to a single Member State, except for one high-capacity pumping module, where the grant was given to multiple Member States (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia). Some Member State authorities relying on the grants viewed them as a significant advantage of the UCPM, enabling them to improve their emergency response capacity<sup>227</sup>. Nevertheless, a minority authorities claimed that the process to apply and claim grants was unclear<sup>228</sup> or too burdensome<sup>229</sup>.

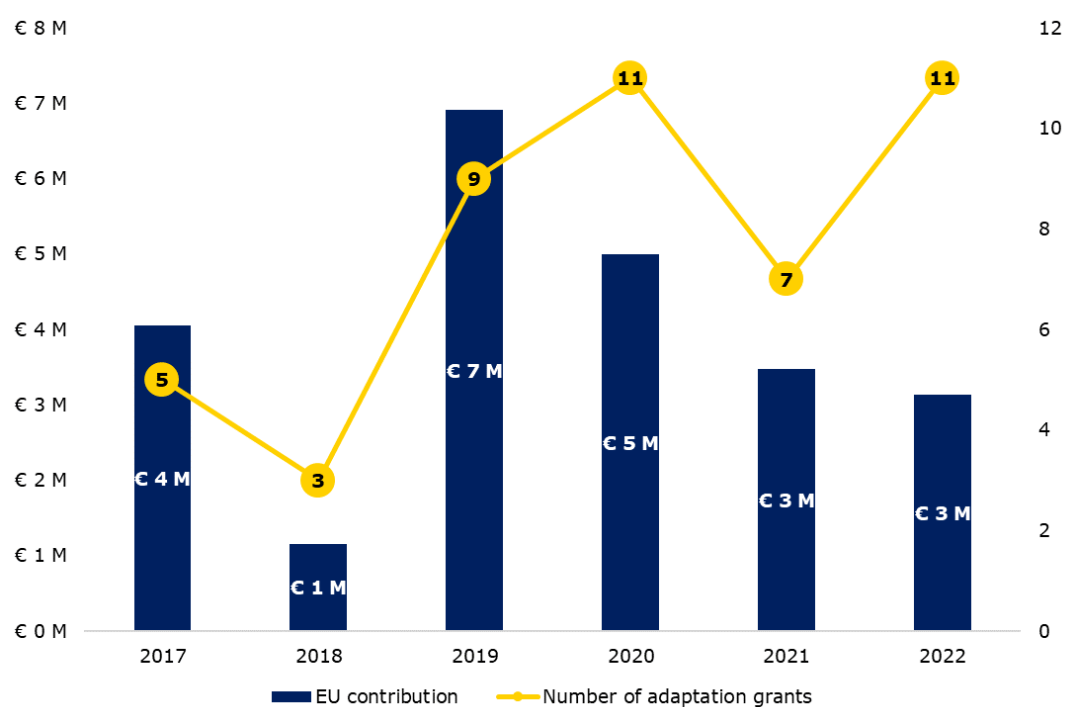
<sup>226</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (9).

<sup>227</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (5).

<sup>228</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2).

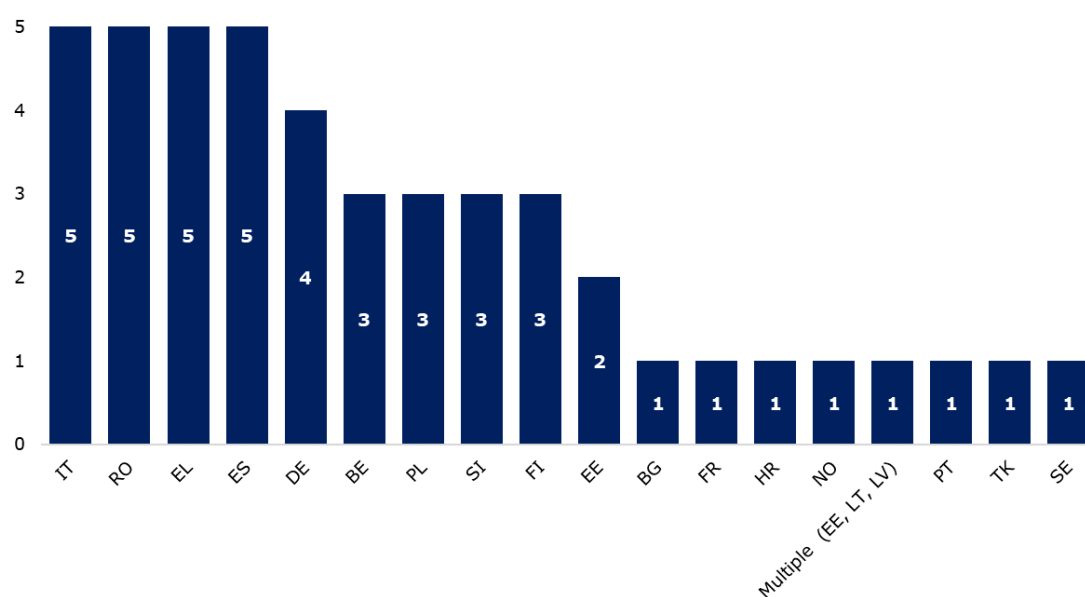
<sup>229</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).

Figure 31. Adaptation grants and EU contribution, 2017-2022



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data<sup>230</sup>.

Figure 32. Adaptation grants received, by Member State, 2017-2022



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

<sup>230</sup> European Commission, *ECPP: Snapshot report 2022*; state-of-play on 1 January 2023, major developments in 2022, planned certification and re-certification activities in 2023.

5.1.13 EQ1.3 To what extent did the UCPM achieve its specific objectives in the field of response within the timeframes set by the Decision? To what extent are suitable mitigation measures in place in the case objectives will not be met in the set time?

Key findings

- The UCPM's contributions in the field of response stand out as its primary strength and the most visible aspect of its work;
- The significant increase in UCPM activations for increasingly complex and large-scale emergencies had a negative impact on the speed of response, especially outside the Union;
- Despite an evolving and challenging disaster risk landscape, the UCPM continued to provide a high response rate in adequate response times. That response rate was most difficult to achieve in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The UCPM introduced effective mitigation measures to maintain the effectiveness of response, e.g. logistical hubs;
- The ERCC's role, especially ERCC Liaison Officers (LOs), in coordinating response was crucial to achieving rapid and efficient responses to disasters. However, this role appears to be increasingly unsustainable in a context of growing frequency, complexity, and scope of disasters;
- The UCPM's financial assistance for transport and logistics had an increasingly positive impact during the evaluation period, especially outside the Union.

Judgement criteria:

- JC1.8: MS and PS were able to respond rapidly and efficiently to disasters and to mitigate their immediate consequences (incl. removing bureaucratic obstacles) thanks to the pooling and mobilisation of resources and support through the activation of the UCPM, and/or through the timely mobilisation of rescEU capacities;
- JC1.9: The (response) mitigation measures in place were effective and appropriate.

Due to the limited data on mitigation measures, judgement criteria JC1.9 will be discussed when relevant activities are mentioned, rather than as a standalone subsection.

**During the evaluation period, the UCPM supported Member and Participating States and, where applicable, third countries to respond rapidly and efficiently to disasters and mitigate their immediate consequences.**

The UCPM's specific objective here is to facilitate rapid and efficient response in the face of (impending) disasters and mitigate their immediate consequences. To assess the extent to which the UCPM achieved this objective, a **rapid and efficient** response is considered that defined by KPIs set between 2017-2020 and 2020-2024, namely: a "rapid response" referring to KPIs on the speed of response (2017-2024) and "efficient response" refers to the KPI on adequacy of response (2020-2024). Between 2017-2020, speed of response was measured from the acceptance of the offer to its deployment, with the target ranging from  $\leq 12$  hours (2017 and 2018) to  $\leq 18$  hours (2019). From 2020, response time was the time between request for assistance and first offer placed in CECIS, with targets set at 3 hours in the EU and within 10 hours outside the EU<sup>231</sup>. The KPI on adequacy of response measures the proportion of RfA to which the UCPM fully/partially responded. The assessment also considered key stakeholders' opinions, given the specific context and circumstance

<sup>231</sup> European Commission, *Civil Protection – Performance*, 2023, [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-overview/civil-protection-performance\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-overview/civil-protection-performance_en)

of each response effort. This is especially relevant in light of the unprecedented and extraordinary circumstances within which the Mechanism operated during the evaluation period (see Section 1 and Section 5.3). This question explores the effectiveness of the response time (rapid response) and the extent to which RfA were effectively answered (efficient response). The efficiency of the UCPM's response in achieving desired outcomes with the optimal use of resources is discussed in Section 5.2.

**The development of further UCPM KPIs has helped to measure progress in UCPM's delivery of assistance to support rapid and efficient efforts. However, KPIs could be better aligned with the evolving disaster risk landscape.** In 2020, DG ECHO introduced developments to its monitoring processes and targets to measure the actual speed and efficiency of response more accurately<sup>232</sup>. Since 2020, targets set for response time are split between within/outside Europe, reflecting the reality of additional time needed to respond outside the Union. An additional KPI was introduced in 2020 on the adequacy of response, enabling more accurate measurement of the extent to which the UCPM contributes to this specific objective<sup>233</sup>. However, the KPIs could consider challenges and requirements stemming from an evolving disaster risk landscape, given that sudden onset emergencies have a more immediate impact and window for response (e.g. earthquakes, forest fires) and the response rate is far shorter than for slow onset emergencies (floods, tropical cyclones), where the impact accumulates over time (see Section 5.2)<sup>234</sup>.

**The UCPM has made significant contributions in the field of response, which stands out as its primary strength and most visible aspect of its work.** The great majority of stakeholders agreed that the UCPM contributed to a rapid and efficient response and to mitigating the immediate consequences of disasters<sup>235</sup>. Most national authorities and experts in civil protection agreed that the UCPM made a significant and positive contribution to the field of disaster response<sup>236</sup>, particularly in responding to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine<sup>237</sup>, the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>238</sup>, and forest fires<sup>239</sup>. Only one DG ECHO officer and one national authority disagreed that the UCPM was effective in this respect<sup>240</sup>. The DG ECHO stakeholder questioned the UCPM's effectiveness in supporting disaster response in third countries, while the national civil protection authority believed that individual Member and Participating States are more effective when acting alone (see Section 5.5).

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<sup>232</sup> European Commission, *Annual Activity Report, 2017-2022*.

<sup>233</sup> European Commission, *Civil Protection – Performance, 2023*, [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-overview/civil-protection-performance\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-overview/civil-protection-performance_en)

<sup>234</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>235</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (30); EU stakeholders (14); international stakeholders (5); experts in civil protection (3); DG ECHO (7). Feedback from EU delegations (AL, TR, MK) to DG ECHO, shared on 9 December 2022. Surveys of: national authorities – UCPM supported mitigating immediate consequences of disasters (38/50), UCPM contributed to rapid and efficient response (38/50); DG ECHO Desk Officers – UCPM supported mitigating immediate consequences of disasters: Member/Participating States (17/17), third countries (8/17); UCPM contributed to rapid and efficient response: Member/Participating States (16/17), third countries (15/34); experts in civil protection – UCPM supported mitigating immediate consequences of disasters: Member/Participating States (14/18), third countries (8/17); UCPM contributed to rapid and efficient response: Member/Participating States (16/17), third countries (15/34).

<sup>236</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (30); experts in civil protection (3); DG ECHO (7). Feedback from EU delegations (AL, TR, MK) to DG ECHO, shared on 9 December 2022. Surveys of: national authorities – UCPM supported mitigating immediate consequences of disasters (38/50), UCPM contributed to rapid and efficient response (33/50); experts in civil protection – UCPM supported mitigating immediate consequences of disasters: Member/Participating States (14/18), third countries (8/17); UCPM contributed to rapid and efficient response: Member/Participating States (16/17), third countries (15/34).

<sup>237</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (7); international stakeholders (3); national authorities (4). Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023*.

<sup>238</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (6); international stakeholders (3); national authorities (2). Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023*.

<sup>239</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (3); experts in civil protection (2). Feedback from EU delegations (AL, TR, MK) to DG ECHO, shared on 9 December 2022. See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires. Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023*.

<sup>240</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (1/17); national authorities (1/50).

**Throughout the evaluation period, the UCPM provided effective support to response efforts, despite an evolving and increasingly complex and dynamic disaster risk landscape.** Notwithstanding the changing nature of disasters and their increasing frequency, complexity and scope, stakeholders stated that the UCPM maintained a high level of quality of response to disasters and their immediate consequences (see Section 5.1.1.4 and Section 5.3)<sup>241</sup>. UCPM response activities entailed<sup>242</sup>:

- Responding to disasters not previously confronted (e.g. forest fires and flash floods in countries that did not traditionally activate the UCPM nor experience such disasters, such as Sweden (forest fires) and Belgium (flash floods));
- Responding to multiple disasters at once (e.g. earthquake in Croatia at the same time as wider COVID-19 response efforts).

**Mitigation measures and innovations implemented had a positive impact on the UCPM's ability to effectively support response efforts.** Stakeholders underlined that DG ECHO showed innovation and resourcefulness in responding to the changing nature of disasters throughout the period<sup>243</sup>. They also highlighted several key mitigation measures and innovations in the response pillar:

- Introduction of logistical hubs in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (see Figure 33)<sup>244</sup>;
- Greater involvement of stakeholders, including the private sector<sup>245</sup> and civil society organisations (CSOs)<sup>246</sup>, and closer involvement of EU delegations<sup>247</sup> (see Section 5.1.2);
- Introduction and deployment of resources from rescEU (e.g. emergency energy supply for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine)<sup>248</sup>.

The following were also recognised as examples of innovation and adaptability, albeit to a more limited extent:

- Integration of new technologies in response efforts, such as the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)<sup>249</sup>;

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<sup>241</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (9); national authorities (3); international organisations (3). European Commission, *UCPM lessons learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022; Kantar, *'Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023. See Annex 7 for two case studies on forest fires and on Ukrainian response.*

<sup>242</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2). Kantar, *'Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023. See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires in Sweden.*

<sup>243</sup> Interviews with: national civil protection authorities (4); EU stakeholders (2); international stakeholders (1); DG ECHO (3). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022. See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>244</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); experts in civil protection (1); national authorities (4). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War against Ukraine*, 2022; Kantar, *'Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023. See Annex 7 for two case studies on Ukrainian response and on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.*

<sup>245</sup> Throughout the report, the term 'private sector' refers to individuals and organisations not under direct state control seeking to generate profit through the provisions of goods and services in the field of civil protection. Interviews with: DG ECHO (4); EU stakeholders (2). European Commission, *UCPM lessons learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022; European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023.*

<sup>246</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (2). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*. 2022. See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.


<sup>247</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1). Feedback from EU delegations (AL, TR, MK) to DG ECHO, shared on 9 December 2022. EESC, *Consolidating the EU-Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022.

<sup>248</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (24); international stakeholders (6); EU stakeholders (11); DG ECHO (11); experts in civil protection (2). Surveys of DG ECHO Desk Officers (12/12); national authorities (36/46). See Annex 7 for case studies on forest fires and on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>249</sup> European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021*, 2021; EU Chem React and European Union Civil Protection, *EU-CHEM-REACT-2, Full scale field exercise (FSX) final conduct report, grant agreement ECHO/SUB/2018/828788*, Warsaw.

- Unification of request lists into a single CECIS file<sup>250</sup>.

Figure 33. Lesson: logistical hubs

**Lesson learnt**

**Logistical hubs introduced to support the response to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine**

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a major military offensive on Ukraine, which caused a major disturbance to logistics infrastructure and supply chains in Ukraine and the surrounding area. Since then, the UCPM has introduced several 'logistical hubs' to ensure that support reached Ukraine in a rapid and efficient manner.

- Romania, Slovakia and Poland, as countries bordering Ukraine, offered to establish logistical hubs where assistance will be pooled to be transferred to the Ukrainian border/ received by Ukrainian authorities. They enabled authorities to send a variety of assets (including non-civil protection items such as power transformers).
- An EU MedEvac Hub for medical evacuations of Ukrainian patients has been operational since 9 September 2022, offering proper treatment to patients arriving from Ukraine before they are flown out to a hospital in another European country.
- Belgium set up a rescEU hub, to streamline and channel donations from the private sector to Ukraine.

These hubs were perceived by key stakeholders (including representatives of the Ukrainian government, and authorities in the countries hosting the hubs) as an effective (and essential) measure to ensure the effectiveness of response. In terms of room for improvement, stakeholders suggested more guidance, with a clear definition of hubs' scope and operation

Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation<sup>251</sup>.

**The UCPM activities that contributed most to achieving specific response objectives (in order of impact) were:**

1. ERCC coordination of RfA;
2. Delivery of assistance;
3. Financial assistance to transport and logistics.

**The ERCC's coordination of responses within and outside the Union continued to make a critical contribution to achieving a rapid and efficient response to disasters.** It has been widely acknowledged as critical in coordinating response efforts, enabling the successful navigation of complex challenges and the delivery of effective responses<sup>252</sup>. National authorities highlighted that the ERCC's coordination of requests has significantly improved since 2017<sup>253</sup>. Recently, the ERCC introduced scientific partnerships on natural hazards and on nuclear and radiological events, which provide 24/7 support, increasing the effectiveness and quality of its contributions<sup>254</sup>. Only a small minority of DG ECHO stakeholders felt that the ERCC's coordination was not as effective as it could be, mostly due to resourcing issues (see Section 5.1.3)<sup>255</sup>. Some stakeholders highlighted that the coordination of assistance was occasionally less effective when dealing with third countries, reportedly due to the political decision-making associated with intervention and the frequently

<sup>250</sup> European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War against Ukraine*, 2022.

<sup>251</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); experts in civil protection (1); national authorities (4). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022. See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022*, 2023.

<sup>252</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (5); EU stakeholders (3); experts in civil protection (3); international stakeholders (2); national authorities (19). Feedback from EU delegations (AL, TR, MK) to DG ECHO, shared on 9 December 2022. Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (12/13), Participating States (12/13), third countries (10/13); national authorities (45/50). European Commission, *Lessons Learnt on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique*, 2019; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2022; Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022*, 2023; European Committee of the Regions, *Preparing for and dealing with crises: strengthening the resilience of the Union, its regions and cities*, COM(2021) 576 final. See Annex 7 for case studies on floods and on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>253</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (37/49).

<sup>254</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1s).

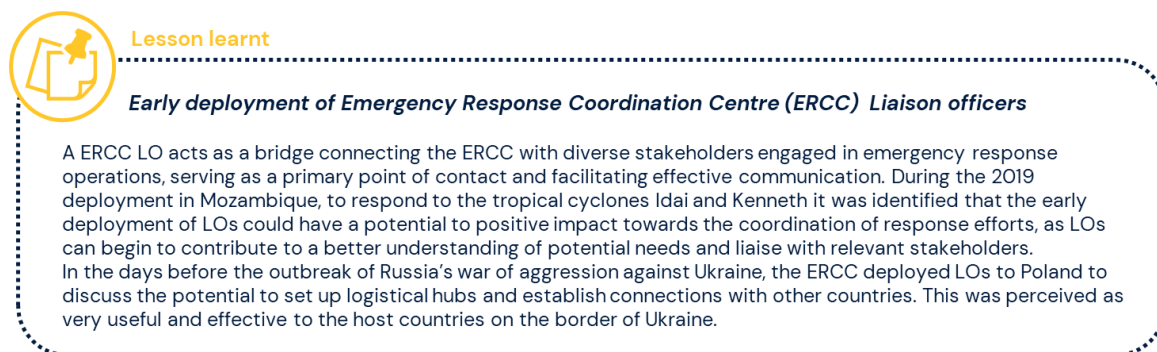
<sup>255</sup> Survey of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (1/13), Participating States (1/13), third countries (2/13).



complex security situations<sup>256</sup>. For example, one expert deployed to Haiti explained that the security situation there posed a significant challenge to the coordination (and delivery) of response efforts<sup>257</sup>.

The **role of ERCC LOs** was singled out for its significant influence as a critical point of contact, facilitating communication between the ERCC and the various stakeholders engaged in emergency response efforts<sup>258</sup>. ERCC LOs offering access to a network of contacts in the country of focus or supporting with relevant language and cultural skills (e.g. Beirut activation case study) were particularly valuable, as were LOs with logistics expertise<sup>259</sup>. The suggestions to deploy ERCC LOs prior to a crisis unfolding appears to have been adopted, as evidenced by the deployment of LOs in Ukraine several days before the onset of the war. They were responsible for establishing communication channels with Polish institutions to explore potential courses of action (see Figure 34). There are opportunities to improve the functioning of ERCC LOs, particularly in defining their roles and responsibilities vis-a-vis those of the EUCPT Team Leader, who is tasked with providing overall leadership, coordination and management of a deployment<sup>260</sup>.

Figure 34. Lesson: early deployment of LOs



Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation<sup>261</sup>.

**The interim evaluation identified opportunities to improve the effectiveness of UCPM's response efforts in the sustainability of the ERCC's role in the current disaster risk landscape and the accessibility of the CECIS platform.** On the effectiveness of the ERCC's coordination of response efforts:

- Concerns were raised about the **future sustainability of the ERCC's effectiveness** in light of the increasing scope, complexity, and frequency of disasters within and outside the Union<sup>262</sup>.

<sup>256</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – third countries (2/13). Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (2); experts in civil protection (2); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (1).

<sup>257</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1).

<sup>258</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (2); national authorities (3); DG ECHO (2). European Commission, *Lessons Learnt on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique*, 2019; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2022; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021, 2022*; Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations (2018-2022) and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023*.

<sup>259</sup> Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023*. See Annex 7 for case study on Beirut port explosion.

<sup>260</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1). Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023*.

<sup>261</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1). European Commission, *Lessons Learnt on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique*, 2019; Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023*. See Annex 7 for case study on Ukrainian response.

<sup>262</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3); DG ECHO (7); EU stakeholders (1). Surveys of: national authorities (1/50). EESC, *Opinion, Consolidating the EU-Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including*

Some stakeholders emphasised that this calls for enhanced contingency planning for multi-sectoral, simultaneous, long-lasting crises<sup>263</sup>. This could entail the development of prioritisation strategies for responding to multiple concurrent crises<sup>264</sup>. Planning could also entail the identification of parameters for ERCC involvement<sup>265</sup>, as well as for the ERCC's role to be better defined to improve the quality of assistance (see Section 5.3)<sup>266</sup>;

- The **CECIS platform** is a web-based alert and notification application that facilitates real-time exchanges between competent national authorities and contact points designated by Member and Participating States and the ERCC. Suggested improvements include enhancing the ability of key stakeholders to access (classified) data, user friendliness ability to cope with and handle multiple RfA<sup>267</sup>, and access by non-EU Member States. CECIS currently relies on the TESTA network service, operated by the Commission and exclusively available to Member States<sup>268</sup>. In many Member States, access to CECIS was restricted to a single computer in a ministry building, significantly limiting its accessibility<sup>269</sup>. CECIS 2.0 is being designed to address these problems (see Section 5.1.3)<sup>270</sup>.

**UCPM's delivery of assistance by deploying resources and experts supported progress towards rapid and efficient responses and mitigating the immediate consequences of disasters. However, while the UCPM fulfilled the majority of RfA relatively rapidly, the speed and efficiency of response in third countries could be improved.** 'Efficiency' here refers to the response rate achieved by the UCPM (efficiency of UCPM activities in terms of desired outcomes achieved with optimal resources is assessed in Section 5.2).

**The UCPM's deployment of response capacities contributed to supporting more rapid and efficient response efforts in Member and Participating States and in third countries.** The majority of stakeholders agreed that the UCPM's delivery of response capacity and deployment of experts contributed to fulfilling the UCPM's response objective<sup>271</sup>. No national authority disagreed on the positive role of the UCPM in delivering assistance in response efforts<sup>272</sup>.

**However, opportunities to improve the delivery of response efforts were identified for several elements:**

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*those occurring outside its territory, 2022; European Commission, Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe, 2023; Kantar, Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023. See Annex 7 for case studies on forest fires and on COVID-19 repatriations/consular services. DG ECHO, Study on the Development of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre ERCC, 2023; European Commission, Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023.*

<sup>263</sup> European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe, 2023*.

<sup>264</sup> Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023*. See Annex 7 for case study on COVID-19 repatriations/consular services.

<sup>265</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023*. See Annex 7 for case studies on forest fires and on COVID-19 repatriations/consular services.

<sup>266</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>267</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (1/2). Interviews with: DG ECHO (6); EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (3). European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations, 2022*; European Commission, *UCPM lessons learnt Programme meeting preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine, 2022*; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe, 2022*. Feedback from EU delegations (AL, TR, MK) to DG ECHO, shared on 9 December 2022. See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>268</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (4); national authorities (2). Feedback from EU delegations (AL, TR, MK) to DG ECHO, shared on 9 December 2022.

<sup>269</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>270</sup> Where relevant, the evaluation team mentions activities taking place beyond the evaluation period where they (will/may) have an impact on evaluation findings.

<sup>271</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (12/13), Participating States (12/13), third countries (11/13, with one respondent disagreeing); national authorities (43/49); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (1/1).

<sup>272</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (agreed – 43/49, neither agreed/disagreed – 6/49).

- **Tracking assistance:** As part of the delivery of assistance, the UCPM tracks that assistance. This includes identifying potential trends in disaster risks and response missions, where feasible. The majority of stakeholders acknowledged that this activity partially contributed to a quicker and more efficient response effort<sup>273</sup> and that it improved during the evaluation period<sup>274</sup>. However, of the response pillar activities, this showed a higher number of stakeholders disagreeing that it was effective, particularly those outside the Union<sup>275</sup>;
- **Time to assess RfA and expert profiles:** Some stakeholders highlighted that too little time is taken to assess RfA and consider whether and where it makes sense for the UCPM to intervene<sup>276</sup>. Similarly, some experts in civil protection noted that this applies to the planning and selection of experts, who are sometimes selected and deployed too hastily, leading to mismatches between experts and the requirements of the response effort<sup>277</sup>;
- **Set up of EUCPT in longer crises:** In the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the long duration of the crisis and high rotation of the EUCPT meant that some members lacked experience and had limited UCPM training<sup>278</sup>.

**The UCPM adapted to changing pressures and demands and consistently maintained a high response rate, thus contributing to effective support for response efforts.** The majority of stakeholders agreed that the UCPM achieved an adequate response rate to the frequency of RfA and the provision of the requested items<sup>279</sup>. Since 2017, the ERCC has coordinated the deployment of resources for 87% of RfA (on average), meeting its 2021 and 2022 targets within and outside the Union (see Figure 35 and Table 6). Figure 35 shows that the response rate decreased from 95% during the 2014-2016 period to 87% in the 2017-2022 period. Nevertheless, given the substantial surge in activations during the evaluation period (520 during the 2017-2022 period, compared to 64 between 2014 and 2016), the UCPM has consistently maintained a high response rate. This demonstrates that the UCPM has successfully delivered the requested assistance in the majority of cases despite a substantial increase in activations.

**The largest impact on the UCPM response rate was in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the Mechanism has continued to meet its targets for request responses.** The lower response rate in 2020 (73%) was due to the unprecedented surge (+440%) in requests received and to a global shortage in personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g. masks)<sup>280</sup>. Table 6 shows that this mainly impacted the response rate for RfA in third countries, notably COVID-19 related requests. Indeed, the interim evaluation identified very few cases where the Mechanism could not provide a response (namely some RfA from third countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, when it was overwhelmed)<sup>281</sup>. Since 2020, the UCPM's response rate met the targets within and outside the Union (see Table 6).

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<sup>273</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (4/9), Participating States (3/9), third countries (2/9); national authorities (34/47).

<sup>274</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (30/49).

<sup>275</sup> Surveys of DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (1/9), Participating States (2/9), third countries (3/9); national authorities (3/47). See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>276</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (3); national authorities (1); EU stakeholders (2); international stakeholders (1). See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>277</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (2); national authorities (1). See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

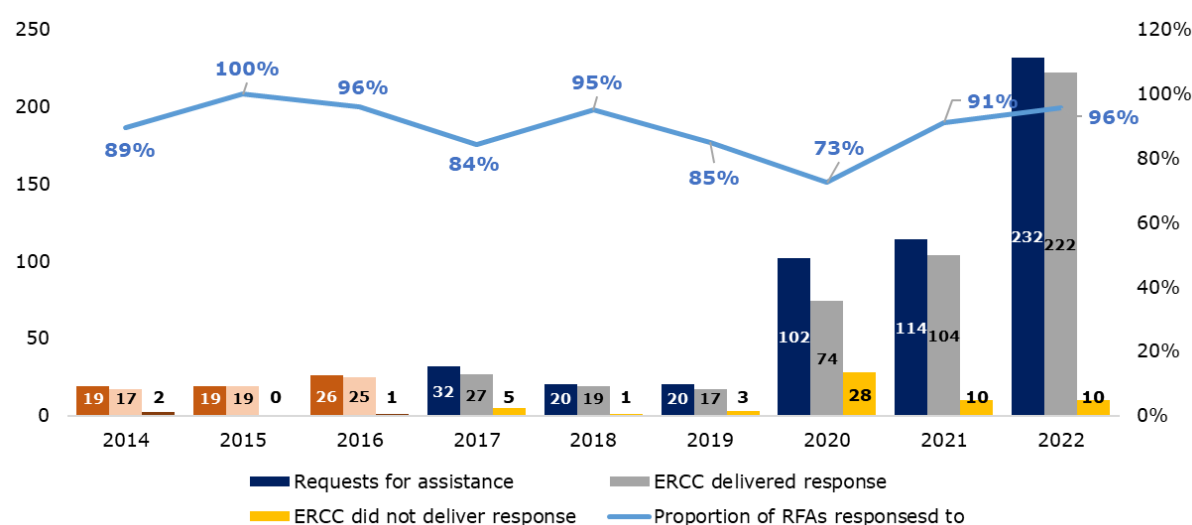
<sup>278</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>279</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (4); experts in civil protection (1); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (9).

<sup>280</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>281</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

Figure 35. UCPM response rates to RfA, 2014-2022



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

Notes: Data from 2014-2016 included in shades of orange for comparison.

Table 6. Adequacy of response of the UCPM (KPI), 2020-2022

	Percentage of RfA partially/completely fulfilled, with the voluntary offers for assistance made by Member States			
	2020	2021	2022	Target 2024
Within the EU	Total: 17% COVID-19: 16% Non-COVID-19: 82%	100%	90%	90%
Outside the EU	Total: 1% COVID-19: 1% Non-COVID-19: 9%	87%	96%	> 86%

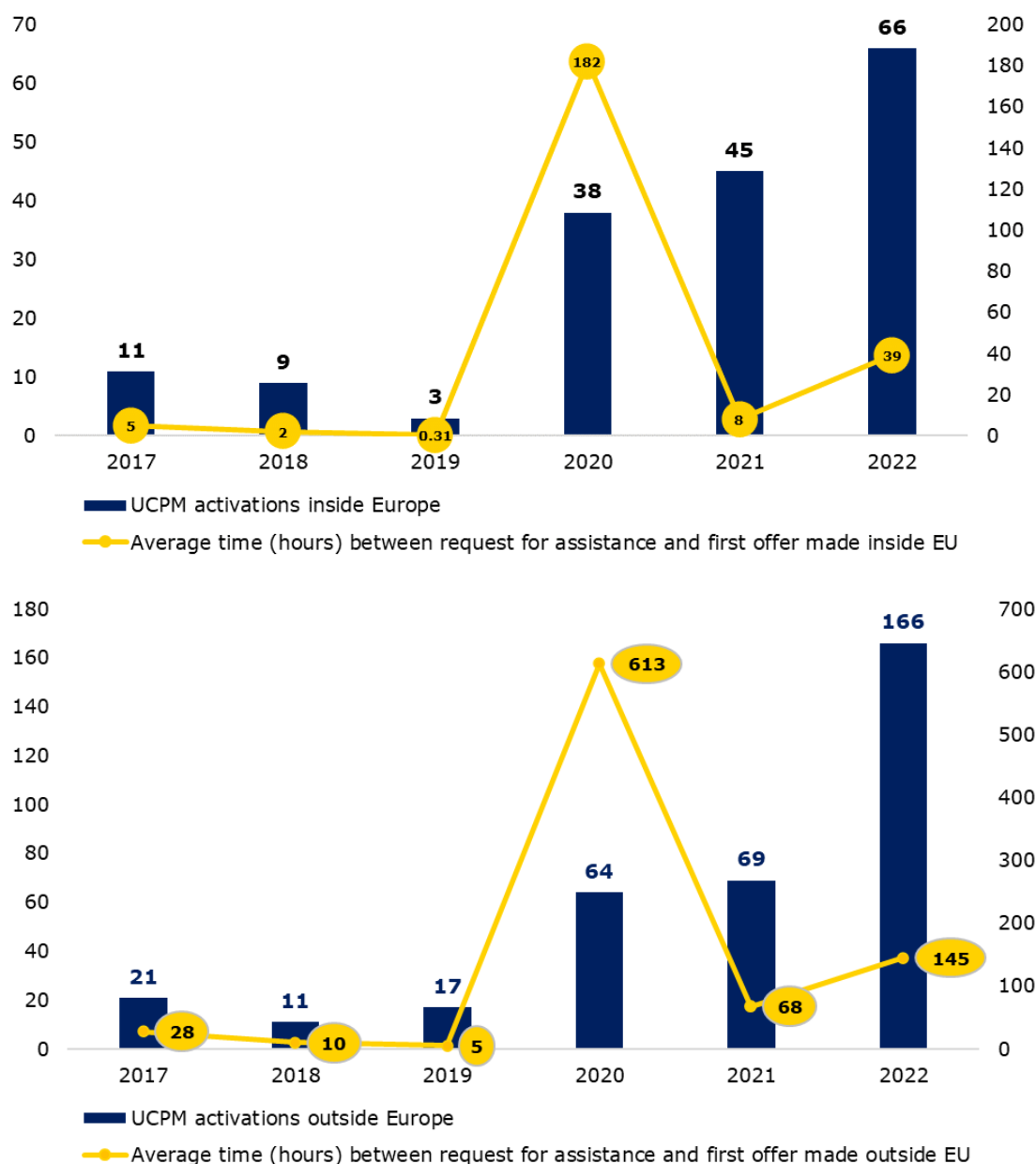
Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO Annual Reports 2020, 2021.

**The significant increase in the number of activations of the UCPM to request support to respond to emergencies of growing complexity and scope negatively affected the speed of response, especially outside the Union.** The average response time generally met the KPI targets across 2017-2019 (i.e. ≤ 12 hours in 2017 and 2018; ≤ 18 hours in 2019, except for response time outside the Union in 2017). Since 2020, the UCPM's response time has typically not met KPI targets (i.e. 3 hours within the EU; 10 hours outside the EU). The gap between the response time and the target KPIs suggests a need to consider whether targets and expectations are adequate and realistic in light of changing threat and disaster risk landscapes (see Section 5.2)<sup>282</sup>. Figure 36 shows a correlation between the significant increase in UCPM activations since 2020 (+440%) and the UCPM's inability to reach the envisioned target response times, especially outside the Union. Figure 37 shows that delays primarily occurred between the acceptance of an offer and its actual deployment. Both within and outside Europe, the response time experienced its highest delays during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the response time has recovered but has yet to return to pre-2020 levels. The

<sup>282</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

most notable increase in response time was in delivering assistance to third countries. This increase may have been influenced by the substantial number of requests related to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (126 requests in 2022)<sup>283</sup>.

Figure 36. Evolution of UCPM activations and response times, within and outside the EU, 2017-2022

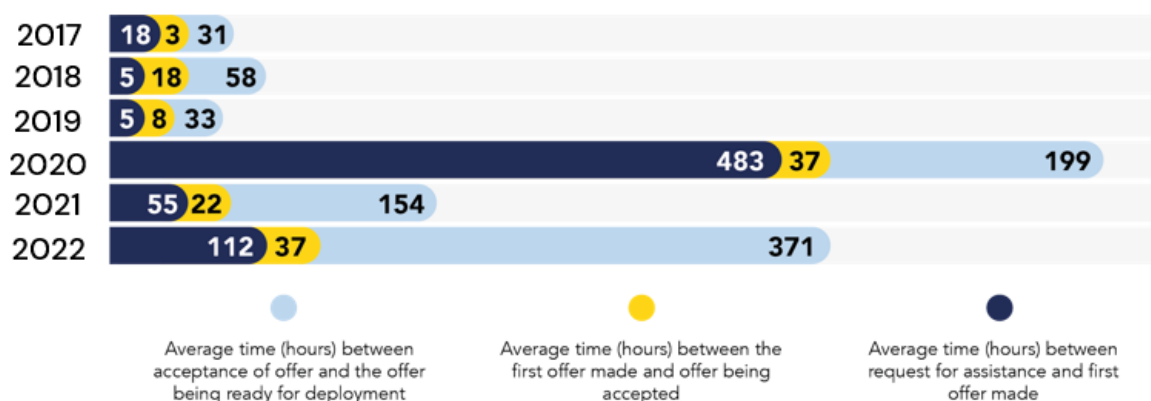


Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

Notes: Average time between RfA submitted and first offer made is taken as indicative of total response time.

<sup>283</sup> Ukraine became a UCPM Participating State in 2023, outside the evaluation scope.

Figure 37. Average time (hours) per step in the delivery of assistance



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

**Despite the shortcomings in adherence to target KPIs, the majority of stakeholders agreed that the UCPM response time is adequate across Member and Participating States, but could be improved for third countries.** The majority of stakeholders agreed that the UCPM's response time is suitable and effectively contributed to expediting disaster response<sup>284</sup>. National stakeholders agreed that the time required to deploy response capacities improved during the evaluation period<sup>285</sup>. DG ECHO stakeholders observed that the response time is heavily dependent on the capacity of Member and Participating States, encompassing both their ability to provide resources and the time they can dedicate to response efforts<sup>286</sup>. Stakeholders pointed out that longer response time in third countries should be attributed not solely to the challenges stemming from logistical and security considerations, but also to an implicit requirement for political decision-making on any UCPM intervention<sup>287</sup>.

**The UCPM's financial assistance for transport and logistics has had an impact on supporting rapid and efficient response efforts, especially outside the EU.**

**Across the evaluation period, the role of the UCPM's financial support for transport and assistance grew, especially outside the EU.** In the event of a disaster within or outside the EU, the UCPM co-financed transport and operational costs (e.g. mobilisation of equipment and personnel, aircraft to help to fight forest fires)<sup>288</sup>. The majority of stakeholders agreed that this financial support for transport and logistics contributed to more rapid and efficient responses, especially outside the Union<sup>289</sup>. The financial support provided by the UCPM for transport and logistics grew, particularly from 2021 onwards<sup>290</sup>. Figure 38 shows a growing tendency to rely on grant agreements, the vast majority of which were for activations outside the EU. This trend corresponds with several large-scale crises, with a large component outside the EU (e.g. COVID-19, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine). The UCPM's ability to provide both standard logistics operations and to adapt to new

<sup>284</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (9).

<sup>285</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (33/49). Interviews with: national authorities (1).

<sup>286</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3).

<sup>287</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (4); EU stakeholders (1); international stakeholders (1).

<sup>288</sup> European Commission, *Transport and operations co-financing procedures under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism*, 2023, [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/funding-evaluations/financing-civil-protection/transport-and-operations-co-financing-procedures-under-union-civil-protection-mechanism\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/funding-evaluations/financing-civil-protection/transport-and-operations-co-financing-procedures-under-union-civil-protection-mechanism_en)

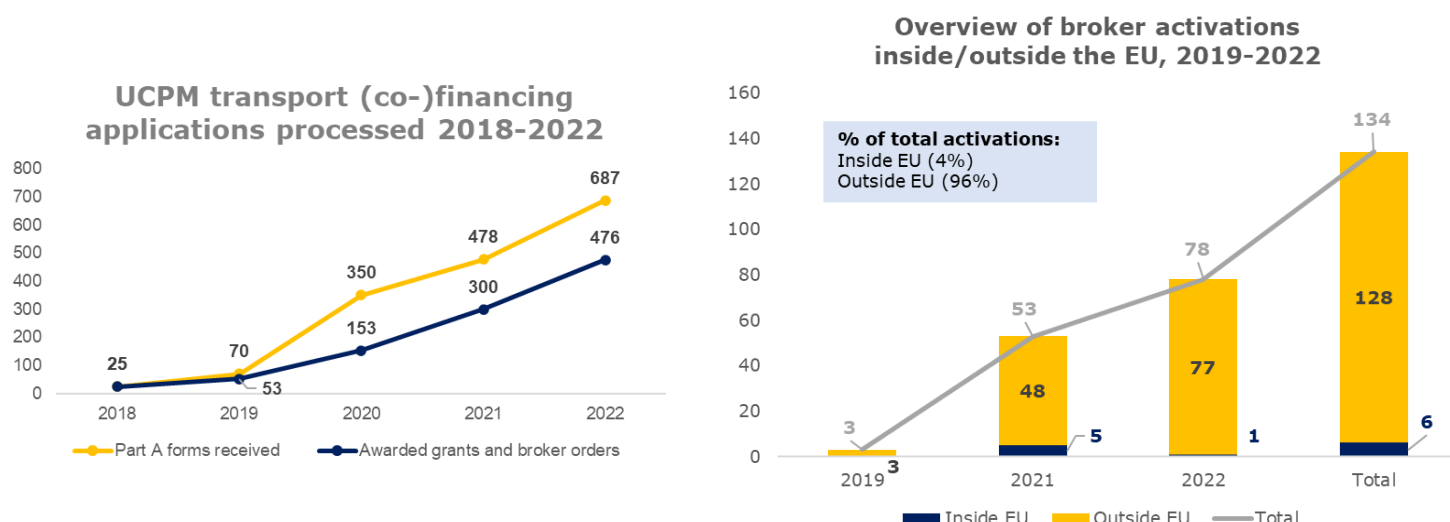
<sup>289</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (3); national authorities (7). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (4/9), Participating States (10/10), third countries (9/10); national authorities (41/47).

<sup>290</sup> Interviews with: national civil protection authorities (2). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations (2018-2022) and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022*, 2023.



logistical demands during complex, large-scale crises (such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the repatriation of EU citizens worldwide) is a notable achievement<sup>291</sup>. This success demonstrates the UCPM's effectiveness in managing diverse and evolving logistical operations<sup>292</sup>.

Figure 38. Type and location of UCPM financial support for transport and assistance, 2018-2022



Source: ICF elaboration, based on: European Commission, ERCC 2021 in perspective: Overview of UCPM activations and deployments, 2022; Kantar, Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations (2018-2022) and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023.

5.1.14 EQ1.4 To what extent did the UCPM achieve its objectives across pillars/horizontal activities within the timeframes set by the Decision? To what extent are suitable mitigation measures in place in case objectives will not be met in the set time?

#### Key findings

- The UCPM's efforts have led to increased awareness and preparedness for disasters, including across sectors at EU and national level;
- UCPM activities have effective tools for raising awareness, particularly the Training and Exercise and Peer Review Programmes. There is room for improvement in the accessibility and dissemination of outputs;
- The development of the PRAF and its customised versions, along with initiatives like the Knowledge Network and Union Disaster Resilience Goals, are expected to enhance cooperation and raise awareness in the field of civil protection.

#### Judgement criteria:

<sup>291</sup> Kantar, Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations (2018-2022) and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

- JC1.10: UCPM-funded projects and other horizontal activities contributed to the achievement of cross-pillar objectives (e.g. increasing public awareness and preparedness for disasters);
- JC1.11: The (cross-pillar/horizontal) mitigation measures in place were effective and suitable.

Judgment criteria JC1.10 and JC1.11 will be addressed collectively, as activities contributed to progress on both. Similarly, due to the limited data on mitigation measures, these will be discussed where relevant activities are mentioned (JC1.11).

**The UCPM progressed towards raising awareness and preparedness for disasters during the evaluation period. UCPM activities stimulated Member and Participating States to pay greater attention to priorities that otherwise may have been neglected, primarily in the prevention and preparedness phases. While there was some progress in raising awareness with non-traditional civil protection actors, there is room for improvement in supporting Member States to engage the public. The UCPM's involvement in the response to COVID-19 and the introduction of the rescEU reserve increased its visibility.**

**UCPM activities increasingly contributed to raising awareness and preparedness for disasters.** The majority of stakeholders agreed that UCPM activities effectively contributed to raising awareness and preparedness for disasters among the general public and civil protection stakeholders<sup>293</sup>. They noted that the involvement of the UCPM in increasingly high-profile disasters (COVID-19, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine) and the introduction of rescEU (with EU-branded response capacities) increased its visibility<sup>294</sup>. There was stronger emphasis on raising awareness and preparedness among various sectors at national and EU level<sup>295</sup>. At national level, for example, there were increased efforts with health, forest and water management authorities, as well as the research, scientific and academic community, CSOs and the private sector. Stakeholders emphasised that this reflected the growing recognition of the interconnectedness of civil protection crises, which led to an increase in the involvement of various authorities and organisations in a range of UCPM initiatives<sup>296</sup>. At EU level, raising awareness across different institutions and agencies required meetings and workshops, sharing DG ECHO's outputs (such as the 'Overview document of disaster risks in the EU'), and identifying areas for enhanced cooperation and resilience with other DGs<sup>297</sup>. However, EU stakeholders highlighted that the accessibility of relevant UCPM outputs could be improved<sup>298</sup>.

**The UCPM, through its activities and projects, could make more effort to support awareness-raising actions among the public and (to a lesser extent) with other sectors.** While public awareness of disasters increased (from 55% in 2015 to approx. 64% in 2020), it is difficult to measure the extent to which UCPM activities contributed<sup>299</sup>.

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<sup>293</sup> Surveys of: national authorities – UCPM activities across pillars contribute to increasing public awareness for disasters (27/50); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (17/19); national authorities – raising awareness and preparedness for disasters among civil protection authorities and experts (43/49); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (20/21); DG ECHO Desk Officers (38/38); Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (1); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (4). German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), *Consortium*, 2018.

<sup>294</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection participating in UCPM (2); national authorities (3); EU stakeholders (2); DG ECHO (4); international stakeholders (2). Feedback from EU delegations (AL, TR, MK) to DG ECHO, shared on 9 December 2022.

<sup>295</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO – other authorities and organisations outside of civil protection realm (23/38); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (16/21); national authorities (31/48); DG ECHO – among other stakeholders (12/32); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (5/15); national authorities (15/26). Interviews with: national authorities (1); DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (4); international stakeholders (1).

<sup>296</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (4); international stakeholders (1); DG ECHO (9); national authorities (6).

<sup>297</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (4); international stakeholders (1).

<sup>298</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2).

<sup>299</sup> European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 511 b EU Civil Protection*, 2021.

The majority of stakeholders underlined the necessity for UCPM activities to better support Member and Participating States to improve awareness-raising with the public<sup>300</sup>. They emphasised that it is Member States' primary responsibility to increase awareness of disasters with the general public, and that the UCPM has only a support role<sup>301</sup>. One DG ECHO stakeholder reported that national public communication could be more effective than a general EU-level approach, given the highly localised nature of risk awareness and dependency, including cultural differences in preparedness<sup>302</sup>. Stakeholders mentioned that DG ECHO could improve coordination and knowledge sharing on joint communication and outreach with national partners<sup>303</sup>. Suggestions included for the UCPM to create targeted, adaptable communication plans for national authorities, or more material for EUCPT to share during deployments. They highlighted that DG ECHO could raise awareness of the UCPM with non-civil protection actors (e.g. health authorities for pandemics)<sup>304</sup>. Stakeholders suggested that this could be achieved by including stakeholders from other sectors in UCPM activities, such as training and exercises (see Section 5.1.2)<sup>305</sup>. The Knowledge Network was highlighted as a potential tool to facilitate this awareness-raising with other sectors. Finally, public communication on UCPM activities could be strengthened through modern means (e.g. social media), particularly in relation to EWS<sup>306</sup>.

The interim evaluation identified some progress in raising awareness among the general public. For example, the Union Disaster Resilience Goals highlight the need to increase public risk awareness and preparedness. In addition, the flagship 'preparEU' awareness-raising programme is expected to step-up public communication efforts across Europe<sup>307</sup>.

**More attention could be paid to increasing awareness of the UCPM in Member and Participating States, as well as third countries.** Stakeholders noted the need to better communicate the Mechanism's activities (especially the frequent changes during the evaluation period, see Figure 2) to increase their effectiveness<sup>308</sup>. Stakeholders mentioned 'change fatigue'<sup>309</sup> throughout the evaluation period, particularly in relation to the rapid modifications to the Mechanism to adapt to new challenges and simultaneous crises (see Section 5.1.3). As a result, stakeholders (especially national authorities) struggled to keep up with activities<sup>310</sup>. This suggests that while adaptability and flexibility

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<sup>300</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019; European Commission, *Lessons Learnt on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique*, 2019; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021, 2022*; Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (3); national authorities (7); international stakeholders (1). See Annex 7 for case studies on forest fires, on floods, on COVID-19. Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (comments). Focus group: cost-effectiveness on 26 May 2023.

<sup>301</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); DG ECHO (1); national authorities (2). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (comments).

<sup>302</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>303</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (4); DG ECHO (1); experts in civil protection (1); national authorities (3). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020, 2021*.

<sup>304</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3); EU stakeholders (3); experts in civil protection (1). See Annex 7 for case studies on forest fires, on floods, on COVID-19. European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020, 2021*; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme: Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2020; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2022.

<sup>305</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); experts in civil protection (1); EU stakeholders (2). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022. Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>306</sup> EESC, *Consolidating the EU-Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022; European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022; European Commission, *Early Warning Systems (EWS) Expert Group Meeting*, 2022.

<sup>307</sup> Where relevant, the evaluation team mentions activities taking place beyond the evaluation period where they (will/may) have an impact on evaluation findings. European Commission, *UCPM Knowledge Network: Applied knowledge for action*, n.d., <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/disaster-resilience-goals/goal-2-prepare>; European Commission, *European Union Disaster Resilience Goals*, 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/factsheet\\_disaster\\_resilience\\_goals.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/factsheet_disaster_resilience_goals.pdf)


<sup>308</sup> Surveys of: experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (17/19). Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>309</sup> Change fatigue often occurs when individuals or teams feel overwhelmed by continuous transitions, resulting in reduced capacity to adapt or engage effectively with new initiatives or processes.

<sup>310</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (12); DG ECHO (6). See Annex 7 for case study on the integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

of the UCPM proved to be one of the main facilitating factors of its effectiveness (see EQ3), greater emphasis should be placed on communicating and facilitating interaction with new and changing procedures and activities. This would maximise stakeholders' gains from the changes and support their adaptation to the evolving risk landscape. Suggestions to improve awareness within Member States include streamlining all awareness information on UCPM activities into one website (see Figure 39). One EU stakeholder suggested increasing awareness in Participating States and third countries through the short-term deployment of focal points to DG ECHO field offices, and ensuring a civil protection representative in EU delegations through at least one local and one non-local focal point in case of staff turnover<sup>311</sup>. The current pilot project of a civil protection representative for the Southern Neighbourhood DG ECHO field offices (see Section 5.1.2) and the plans to introduce civil protection contact points in EU delegations are positive steps in this direction<sup>312</sup>. Similarly, the new online training courses on the UCPM for Member and Participating States, as well as Neighbourhood countries, EU delegations and DG ECHO field offices (part of the new UCPM training programme to be implemented from September 2023) will help to raise awareness of the UCPM among key stakeholders<sup>313</sup>.

Figure 39. Lesson: awareness-raising information is fragmented across DG ECHO websites

**Lesson learnt**

**Information on the UCPM is fragmented across websites**

Whilst online resources on the UCPM are considered a good source of knowledge on the Mechanism, stakeholders pointed out that information on the UCPM is splintered across different websites, such as the ERCC portal, the DG ECHO website and the Knowledge Network online portal. Streamlining information on the UCPM, thus creating a single-entry point for interested stakeholders could increase effectiveness of awareness-raising activities. This single-entry point could also include relevant links to different EWS (e.g. EFFIS). The Knowledge Network online tool presents a good opportunity in its role to bring together and raise awareness on UCPM activities.

Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation<sup>314</sup>.

**Horizontal and cross-pillar UCPM activities that contributed most to raising awareness and preparedness across Member and Participating States, and, in some cases, third countries (in order of impact), were:**

1. Training and Exercises Programme;
2. EoE Programme;
3. Workshops (Civil Protection Forum, Workshops with the EU Presidency, Lessons Learnt Workshops);
4. Peer Review Programme;
5. PPP;
6. Advisory missions in the field of preparedness.

<sup>311</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>312</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>313</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on the integration of preparedness activities.

<sup>314</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (1). See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

UCPM training<sup>315</sup>, exercises<sup>316</sup> and the EoE Programme<sup>317</sup> were key tools to increase awareness and preparedness of key target stakeholders. The knowledge produced by **UCPM training and exercises** is perceived as invaluable for participants to gain a better awareness of civil protection structures and disaster types (see Section 5.1.1.2)<sup>318</sup>. Nevertheless, suggestions to make training and exercises even more effective in raising awareness included extending targeted invitation to stakeholders across sectors and highlighting other UCPM elements (e.g. host nation guidelines) more explicitly and more frequently in training<sup>319</sup>. Stakeholders noted that training and exercises could also raise awareness of topics such as maritime affairs<sup>320</sup>. One sign of progress is the introduction of a discussion-based exercise on marine pollution in 2023<sup>321</sup>. Looking ahead, the aforementioned ‘non-deployable’ online training courses (available for a more extended audience, such as EU delegations and EU Neighbourhood countries’ authorities) are considered a useful additional resource<sup>322</sup>. Data show that the ability of UCPM training to increase the knowledge base on cross-border risks between Member States prone to the same types of disasters depend heavily on the national experts participating, notably their commitment to disseminate their knowledge at national level<sup>323</sup>.

The **EoE Programme** is considered a valuable practical tool, fostering fruitful discussions on a variety of topics and producing outputs in several languages, increasing their accessibility<sup>324</sup>. Experts demonstrated a keen interest in sharing the information and knowledge acquired through exchanges, for instance by means of field reports<sup>325</sup>.

**Both the Training and Exercises and EoE Programmes adapted to ensure continuity in light of the challenges posed by COVID-19’s social distancing measures.** For the EoE (see Figure 40), training (see Figure 5) and exercises (see Figure 6) sessions and attendance slowed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (due to social distancing measures), although some digital events mitigated the

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<sup>315</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO – training across Member States (11/14); DG ECHO – training across Participating States (11/14); DG ECHO – training across third countries (4/12); national authorities – training across Member States/Participating States (35/49). Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); national authorities (4).

<sup>316</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO – exercises across Member States (10/11); DG ECHO – exercises across Member States (3/4); DG ECHO – exercises across third countries (6/11); national authorities (42/51). Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); national authorities (1).

<sup>317</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – EoE Programme across Member States (4/4); DG ECHO Desk Officers – EoE Programme across Participating States (3/4); DG ECHO Desk Officers – EoE Programme across third countries (1/4); national authorities – across Member States/Participating States (31/48); German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), *Consortium*, 2018.

<sup>318</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (4); EU stakeholders (1); experts in civil protection (1). European Commission, *Lessons and good practices identified from TAST deployments*, 2019; Training Consortium, *UCPM training programme 16th cycle 2018–2019*, UCPM Introduction Course (CMI); EU MODEX. Final Consolidated Report Union Civil Protection Mechanism Training Programme Modex Cycle 2019–2021; Training Consortium, *UCPM training programme cycle 18th. Assessment Mission Course (AMC)*, 2022; EU Civil Protection Forum, *Europe in the World: the Union Civil Protection Mechanism as a regional cooperation model*, Fourth warm-up session, 2022; European Commission, *Lessons Learnt on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique*, 2019; THW, *Consortium*, 2018.

<sup>319</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); EU stakeholders (2); European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2022.

<sup>320</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2).

<sup>321</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2). European Commission, *DBX EU MODEX on Marine Pollution Conference*, 2023, <https://www.marine-pollution.eu-modex.eu/>. See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>322</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>323</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – national experts who participated in UCPM training courses and exercises disseminated their knowledge further at national level to a moderate/great extent (8/17), small/some extent (9/17). Interviews with: national authorities (2); THW, *Consortium*, 2018.

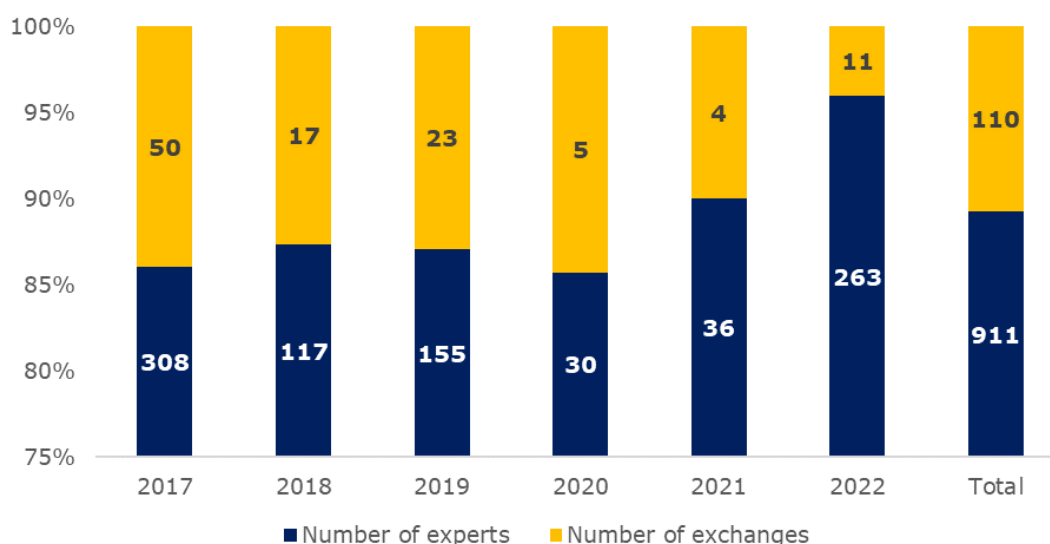
<sup>324</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – EoE Programme across Member States (4/4); DG ECHO Desk Officers – EoE Programme across Participating States (3/4); DG ECHO Desk Officers – EoE Programme across third countries (1/4); national authorities – across Member States/Participating States (31/48). THW, *Consortium*, *Exchange of Experts in Civil Protection Programme*, 2018; National Centre APELL for the Disaster Management – Romania (CN APELL–RO) and EUROMODEX, *EUROMODEX LOT2 2017–2018 FINAL CONSOLIDATED REPORT*, 2018; Training Consortium, *Santec Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and man-made disasters in the EaP countries. PPRD East 2*, 2019; CN APELL–RO and the Romanian General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (Consortium), *Programme of exchange of Civil Protection Experts*. Final Report, 2020.

<sup>325</sup> CN APELL–RO and Romanian General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (Consortium), *Programme of exchange of Civil Protection Experts*, Final Report, 2020.



impact<sup>326</sup> (e.g. a hybrid table-top exercise was held under PPRD East 3<sup>327</sup>). These digital mitigation measures, while not considered as beneficial as face-to-face events, enabled the programmes to continue in some capacity in the face of adverse situations<sup>328</sup>.

Figure 40. Exchange of Experts Programme, 2017-2022



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

Notes: Data on exchange of experts from September 2022; 17 experts already approved for three exchanges in October and November 2022.

**UCPM workshops** with relevant actors were seen as a relevant tool to raise awareness:

- **Lessons Learnt Workshops** are effective exercises, but require more follow-up to implement the lessons (especially at national level) (see Section 5.3.3)<sup>329</sup>. The increase in thematic meetings (e.g. forest fire seasons, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, COVID-19) outside Brussels (a Lessons Learnt meeting in January 2023 in Lisbon on forest fires, see Figure 70) is a valued development<sup>330</sup>;
- **Workshops with the EU Presidency** are an effective tool to bring together stakeholders across sectors and raise awareness of the UCPM and potential upcoming disasters<sup>331</sup>. Such workshops need more follow-up at EU level<sup>332</sup>. The workshop under the Swedish Presidency

<sup>326</sup> EUROMODEX, *Final Consolidated Report Lot 2 / cycle 10 January 2019 – July 2020, 2021*; CN APPEL-RO and Romanian General Inspectorate for Emergency situations (IGSU), *Programme of Exchange of Civil Protection Experts. Final Report of the first 12 months renewal Contracting Phase/Stage 2, 2021*; CN APPEL-RO and the Romanian General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (Consortium), *Programme of exchange of Civil Protection Experts, Final Report, 2020*.

<sup>327</sup> European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations, 2022*.

<sup>328</sup> Training Consortium, *UCPM training programme, 18th cycle. Modules Basic Courses (MBC) and Technical Experts Courses (TEC), 2021*; CN APPEL-RO and the Romanian General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (Consortium), *Programme of exchange of Civil Protection Experts, Final Report, 2020*. Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (comments). Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1/10).

<sup>329</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (8); DG ECHO (4). European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations, 2019*; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020, 2021*. Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (9/18), Participating States (8/17), third countries (4/17); national authorities (28/49).

<sup>330</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2). See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>331</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (19/25), Participating States (16/24), third countries (8/24); national authorities (38/50). Interviews with national authorities (3); EU stakeholders (2); international stakeholders (1); DG ECHO (1).

<sup>332</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).



in Stockholm on prevention and response to flooding was highlighted as a good example of raising awareness among policy makers and the public<sup>333</sup>;

- **The Civil Protection Forum** is a good forum for raising awareness and preparedness among Member States across pillars and sectors<sup>334</sup>. A comparison between the forums in 2018 and in 2022 suggests that it expanded in scope and introduced innovations<sup>335</sup>. The number of participants in 2022 increased by 18%, with the new hybrid format enabling 83% of participants to attend online and 17% in-person;
- **Thematic workshops and conferences** are effective in raising awareness at institutional and civilian level<sup>336</sup>. At institutional level, the 2022 introduction of the framework contract for ad hoc training was highlighted as a good practice. This framework contract is a flexible tool used by DG ECHO to organise workshops and training on additional themes not covered by the 'traditional' modules of the main training programme, providing an opportunity to raise awareness on a breadth of topics<sup>337</sup>.

The **PPP** and **Peer Review Programme** were highlighted as effective tools to increase awareness and preparedness, especially across sectors<sup>338</sup>. This is mostly attributed to the increasing breadth of hazards covered (see Figure 10) and sectors involved in projects funded under the PPP<sup>339</sup>, as well as the cross-sectoral cooperation fostered by the Peer Review Programme through interdisciplinary good practices and recommendations. A minority of stakeholders highlighted room for improvement in promoting both Programmes<sup>340</sup>. The PRAF is expected to have a positive impact on raising awareness and preparedness by introducing a standardised approach and sharing best practices, including in the context of wildfire assessment<sup>341</sup>.

**Advisory missions in the field of preparedness** raised awareness of how the Mechanism works and the system of civil protection, particularly in third countries<sup>342</sup>. National authorities stressed the positive impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of response<sup>343</sup>. Nevertheless, there seems to be a lack of awareness of the impact of advisory missions among national authorities (see Sections 5.1.1.1 and 5.1.1.2).

Looking forward, stakeholders reported the potential for the **Knowledge Network** and **Union Disaster Resilience Goals** to raise awareness and increase preparedness<sup>344</sup>. The Knowledge Network has the potential to bring together relevant UCPM outputs (e.g. from prevention and preparedness projects) and reach stakeholders beyond national civil protection authorities<sup>345</sup>. It also has the potential to enhance communication between policy makers and field actors<sup>346</sup>. This will involve

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<sup>333</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (3); experts in civil protection (1). Surveys of: DG ECHO (comments).

<sup>334</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1); EU stakeholders (2); DG ECHO (1).

<sup>335</sup> European Commission, *European Civil Protection Forum 2018*, 2018; European Commission, *7th European Civil Protection Forum 2022*, 2022.

<sup>336</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (8/14), Participating States (7/13), third countries (2/13); national authorities (32/48). Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (1).

<sup>337</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on the integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>338</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (8); experts in civil protection (2); DG ECHO (1); international stakeholders (1). Surveys of: national authorities – PPP (32/48), Peer Review Programme (24/47); DG ECHO – Member States (6/6), Participating States (4/6), third countries (2/5). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022.

<sup>339</sup> European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020)*, 2021.

<sup>340</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (1); experts in civil protection (1).

<sup>341</sup> European Commission, *Peer Review Assessment Framework (PRAF)*. 2021, [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/peer\\_review\\_-\\_assessment\\_framework\\_sep\\_2021.pdf](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/peer_review_-_assessment_framework_sep_2021.pdf)

<sup>342</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (26/49). Interviews with: national authorities (1).

<sup>343</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).

<sup>344</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (8); EU stakeholders (3); DG ECHO (2); international stakeholders (1).

<sup>345</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (6); DG ECHO (1); international stakeholders (3).

<sup>346</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1); national authorities (3); international stakeholders (1).

facilitating bottom-up exchanges of knowledge and lessons, as well as promoting transparent communication on the integration of recommendations derived from project findings. The Knowledge Network online platform, especially its project spaces including the outputs of all UCPM-funded projects, are expected to play a significant role in enhancing awareness (see Figure 23)<sup>347</sup>. Similarly, stakeholders underlined that the **Union Disaster Resilience Goals** could help to raise awareness of the importance of the stages of the disaster management cycle before response<sup>348</sup>.

5.1.2 EQ2: To what extent did the UCPM achieve its general objective (Article 3(1) of the Decision) of contributing to strengthened cooperation and coordination between the Union and the Member States for civil protection in the areas of prevention, preparedness for and response to natural and man-made disasters?

#### Key findings

- The UCPM fostered closer cross-border cooperation and a sense of solidarity across Member States, Participating States and third countries, including incorporating lessons from major disasters;
- Efforts were made to streamline DG ECHO's coordination with Member States, Participating States and third countries on UCPM activities through organisational improvements and dedicated officers. There is scope to foster better synergies between DGs and to ensure adequate cross-border assessment and planning between Member States;
- The UCPM demonstrated operational cooperation with third countries, particularly during activations and financing of transport and logistics. Third countries' interest in diplomatic cooperation has increased, albeit more slowly;
- The UCPM made progress in cross-sectoral cooperation, mostly due to its involvement during COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and especially with non-conventional civil protection actors, such as health authorities, the private sector and EU delegations. Further coordination with other DGs was effective despite challenges in certain areas, such as the Cyber Task Force and hybrid threats;
- Training and exercises, the ERCC and rescEU were most frequently noted for their contributions to increased communication, coordination and cooperation.

#### Judgement criterion:

- JC2.1: UCPM led to improved communication, cooperation and coordination both cross-borders (i.e. between the Union, MS, PS and TC) and across sectors in relation to prevention, preparedness for and response to natural and man-made disasters

**During the evaluation period, the UCPM progressed towards its general objective as set in Article 3(1) of the Decision, namely to improve communication, cooperation and coordination across borders and sectors on disaster prevention, preparedness and response. Cross-border and cross-sectoral cooperation was fostered with Member and Participating States, as well as third countries, with scope to strengthen the UCPM's diplomatic capacity. Progress on cross-sectoral cooperation was one of the key changes in this evaluation period, which could be built on in the coming years.**

**UCPM activities contributed to improving cross-border cooperation, especially with Member and Participating States.** The large majority of stakeholders agreed that the UCPM fostered closer cross-

<sup>347</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on the integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>348</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2). Focus group on: cost-effectiveness on 26 May 2023.

border cooperation and, consequently, a sense of solidarity across Member States, Participating States and (to a lesser extent) third countries<sup>349</sup>.

**Lessons from large-scale events (COVID-19, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine) played a key role in the UCPM's contribution to fostering cross-border cooperation.** Lessons on cooperation from previous crises (from the migrant crisis in 2015 to COVID-19 in 2020 and, since 2022 Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine) are now incorporated to ensure continuous improvement in cooperation<sup>350</sup>. For example, since COVID-19, it is standard practice to have virtual calls with Member and Participating States' civil protection authorities very early in the deployment stage, as well as informal cooperation channels with third-country stakeholders during deployment<sup>351</sup>.

**Member States', Participating States' and third countries' cooperation with DG ECHO has strengthened. DG ECHO made organisational improvements to the coordination of Member States, Participating States and third countries with the UCPM, with room for improvement to foster more cooperation between DGs.** Efforts were made to streamline DG ECHO's coordination with Member States, Participating States and third countries on UCPM activities<sup>352</sup>. DG ECHO units on civil protection were reorganised to reflect the division of work on the UCPM's pillars, namely Directorate A on response, and Directorate B on preparedness and prevention. In addition, a DG ECHO Desk Officer was assigned per key legislative change to follow-up on progress<sup>353</sup>. Nevertheless, some operational preparedness activities are split between Directorate A and Directorate B (e.g. the ECPP) and there could be stronger structural links between the units working on different activities under the Knowledge Network<sup>354</sup>. The current restructuring of DG ECHO will likely address these issues<sup>355</sup>.

**Significant efforts were made to enhance cross-border cooperation between Member and Participating States in the field of prevention, with room for improvement.** Cross-border cooperation was identified as a key area for improvement in the overview document of disaster risks in the EU and highlighted in the Union Disaster Resilience Goals<sup>356</sup>. Amendments to Article 6 (Regulation (EU) 2021/836) in 2021 introduced cross-boundary disaster risk mapping, including in the DRM Summary Reports, in order to enhance concrete planning based on risk assessments (see Section 5.1.1.1)<sup>357</sup>. This points to a potential need to facilitate adequate cross-boundary cooperation arrangements at all governance levels for all DRM phases and relevant risks (see Section 5.5.1). The ongoing study on cross-border resilience and crisis management by DG REGIO and DG ECHO is

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<sup>349</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – between civil protection authorities across Member and Participating States (35/37), in third countries (31/37); national authorities – across Member and Participating States (44/49), in third countries (37/47). Interviews with: national authorities (12); EU stakeholders (10); international stakeholders (2); DG ECHO (8); experts in civil protection (1). European Commission, *Europe in the World: the Union Civil Protection Mechanism as a regional cooperation model*, EU Civil Protection Forum, Fourth warm-up session, 2022.

<sup>350</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1); EU stakeholders (4); international stakeholders (1); DG ECHO (2). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022; European Commission, *7th European Civil Protection Forum 2022. Final Report*, 2022; European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2023.

<sup>351</sup> European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022.

<sup>352</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (10).

<sup>353</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>354</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on the integration of UCPM preparedness activities. Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>355</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

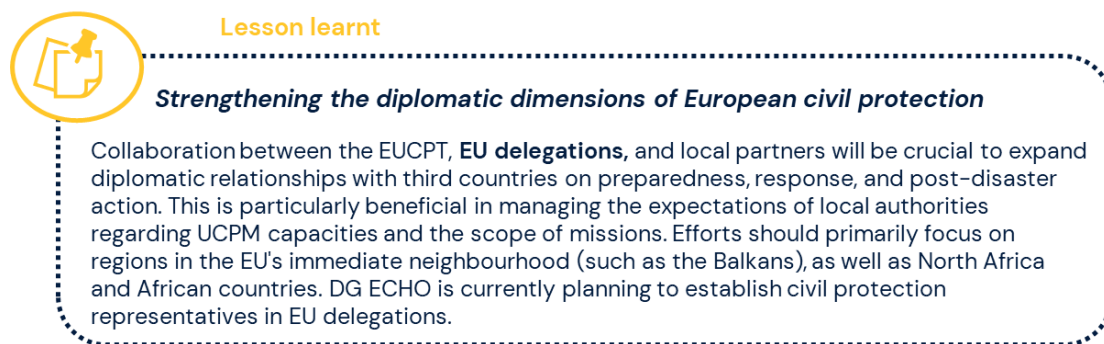
<sup>356</sup> European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made disasters the European Union may face*, 2020; Commission Recommendation of 8 February 2023 on Union Disaster Resilience Goals, 2023/C 56/01; Commission Decision C(2022) 4916 on the financing of the pilot project Cross-Border Crisis Response Integrated Initiative (CB-CRII) and the adoption of the work programme for 2022.

<sup>357</sup> Interviews with: national civil protection authorities (2); DG ECHO (2); international stakeholders (1). Surveys of: national authorities (28/49). Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services, *Evaluation study of definitions, gaps and costs of response capacities for the Union Civil Protection Mechanism*, 2019.

expected to provide further insights into cross-border risks, cooperation agreements, and lessons on good risk governance<sup>358</sup>.

**Across the evaluation period, cooperation with third countries was more operational than diplomatic.** Here 'operational cooperation' refers to ad hoc cooperation when the need arises, while 'diplomatic cooperation' is long-term strategic and formalised cooperation (such as through formal agreements). The majority of UCPM activations (see Figure 7), as well as financing of transport and logistics was outside of the Union (see Figure 38), showing strengthened operational cooperation between the UCPM and third countries. However, progress towards fostering new long-term cooperation with third countries was slower than previously, with two new Participating States joining the UCPM (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and one new Administrative Agreement signed (Georgia) (see Figure 42). Diplomatic cooperation with third countries was not a priority during the evaluation period and was impeded by DG ECHO's strained resources for the UCPM<sup>359</sup>.

Figure 41. Lesson: cooperation between the UCPM and EU delegations



Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation<sup>360</sup>.

**Cooperation between the UCPM and third countries is expected to increase in the coming years.**

There is evidence of increasing interest from third countries to increase diplomatic relations with the UCPM from 2023 onwards (see Figure 42)<sup>361</sup>. In 2023, DG ECHO renewed its Administrative Agreement with the United States (US) and is holding discussions with Canada on signing an agreement in 2023<sup>362</sup>. There have been significant developments in relation to Participating States beyond the evaluation period<sup>363</sup>:

- Ukraine officially became a UCPM Participating State in April 2023;
- Moldova submitted an application to become a Participating State in 2023;
- Georgia submitted an application to join the UCPM in 2023;
- Discussions are ongoing about another country potentially becoming a Participating State.

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<sup>358</sup> Where relevant, the evaluation team mentions activities taking place beyond the evaluation period where they (will/may) have an impact on evaluation findings. European Commission, *Cross-border resilience and crisis management*, 2023, <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/news/cross-border-resilience-and-crisis-management>

<sup>359</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); international stakeholders (1). EESC, *Consolidating the EU–Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022.

<sup>360</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019; European Commission, *Lessons Learnt on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique*, 2019; EESC, *Consolidating the EU–Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022; European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>361</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); international stakeholders (1). THW, *Consortium*, 2018.

<sup>362</sup> Where relevant, the evaluation team mentions activities taking place beyond the evaluation period where they (will/may) have an impact on evaluation findings.

<sup>363</sup> Where relevant, the evaluation team mentions activities taking place beyond the evaluation period where they (will/may) have an impact on evaluation findings.

This increased interest in cooperation from third countries is evident through the revived interest in the PPRD East and new PPRD South (now PPRD Med). Three of the countries that have applied to become Participating States (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) are members of the PPRD East 3, with the goal of increasing disaster risk management capacity and proximity with the UCPM. Based on feedback from third-country participants, the PPRD South (now PPRD Med) evolved to be more participatory and take a more bottom-up approach<sup>364</sup>. The meaningful involvement and integration of third countries in existing networks has played a vital role in facilitating the UCPM's progress on cooperation with these countries. In addition, closer cooperation with third countries is planned through a recent DG ECHO pilot project deploying senior technical experts from the Neighbourhood countries (i.e. having thorough knowledge of their language and culture), IPA countries (Western Balkans and Türkiye), and Southern Neighbourhood. These experts are tasked solely with fostering cooperation on civil protection matters with DG ECHO, the implementing consortia and EU delegations<sup>365</sup>. In addition, DG ECHO plans to introduce civil protection contact points in EU delegations, in response to recommendations by several external evaluations<sup>366</sup>. There is uncertainty as to whether DG ECHO will be able to meet the increasing demand for advice on disaster management in third countries, given time and resource constraints<sup>367</sup>. During the evaluation period, this affected an invitation by the Gulf countries and Asia, as well as Japan.

Figure 42. Overview of third countries cooperating with the UCPM

	UCPM Participating States	Administrative Agreements between the UCPM and third countries	Formalised cooperation (to be confirmed beyond the evaluation period)
2017-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Bosnia and Herzegovina (2022)</li> <li>› Albania (2022)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Georgia (2018)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ukraine became a Participating State of the UCPM in April 2023;</li> <li>▪ Moldova submitted a request to become a UCPM Participating State in 2023;</li> <li>▪ Georgia submitted an application to become a UCPM Participating State in 2023;</li> <li>▪ There are ongoing discussions about Switzerland becoming a Participating States;</li> <li>▪ Canada to sign an Administrative Agreement in 2023;</li> <li>▪ United States renewed administrative agreement in 2023</li> </ul>
Before 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Türkiye (2015)</li> <li>› Serbia (2015)</li> <li>› North Macedonia (2014)</li> <li>› Montenegro (2014)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Algeria (2016)</li> <li>› Australia (2008)</li> <li>› Tunisia (2013)</li> <li>› Russia (2013, not renewed)</li> <li>› Ukraine (2008)</li> <li>› United States (2011)</li> <li>› Letter of Intent with Chile (2011)</li> </ul>	

Source: ICF elaboration, based on European Commission, *List of Participating Countries in the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2023*; European Commission, *Civil protection partners 2023*; European Commission, *Ukraine joins the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, 2023*.

**The UCPM has made significant progress towards building cross-sectoral cooperation at national and EU level, primarily due to the nature of the key emergencies in the evaluation period.** The key change was in fostering cross-sectoral cooperation, especially with non-conventional civil protection actors<sup>368</sup>. This was primarily triggered by the two main crises in 2017-2022 – the COVID-19 pandemic

<sup>364</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Note for the Attention of Head of Cabinet ALEŠKA SIMKIĆ*, 2021.

<sup>365</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>366</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*; European Commission, *Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014–2016*, 2017; EESC, *Consolidating the EU–Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022.

<sup>367</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>368</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (12); DG ECHO (8); EU stakeholders (4); international stakeholders (2); experts in civil protection (3). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – increased cross-sectoral cooperation in Member/Participating States (33/38); experts in civil protection (14/19); DG ECHO Desk Officers – cross-sectoral cooperation in third countries (19/38); experts (8/19). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020, 2021*; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022. See Annex 7 for case study on COVID–19.



(health actors) and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (energy, agriculture, IT, humanitarian aid, private sector (see Figure 43) and civil society organisations)<sup>369</sup>. For example, the UCPM's involvement in the COVID-19 response, particularly through vaccine sharing efforts, significantly increased collaboration with health authorities<sup>370</sup>. Cooperation with EU delegations also improved through regular cooperation meetings during response efforts and training in 2019 with approximately 80 EU delegations<sup>371</sup>. Cooperation is set to significantly improve through the introduction of civil protection contact points<sup>372</sup>. Stakeholders agreed that the UCPM contributed to increased cross-sectoral cooperation in prevention and preparedness, working with actors across the disaster management cycle<sup>373</sup> to prevent and reduce the potential effects of disasters<sup>374</sup>.

Figure 43. Lesson: the UCPM fostered increased cooperation with the private sector to increase capacity when national authorities were strained



**Lesson learnt**

**DG ECHO fostering cooperation with the private sector in Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine helped when national authorities were overwhelmed**

From the beginning of the crisis, private sector entities got in touch with DG ECHO expressing their interest to donate goods. Traditionally, Member and Participating States, as well as Ukraine (at the time not a UCPM Participating State) would have dealt with the private donations bilaterally, but they were overwhelmed, leading to the involvement of the UCPM to channel private donations and fill assistance gaps, as well as broaden available capacity. In collaboration with Belgium and Polish authorities, DG ECHO established two rescEU hubs to manage those donations: i) a rescEU medical, shelters and CBRN hub in Belgium (managed by the Federal Public Service Health), and ii) a rescEU energy hub in Poland (managed by the Governmental Strategic Reserves Agency, RARS). This cooperation with the private sector was seen as a very positive development as it increased the capacity of the UCPM when Member and Participating States and the market were strained. Nevertheless, the lack of a legal framework highlighted a need for a more robust framework to streamline this cooperation and make the process simpler and faster.

Source: ICF elaboration, based on the case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (see Annex 7) and European Commission, Minutes from Lessons Learnt Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023.

**The UCPM increased cross-sectoral cooperation with other EU-level services.** Stakeholders underlined that the UCPM generally demonstrated effective cross-sectoral cooperation with other European Commission authorities<sup>375</sup>. Notable examples were identified in the areas of CBRN<sup>376</sup>, health emergencies<sup>377</sup>, and marine pollution<sup>378</sup>. Cross-sectoral cooperation with other EU level services occurred through three channels:

- **Formalised relationships increased structured cooperation with other sectors, especially on concrete tasks.** For example, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

<sup>369</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (15); EU stakeholders (7); DG ECHO (14); experts in civil protection (2); international stakeholders (2). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022; European Commission, *Towards faster, greener and smarter emergency management*, 7th European Civil Protection Forum 2022, Final Report, 2022; European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2020. Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>370</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (9); national authorities (4); EU stakeholders (1). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022; European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2020.

<sup>371</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022.

<sup>372</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>373</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (27/38); national authorities (32/46). Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); experts in civil protection (1); national authorities (2); international stakeholders (1). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020, 2021*.

<sup>374</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (23/27); experts in civil protection (19/21); national authorities (44/49).

<sup>375</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (4); EU stakeholders (7). European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2020; European Commission, *Prepared by Landell Mills*, 2022; Surveys of: national authorities – the UCPM strengthened cooperation between the EU with Member and Participating States (43);

<sup>376</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (2).

<sup>377</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>378</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1).



sent liaison officers to the ERCC to follow up on COVID-19 and Ebola outbreaks<sup>379</sup>. Similarly, DG ECHO and the ECDC now have arrangements in place for the ECDC to deploy experts as part of UCPM operations<sup>380</sup>. Another success was the increased cooperation between DG ECHO and the EEAS, particularly under the Consular Taskforce, which held almost daily meetings on the repatriation of EU citizens<sup>381 382</sup>;

- **Inter-service procedures allowed for cooperation with other EU-level services, particularly on cross-cutting topics.** Such arrangements are in place between DG ECHO and the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INPTA), Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST), Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), and the Directorate General for Energy (DG ENER)<sup>383</sup>. For example, DG ECHO consulted an interservice group of 26 DGs during the development of the Union Disaster Resilience Goals<sup>384</sup>;
- **Operational cooperation outside of formal arrangements.** Stakeholders noted beneficial informal networks and frequent exchanges, including on calls for proposals and relevant developments<sup>385</sup>. For instance, DG ECHO closely follows projects under the European Cross-Border Cooperation, Interreg A, funded by DG REGIO<sup>386</sup>. The two DGs also operationally cooperated on scoping and launching a study providing necessary insights for the Union Disaster Resilience Goals.

**Looking forward, DG ECHO is making increasing efforts to foster cross-sectoral cooperation.** This is evident in the recent discussion-based EU MODEX on marine pollution, which was the first to include a broad range of actors (including private insurers, legal advisors, coastguard, marine pollution and civil protection authorities)<sup>387</sup>. It is also in the process of drafting guidance documents for non-conventional civil protection actors (for EU delegations and permanent representations, and for humanitarian aid actors)<sup>388</sup>.

**There is room for more cooperation with different sectors, outside the field of civil protection.** Stakeholders agreed that while progress has been made<sup>389</sup>, the UCPM could improve cross-sectoral cooperation with certain stakeholders and institutions<sup>390</sup>. Deepening cross-sectoral cooperation may

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<sup>379</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>380</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>381</sup> European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2020.

<sup>382</sup> This success was recognized by the EU Ombudsman with the attribution to DG ECHO and the EEAS of the 2021 Award for Good Administration honouring the “EU’s extraordinary efforts last year to help repatriate over a half million EU citizens stranded around the world due to the pandemic.” ( see at <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/press-release/en/143409> ( see at <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/press-release/en/143409> )

<sup>383</sup> DG ECHO internal data.

<sup>384</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>385</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); DG ECHO (1).

<sup>386</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Interreg A – Cross-border cooperation*, 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border_en)

<sup>387</sup> European Commission, *DBX EU MODEX on Marine Pollution Conference*, 2023, <https://www.marine-pollution.eu-modex.eu/>. Interviews with: national authority (1).

<sup>388</sup> European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Note for the attention of Mr Matjaz Malgaj, head of cabinet of commissioner Lenarcic: DG ECHO Communication Strategy 2021*, 2020.

<sup>389</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation and promoted coordination between authorities and organisations in areas outside the realm of civil protection (22/36), other relevant stakeholders (11/21); national authorities – between authorities/organisations in areas outside the realm of civil protection (22/46), other relevant stakeholders (6/18). Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); experts in civil protection (1); national authorities (1); international stakeholders (1).

<sup>390</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); national authorities (3); EU stakeholders (7). See Annex 7 for case studies on floods and on COVID-19. Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

require strengthening the role of civil protection at EU and/or national level. At **EU level**, stakeholders suggested structural changes to streamline cooperation across sectors (see Section 5.3)<sup>391</sup>. They highlighted that some cross-sectoral cooperation between DG ECHO and other EU services were more challenging<sup>392</sup>, such as difficulties in creating synergies with other EU work on cyber security and hybrid threats<sup>393</sup>, as well as stakeholders' lack of clarity on the operational delineation of responsibilities between DG ECHO and the newly established entity HERA (see Section 5.1.3)<sup>394</sup>. Stakeholders mentioned several challenges in fostering cross-sectoral cooperation at **national level**, including national civil protection authorities' lack of (political) ability to effectively cooperate with other sectors and ministries<sup>395</sup>. This suggests room for improvement in raising awareness about the UCPM with non-conventional actors<sup>396</sup>. For particular sectors where the UCPM could foster more cooperation:

- There is scope for the UCPM to promote further cooperation, particularly in the pillar of **prevention**, given the growing complexity of disasters<sup>397</sup>. EU stakeholders noted that they expect advantages from further collaboration with relevant DGs and agencies to enhance prevention and **preparedness**, as well as generally increasing the accessibility of outputs<sup>398</sup>;
- The UCPM could improve and build on its cooperation with **health** and **chemical accident** stakeholders, the **private sector** (see Figure 43) and **EU delegations**<sup>399</sup>. Challenges remain in engaging national health ministries in UCPM activities and raising awareness of the Mechanism<sup>400</sup>. There have been calls to involve the private sector in UCPM activities, including to provide additional capacity to Member States in exceptional circumstances<sup>401</sup>, and for the protection of cultural heritage (e.g. cooperation with private insurance companies)<sup>402</sup>. During the response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the private

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European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020*, 2021; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2022; European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2020.

<sup>391</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>392</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (2).

<sup>393</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>394</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); DG ECHO (3); national authorities (6). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>395</sup> Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. Interviews with: national authorities (5); EU stakeholders (2); DG ECHO (6). European Commission and World Bank, *Understanding the needs of civil protection agencies and opportunities for scaling up Disaster Risk Management Investments*, 2021; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020*, 2022; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022.

<sup>396</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (3); national authorities (2). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020*, 2021; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022.

<sup>397</sup> Focus group on: cost-effectiveness on 26 May 2023. European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2022.

<sup>398</sup> Focus group on: cost-effectiveness on 26 May 2023.

<sup>399</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); EU stakeholders (2); DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021*, 2022; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022; European Commission, *Towards faster, greener and smarter emergency management*, 7th European Civil Protection Forum 2022, 2022; European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2019; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Combined Evaluation of DG ECHO's humanitarian response to epidemics, and DG ECHO's partnership with the World Health Organisation, 2017-2021*, 2022. Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>400</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1); EU stakeholders (2). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Combined Evaluation of DG ECHO's humanitarian response to epidemics, and DG ECHO's partnership with the World Health Organisation, 2017-2021*, 2022; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022; European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2020.

<sup>401</sup> Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>402</sup> European Commission, *Safeguarding Cultural Heritage from Natural and Man-Made Disasters. A comparative analysis of risk management in the EU*.

sector played a role in the Mechanism for the first time by channelling donations to Ukraine through a logistical hub (see Figure 33)<sup>403</sup>. There are calls for this new role to be replicated in certain similar crises<sup>404</sup>. Beyond the evaluation period, DG ECHO has increased its efforts to cooperate with the private sector, but there is a need for criteria and parameters for involvement to be defined. For example, the fact that Member States did not agree to a different model for private sector involvement in the context of the Türkiye-Syria crisis, shows the expected benefit of reducing civil protection authorities' burden as a key decision-making parameter<sup>405</sup>. Similarly, notwithstanding improvements to cooperate with EU delegations, their crucial role has led to calls for further cooperation efforts<sup>406</sup>. Stakeholders suggested that involving Member State representations in the affected country could enhance response coordination<sup>407</sup>. The fact that DG ECHO is working towards introducing civil protection contact points in EU delegations will likely have an impact<sup>408</sup>.

**During the evaluation period, UCPM activities across the pillars contributed to increased communication, coordination and cooperation, to varying degrees.**

Stakeholders agreed that **response**<sup>409</sup> activities contributed most to increased communication, coordination and cooperation, in particular:

- The **ERCC's** role in coordinating and communicating throughout an emergency was underlined as crucial<sup>410</sup>;
- The UCPM's **deployment efforts** helped to strengthen cooperation through regular meetings with all relevant actors and to **smooth cooperation with relevant international organisations operating in parallel**<sup>411</sup>. Stakeholders highlighted significant improvements in cooperation between national, EU and international actors during response efforts outside the EU<sup>412</sup>, especially in the context of the Türkiye-Syria earthquake in 2023<sup>413</sup>. They also noted good cooperation between the UCPM and NATO, the Red Cross, International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the WHO. Complex coordination efforts in the context of floods, the Ebola outbreak, the Türkiye-Syrian earthquake, and COVID-19 (including

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<sup>403</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); EU stakeholders (1); DG ECHO (1); experts in civil protection (1). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021, 2022*; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine, 2022*; European Commission, *Towards faster, greener and smarter emergency management, 7th European Civil Protection Forum 2022, 2022*; European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes, 2019*.

<sup>405</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). DG ECHO internal data.

<sup>406</sup> Interviews with: national civil protection authorities (1). European Commission, *Lessons Learnt on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique, 2019*; EESC, *Consolidating the EU–Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory, Opinion, 2022*; European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations, 2019*.

<sup>407</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations, 2019*.

<sup>408</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>409</sup> Interviews with: international authorities (8); DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (10); international stakeholders (1).

<sup>410</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (6); DG ECHO (1); international stakeholders (2); experts in civil protection (1); EU stakeholders (2). European Commission, *Lessons Learnt on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique, 2019*; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations, 2020*; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe, 2022*; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine, 2022*. See Annex 7 for case studies on floods and on COVID-19.

<sup>411</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); Interviews with: international stakeholders (2); national authorities (3); EU stakeholders (2). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations, 2022*; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learned Meeting on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism operations in 2017, 2018*. Surveys of: DG ECHO – increased cooperation and coordination between Member States, Participating States, third countries and international partners (33/38); experts in civil protection (15/19); national authorities (47/52).

<sup>412</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO (33/38); experts in civil protection (15/19); national authorities (47/52). Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholder (1); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (3).

<sup>413</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (1).

outside the Union) reinforced cooperation between relevant actors<sup>414</sup>. Informal cooperation channels with third-country stakeholders during deployment and (virtual) calls with civil protection authorities very early in the deployment stage<sup>415</sup> were highlighted. There is scope to improve information management with international partners and to engage actors outside of civil protection during response efforts<sup>416</sup>. In contrast, challenging cooperation efforts between the UCPM and international organisations were experienced during medical deployments of EMT to Armenia in 2020, where the WHO's absence highlighted the need for improved collaboration<sup>417</sup>. Revised SOPs have been implemented to address and mitigate these challenges<sup>418</sup>;

- **The deployment of EUCPT was seen to foster better cooperation and coordination efforts.** Stakeholders highlighted that EUCPT eased communication with local authorities and other relevant stakeholders<sup>419</sup>. They noted that in response to the 2019 earthquake in Albania, the EUCPT was particularly successful as a coordination hub for international actors<sup>420</sup>;
- **Financial assistance for transport and logistics** was an enabler to achieve the UCPM's general objective (more for third countries than Member and Participating States), as it is all coordinated and financed through a central EU system<sup>421</sup>. There is room to simplify procedures related to co-financing transport costs (see Section 5.1.3 and Section 5.2).

**Cross-pillar/horizontal** activities had an impact on increased communication, coordination and cooperation across borders and sectors. In particular:

- The **Training (and Exercises) Programme** brought people from different backgrounds together to learn how to cooperate across borders and sectors<sup>422</sup>. A good example is the joint training between the UN and European Commission, with 12 sessions taking place during the evaluation period. The benefits of this increased cooperation were especially visible in the earthquake response in Türkiye-Syria (see Section 5.1.1.2)<sup>423</sup>;
- Evidence suggests that the **Knowledge Network** will play a significant role in strengthening cooperation, especially between civil protection and disaster management and scientific

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<sup>414</sup> European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2022; European Commission, *ERCC 2021 in perspective: Overview of UCPM activations and deployments*, 2022. European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learned Meeting on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism operations in 2017*, 2018. Interviews with: international stakeholders (2); national authorities (3); EU stakeholders (2).

<sup>415</sup> European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020*, 2021.

<sup>416</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learned Meeting on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism operations in 2017*, 2018; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020*, 2021.

<sup>417</sup> European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020*, 2021.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

<sup>419</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3). See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>420</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020.

<sup>421</sup> Kantar, *Desk Report – Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations (2018–2022) and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation*, 2020, 2022. Interviews with: EU stakeholder (3); DG ECHO (1); experts in civil protection (1); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (2).

<sup>422</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1); international stakeholders (1). Training Consortium, *UCPM Training Programme 16th Cycle 2018–2019. UCPM Introduction Course (CMI)*, 2019; Training Consortium, *UCPM Training Programme 16th Cycle. Modules Basic Courses (MBC) and Technical experts courses (TEC)*, 2019; Training Consortium, *UCPM Training Programme 17th Cycle. Operational Management Course (OPM)*, 2018; CN APELL-RO and EUROMODEX, *EUROMODEX LOT2 2017–2018 FINAL CONSOLIDATED REPORT*, 2018; Training Consortium, *UNDAC Induction course (IC) and team leader course (TL) 2018*, 2018; Training Consortium, *Training programme EU On-site Integration Course (OSIC) in the frame of the UCPM training programme: project progress report*, 2022. Surveys of: national authorities (40).

<sup>423</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).

experts (from academic, non-governmental and national organisations)<sup>424</sup>. It will expand and build on the work of the DRMKC's Risk Data Hub, which is already facilitating links between practitioners, policy makers and academics on disaster risk management<sup>425</sup>;

- **Conferences and workshops** (particularly Civil Protection Forum and Lessons Learnt workshops) foster cooperation by bringing together relevant actors and facilitating a mutual understanding of good practices, improvements and lessons<sup>426</sup>.

The main activities contributing to strengthened cooperation in the field of **prevention** and **preparedness** were:

- The **PPP** successfully reinforced cooperation at international and national level, especially through good internal coordination between beneficiaries and with national and local stakeholders<sup>427</sup>. Regular meetings with prevention and preparedness actors with Sendai focal points also fostered further cooperation in prevention and preparedness<sup>428</sup>. Calls for proposals have highlighted the need for cooperation in certain areas and countries<sup>429,430</sup>;
- The **ECPP** and **rescEU** were seen as essential to cooperation by bringing together Member and Participating States to pool assets and identify capacity gaps<sup>431</sup>. The establishment of the 'rescEU private sector work strand' for CBRN, shelter and medical supplies hosted by Belgium was an important development that shows the potential for rescEU to expand its cooperation sectors<sup>432</sup>. The UCPM indirectly contributed to reinforcing bilateral and sub-regional cooperation by reinforcing national capacities to deal with forest fire management<sup>433</sup>;
- There appears to be **scope for improvement** for **EWS** and risk mapping and **DRM Summary Reports**, both of which could foster more cross-sectoral cooperation. EWS could work to foster better synergies with military structures, while risk mapping and DRM Summary Reports could bring together more non-conventional civil protection actors<sup>434</sup>. The Union Disaster Resilience Goals call for more comprehensive assessments building on sector-specific and multi-sector risks assessments<sup>435</sup>.

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<sup>424</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); EU stakeholders (3); DG ECHO (2); experts in civil protection (1); international stakeholders (1). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Fifth Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre (DRMKC) Annual Seminar*, 2022; European Commission, *Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) Strategic crisis management in the EU*, 2022; THW, *Consortium*, 2018. Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Lessons Learnt Programme (15); national authorities – impact of significant changes: Knowledge Network (36).

<sup>425</sup> European Commission, *Risk Data Hub – web platform to facilitate management of disaster risks*, 2019. Surveys of: experts in civil protection (5).

<sup>426</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1); EU stakeholders (1). European Commission, *Lessons Learnt on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique*, 2019; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2022. Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (21).

<sup>427</sup> European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil protection prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014–2020)*, 2021. Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); experts in civil protection (2); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (2). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (16/17); experts in civil protection – project lead for prevention projects (10/11), project lead for preparedness projects (10/11), project member of consortia (7/7).

<sup>428</sup> European Commission, *Annual Activity Report 2019, 2020*; European Commission, *Annual Activity Report 2020, 2021*.

<sup>429</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (1).

<sup>430</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1).

<sup>431</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); EU stakeholders (7); DG ECHO (2); experts in civil protection (1); international stakeholders (2). Surveys of: national authorities – in response to Participating States (44/45), coordination of deployment response capacities (41/42).

<sup>432</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (4). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022; European Commission, *Towards faster, greener and smarter emergency management*, 7th European Civil Protection Forum 2022, 2022.

<sup>433</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>434</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1); EU stakeholders (1). European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2019; Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services, *Evaluation study of definitions, gaps and costs of response capacities for the Union Civil Protection Mechanism*, 2019; European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2020.

<sup>435</sup> Goal 1, Commission Recommendation of 8 February 2023 on Union Disaster Resilience Goals, 2023/C 56/01.



5.1.3 EQ3. What factors have driven/hindered the effectiveness towards achieving the UCPM's general and specific objectives?

**Key findings**

- The changing threat and risk landscape placed new pressures on the UCPM. Most notably, the COVID-19 pandemic and the implications of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine resulted in challenges of new scope and complexity for the Mechanism;
- Intrinsic limits in current scientific knowledge and know-how limited the effectiveness of the UCPM;
- Some external barriers hampered cooperation and coordination activities of the UCPM. These included the complex and diverse national institutional landscapes navigated by DG ECHO and national civil protection authorities, a mismatch between expectations in third countries and what the UCPM could offer, and limited national resources to engage and support the activities of the UCPM;
- The effectiveness of the UCPM was enhanced by the legislative, organisational, and procedural adaptability of the Mechanism. Trust and mutual understanding between DG ECHO and Member and Participating States positively affected the Mechanism's effectiveness. However, changes in DG ECHO's organisation led to some inefficiencies in internal cooperation, with consequences for UCPM support to Member and Participating States, as well as third countries;
- UCPM activities had unintended positive effects, including on policy awareness, operationalising scientific tools, and regional cooperation on civil protection outside Europe.



**Judgement criteria:**

- JC3.1: There were some internal/ external factors that drove/hindered the effectiveness of the UCPM;
- JC3.2: Cooperation and coordination were sometimes hampered by factors internal and/or external to the UCPM
- JC3.3: Legislative amendments of the UCPM since 2017 (e.g. introduction of rescEU) as well as structural changes in the Commission and DG ECHO (e.g. new European Commission, DG ECHO Commissioner, etc.) have aided the achievement of general and specific objectives in the field of preparedness and response;
- JC3.4 UCPM activities across the pillars had some positive effects and limited negative repercussions beyond what was planned.

**Several internal and external factors influenced the effectiveness of the UCPM** (see Figure 44). This subsection outlines the internal and external barriers and enablers impacting the effectiveness of the UCPM. It examines the impact of legislative amendments and structural changes in DG ECHO on the attainment of general and specific objectives in preparedness and response, and describes the unintended consequences of UCPM's activities across its pillars.



Figure 44. Factor mapping and key judgement criteria

	Hindering factors 	Facilitating factors 
<b>Internal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ DG ECHO human and financial resources (JC3.1)</li> <li>➤ Focus on response to the detriment of preparedness and prevention (JC3.1)</li> <li>➤ Complexity of processes and amount of required documentation (JC3.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Legislative responsiveness and adaptability (legislative amendments) (JC3.3)</li> <li>➤ Internal organisational changes to DG ECHO (JC3.3)</li> <li>➤ Adaptability of / innovation in DG ECHO (JC3.1)</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Changing threat and risk landscape (JC3.1)</li> <li>➤ COVID-19 (JC 3.1)</li> <li>➤ Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (JC3.1)</li> <li>➤ Limits to scientific know-how and evidence base (JC3.1)</li> <li>➤ Complexity of administrative and governance landscape across MS/PC (JC3.2)</li> <li>➤ Misalignment between beneficiaries' expectations and UCPM capacity (JC3.2)</li> <li>➤ Resource constraints of Member States/Participating States stakeholders/counterparts (JC3.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Cross-sectoral cooperation (JC3.1)</li> <li>➤ Private sector contributions (JC3.1)</li> <li>➤ Trust among DG ECHO and national counterparts (JC3.2)</li> <li>➤ Understanding of UCPM among Member States/Participating States (JC3.2)</li> </ul>

Source: ICF elaboration.

#### Judgement criterion:

- JC3.1: There were some internal/external factors that drove/hindered the effectiveness of the UCPM

Several external and internal factors negatively affected the UCPM during the evaluation period. Nevertheless, the ability of DG ECHO and Member States to adapt to crises' demands helped to mitigate the effects of external challenges and limitations. This included the adoption of innovative processes and enhanced cooperation with stakeholders outside the civil protection community.

Recent years have seen significant changes in the threat and risk landscape, leading to new pressures and challenges for the UCPM. The increased frequency, scale, complexity and concurrent nature of emergencies put a significant strain on the UCPM. The Mechanism was a key solution to unprecedented crises. However, it was designed on the assumption of being able to regroup and rebuild capacities in non-activation time<sup>436</sup> and the demands of a threat and risk landscape characterised by increasing pressures are likely to overwhelm both national and European capacities to respond. From the ERCC's perspective, challenges with multiple simultaneous RfA include module shortages and prioritisation<sup>437</sup>. Stakeholders noted a need to align the UCPM's work and capabilities with the new risk landscape<sup>438</sup>, including climate change adaptation and slow onset disasters<sup>439</sup>.

<sup>436</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); national authorities (3).

<sup>437</sup> European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021, 2022*.

<sup>438</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); national authorities (3).

<sup>439</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Recommendations for National Risk Assessment for Disaster Risk Management in the EU*, 2021. Slow onset disasters are defined by the UNDRR as 'one that emerges gradually over time [...] and] could be associated with,

Some of the crises during the evaluation period created exceptional challenges and pressure for the UCPM, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Nevertheless, DG ECHO's crisis management capitalised on opportunities for innovation and enhanced cooperation to mitigate the challenges and pressures encountered.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant obstacles to UCPM's operations due to delays and cessations of activities linked to public health measures<sup>440</sup>. For example, the deployment of ERCC Liaison Officers and EUCPTs to UCPM activations was not possible during the first half of 2020<sup>441</sup>.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the implementation of the **Training and Exercises Programme**, as well as the **EoE Programme**<sup>442</sup>. These activities were affected in several ways: 1) delays and cancellation of in-person training activities<sup>443</sup>, 2) remote or hybrid implementation of activities originally envisioned for in-person delivery<sup>444</sup>, and 3) fewer participants requesting or attending training activities due to health-related cancellations, limited flight availability, and reduced interest<sup>445</sup>.

Figure 45. Examples of UCPM training and exercises hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic

### Examples of Training and Exercises hindered during the COVID-19 pandemic



**Modules Basic Courses (MBC) and Technical Experts courses (TEC), 2019–2020:** 8 out of the 11 courses were successfully completed as planned. The remaining 3 out of 11 had to be cancelled despite being prepared for. The new courses in the 18th cycle prevented any postponements.

**EU MODEX Lot 3, 2019–2020:** Four modules withdrew their participation in a MODEX Exercise in Turkey due to pandemic-related issues in Romania, deployment to an emergency on La Palma islands, and logistical problems.

**ModTTX Modules Table–Top Exercises 2019–2020:** The two remaining exercises in Belgium (ModTTX) and Germany (Team Leader Exercise) in the training cycle had initially been postponed. The latter was re-designed as a Virtual reality role play centred around 'Inclusive Leadership', involving five Team Leaders who used virtual reality goggles with an app and avatars.

**High Level Coordination Course (HLC) and Course on Negotiation and Decision-making (CND), 2022:** The increased number of cancellations by participants or course staff due to health reasons and limited availability of flights had posed a challenge for all Lots. Yet, within Lot 6, all six courses were successfully delivered with a high average participant rating of 4.6 out of 5.

Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation<sup>446</sup>.

e.g. drought, desertification, sea-level rise, epidemic disease' (UNDRR, *Sendai Framework Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction*, 2023, <https://www.undrr.org/quick/11964>).

<sup>440</sup> European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021*, 2022.

<sup>441</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (comment). European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID–19 wave in Europe*, 2020.

<sup>442</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – in-person training (44/49), EU MODEX (31/41), table-top exercise (21/41, with 13 indicating a moderate impact). Interviews with: national authorities (3/36). European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID–19 wave in Europe*, 2020.

<sup>443</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders — the training activity was not implemented (28/45), the number of sessions per year decreased (19/45). Training Consortium, *17th cycle. Modules Basic Courses (MBC) and Technical experts courses (TEC)*, 2020; Mod TTX, *ModTTX Modules Table–Top Exercises 2019–2020 N°ECHO/SER/2018/785702*, 2020; European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID–19 wave in Europe*, 2020; EU MODEX, *Final Report MODEX 2019–2020 lot 5*, 2020.

<sup>444</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (30/45 and 15/45, respectively). Mod TTX, *ModTTX Modules Table–Top Exercises 2019–2020 N°ECHO/SER/2018/785702*, 2020; EU Chem React and European Union Civil Protection, *EU–CHEM–REACT–2, Full scale field exercise (FSX) final conduct report, grant agreement ECHO/SUB/2018/828788*, 2021.

<sup>445</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – the number of participants requesting to participate in the training activities decreased (14/45), the number of (maximum) participants was reduced (8/45) and comments. EU MODEX, *Final Progress Report. EU MODEX 2019–2020 Lot 3*, 2021; Training Consortium, *UCPM Training Programme 18th cycle. High Level Coordination Course (HLC) and Course on Negotiation and Decision-making (CND)*, 2022.

<sup>446</sup> Training Consortium, *17th cycle. Modules Basic Courses (MBC) and Technical experts courses (TEC)*, 2020; EU MODEX, *Final Progress Report. EU MODEX 2019–2020 lot 3*, 2021; Training Consortium, *UCPM Training Programme 18th cycle. High Level Coordination Course (HLC) and Course on Negotiation and Decision-making (CND)*, 2022; Mod TTX, *ModTTX Modules Table–Top Exercises 2019–2020 N°ECHO/SER/2018/785702*, 2020.

**Large-scale crises increased the demands placed on the UCPM and on national capacity, to the point of threatening to overwhelm them.** The rise in multiple simultaneous RfA and activations since 2017 (see Section 5.1.1.3) posed challenges in allocating the necessary capacity and resources<sup>447</sup>. This increased pressure specifically impacted the ERCC's work.

**Heightened demands added to DG ECHO's already significant workload in implementing budget reinforcements and legislative amendments.** For example, the COVID-19 pandemic had a widespread impact, affecting virtually all Member and Participating States and resulting in global supply chain shortages, restricting national response options and capacity to make offers<sup>448</sup>. Meanwhile, the ERCC provided major coordination and logistical support over sustained and intensive periods of time, for instance during the consular support and repatriation operations<sup>449</sup>. The changing role of ERCC duty officers from support staff to full-time staff helped to mitigate the increasing volume of activations<sup>450</sup>.

**The growing number and diversity of actors involved in emergency responses necessitated new coordination structures and processes**<sup>451</sup>. This encompassed engaging with new contact points at national, EU, and international level (see Section 5.1.2).

- At **national level**, coordination challenges were especially pressing when new actors had limited knowledge about the UCPM's procedures and capabilities<sup>452</sup>. Similarly, the ERCC encountered challenges in interacting with national bodies outside civil protection, such as health authorities, interior ministries and foreign ministries (see Section 5.1.2);
- At **EU level**, higher coordination demands were expected particularly when stakeholders had a limited understanding about the distribution of roles between the UCPM and new actors emerging in the field of crisis management. Stakeholders expressed a general apprehension of an increasingly complex EU crisis management landscape.<sup>453</sup> In particular, stakeholders perceived a lack of clarity as regard the distribution of roles between the UCPM and the newly established entity HERA<sup>454</sup> (Section 5.4.3) and to a lesser extent the upcoming Cyber Task Force<sup>455</sup> (Section 5.1.2), and the private sector<sup>456</sup> (Section 5.1.2). As regards cooperation with HERA, respective responsibilities of the single entities are clearly defined in the legislations (Section 5.4.3 for the description of responsibilities divided between HERA and UCPM).<sup>457</sup>

This suggests that while the **adaptability and flexibility** of the UCPM proved to be one of the main facilitating factors in its effectiveness, greater emphasis should be placed in future on communicating and facilitating interactions between the UCPM, new actors and stakeholders. This would maximise stakeholders' gains from the engagement of the UCPM with new actors and maintain their confidence in the effectiveness and efficiency of the UCPM.

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<sup>447</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (7); national authorities (1). European Commission, *Annual Activity Report 2020, 2021*.

<sup>448</sup> European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe, 2020*; European Commission, *Annual Activity Report 2020, 2021*.

<sup>449</sup> European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe, 2020*.

<sup>450</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>451</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (6); national authorities (4). European Commission, *Annual Activity Report 2020, 2021*; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020, 2021*.

<sup>452</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (6); national authorities (4).

<sup>453</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (4 comments). Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); national authorities (2). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023; DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.

<sup>454</sup> Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023 (4 national authorities, 1 expert). Interviews with: DG ECHO (3). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers - effectiveness (8), efficiency (3), coherence (5). Interviews with: national authorities (8); EU stakeholders (2); international stakeholder (1); national authorities (1 comment). See Annex 7 for case study on COVID-19.

<sup>455</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>456</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). ERCC presentation notes CECIS.

<sup>457</sup> Regulation 2022/2371; Commission decision C(2021) 6712 on the 16.09.2021. See Annex 7 for case study on COVID-19.

**The effectiveness of the UCPM was influenced by limits of scientific knowledge and evidence. In the area of prevention and preparedness, several barriers hindered increased use of scientific know-how<sup>458</sup>.** These included: 1) measuring the effectiveness of prevention actions, 2) assessing population risk behaviour and awareness, 3) accessing scientifically tested solutions, and 4) quantifying risks and obtaining reliable data. For example, data availability varied across hazards and elements<sup>459</sup>.

A recent report by the World Bank found that while coverage of risk information and economic indicators was good for hazards such as floods and earthquakes, there was little information for volcano eruptions, droughts, landslides, technological hazards, and certain elements of wildfires. These challenges impede the ability to anticipate, predict, and evaluate investments in prevention and preparedness<sup>460</sup>. Variations in data availability and knowledge across hazards add to the challenges of harmonising DRM Summary Reports (see Section 5.1.1.1)<sup>461</sup>. Climate change exacerbates the issue, as relying solely on historical data for forecasting may not capture future patterns and changes in event frequency and magnitude<sup>462</sup>.

The 2018 event in the Sulawesi Island exemplified the difficulty in anticipating complex and dynamic multi-hazard events<sup>463</sup>. Models could not capture the complex dynamics of the event, where an earthquake triggered a tsunami within a short timeframe, resulting in significant damage. In the area of response, the limited ability to forecast and assess cascading effects presented challenging political decisions during the initial response phase<sup>464</sup>. Rapid decision-making needs to be balanced with the inherent uncertainties in scientific advice. Overall, these limitations underscore the need for improved data harmonisation.

**Some internal barriers also impacted the effectiveness of the UCPM. These included limits on the human and financial resources available, as well as the strong focus on response, to the detriment of non-operational preparedness and prevention.**

The concurrent unfolding of complex crises strained DG ECHO's human resources (see Section 5.2.1). This strain was exacerbated by a loss of institutional knowledge due to a high turnover rate among staff<sup>465</sup>. Delays in filling new vacancies, together with the reorganisation of DG ECHO, required delivery of an increased scope of work<sup>466</sup>.

DG ECHO staff found that resources sometimes limited the Mechanism's ability to progress its general and specific objectives<sup>467</sup>. For example, stakeholders noted that time pressures meant it was impossible to systematically implement lessons identified to improve UCPM tools.

Resource allocation across UCPM activities was seen as sub-optimal from a long-term perspective, hindering the achievement of objectives (see Section 5.2.1)<sup>468</sup>. During the evaluation period, limited

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<sup>458</sup> European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2019; European Commission and World Bank, *Understanding the needs of civil protection agencies and opportunities for scaling up Disaster Risk Management Investments*, 2021; European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the EU may face*, 2021.

<sup>459</sup> World Bank, *Economics of Disaster Prevention and Preparedness. Investment in Disaster Risk Management in Europe Makes Economic Sense*, 2021; European Commission, *Recommendations for National Risk Assessment for Disaster Risk Management in the EU*, JRC, 2021.

<sup>460</sup> European Commission and World Bank, *Understanding the needs of civil protection agencies and opportunities for scaling up Disaster Risk Management Investments*, 2021; European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the EU may face*, 2020.

<sup>461</sup> European Commission, *Recommendations for National Risk Assessment for Disaster Risk Management in the EU*, JRC, 2021.

<sup>462</sup> European Commission, *Recommendations for National Risk Assessment for Disaster Risk Management in the EU*, JRC, 2021; ECA, *Floods Directive: progress in assessing risks, while planning and implementation need to improve*, 2018.

<sup>463</sup> European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2018.

<sup>464</sup> Focus group on: cost-effectiveness on 26 May 2023. European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2019; European Commission, *Early Warning Systems (EWS) Expert Group Meeting*, 2022.

<sup>465</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3).

<sup>466</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>467</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (6). Surveys of: DG ECHO – perceive a negative impact of the size and structure of the UCPM budget on the achievement of its objectives (11), flexibility of the budget (11), resources allocated to the implementation of UCPM activities (16).

<sup>468</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO – resources allocated to the implementation of UCPM activities (16/33).

resources were allocated to non-operational activities under prevention and preparedness, compared to the response pillar<sup>469</sup>. This affected planning by DG ECHO staff and national authorities working on these pillars. Limited resources also hindered cooperation on prevention topics beyond wildfires, as well as collaboration with third countries. Stakeholders reported a need to review and adjust resource distribution across UCPM pillars<sup>470</sup>.

**However, different enablers helped to mitigate the effects of these barriers.** In particular, innovation and adaptability in activities and processes enhanced the effectiveness of the UCPM<sup>471</sup>. Enabling factors included:

- DG ECHO staff's **strong commitment and good internal working relationships** were seen as effective measures to mitigate limited resources and enhance UCPM activities<sup>472</sup>;
- The **use of innovative methodologies and technologies** ensured the continuity of UCPM activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, the Training and Exercise Programme and the EoE Programme successfully transitioned to virtual and remote formats<sup>473</sup>. Online training did not have a negative impact on outcomes overall, and, in some cases, facilitated easier access<sup>474</sup>. Nevertheless, key stakeholders highlighted certain disadvantages of online training, including the need for shorter course durations to prevent screen fatigue, reduced networking opportunities for participants, and the challenge for trainers to maintain an engaging pace<sup>475</sup>;
- **Close cross-sector cooperation and targeted private sector involvement** mitigated the exceptional strain on civil protection resources in addressing complex emergencies (see Section 5.1 and Section 5.4.2)<sup>476</sup>. Member States acknowledged the private sector's support role in reinforcing logistics, transport, warehousing, in-kind assistance and donations<sup>477</sup>. However, both Member States and DG ECHO agreed that private sector contributions should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and carefully framed within this existing set-up of responsibilities<sup>478</sup>. This includes obtaining agreement from Member States, which maintain overall emergency management responsibility, and ensuring clear added value in complementing national activities and aligning with EU priorities. Setting clear rules, standards and principles for private sector involvement is crucial to effective collaboration and accountability<sup>479</sup>.

#### Judgement criterion:

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<sup>469</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (5). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – negative impact of the scope and nature of UCPM prevention activities (6/33), scope and nature of UCPM prevention activities (2/33), response activities (1/33), cross-pillar activities (2/33).

<sup>470</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (4 comments).

<sup>471</sup> Kantar, *CASE STUDY 8 – COVID-19 repatriations/consular services*, 2023.

<sup>472</sup> Focus group on: cost-effectiveness on 26 May 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); national authorities (1).

<sup>473</sup> CN APPEL\_ RO and IGSU, *Programme of Exchange of Civil Protection Experts. Final report of the first 12 months renewal Contracting Phase/stage 2*, 2021. Interviews with: national authorities (3); experts in civil protection (1).

<sup>474</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (7); national authorities (12). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – positive impact of external factors on the progress towards the achievement of UCPM objectives: the frequency, size and /or complexity of disasters (29/34); national authorities (28/44); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (12/18); DG ECHO Desk Officers - Hi-Lo disasters (29/34); national authorities (28/44); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (9/19); DG ECHO Desk Officers - climate change (24/34); national authorities (22/44); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (11/19); DG ECHO Desk Officers - migration flows (23/34); national authorities (22/44); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (12/16).

<sup>475</sup> Training Consortium, *UCPM Training Programme. 18th cycle. Modules Basic Courses (MBC) and Technical experts courses (TEC)*, 2021; Training Consortium, *UCPM Training Programme. 18th cycle. Operational Management Course (OPM)*, 2021. Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (comments). Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1).

<sup>476</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (8); national authorities (12); Interviews with experts in civil protection (1). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022.

<sup>477</sup> Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>478</sup> Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>479</sup> Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.



- JC3.2: Cooperation and coordination were sometimes hampered by factors internal and/or external to the UCPM

**While there was good cooperation and coordination (see EQ.2), evidence shows that external factors and states of affairs at national level occasionally had a hampering effect. Nonetheless, good relations in terms of mutual understanding and networks helped to mitigate challenges.**

**Cooperation and coordination were sometimes impeded by the complexity of the process and documentation required by DG ECHO, affecting communication and information exchange between DG ECHO and national authorities<sup>480</sup>. Both national authorities and DG ECHO recognised the need to simplify procedures on **co-financing transport costs** (see Sections 5.2.1, 5.3.1, and 5.3.2)<sup>481</sup>.**

Stakeholders raised concerns about the multiple ratios for funding, the requirement to submit forms for every transport movement, and limitations on spontaneous offers. Simplification could be expected to enhance the speed and effectiveness of response efforts. Another key challenge was the lack of a centralised data collection tool to exchange information and monitor activities (see Section 5.2.1)<sup>482</sup>. In particular, **CECIS** was seen as outdated, as its manual processing makes it difficult to manage, share and extract data<sup>483</sup>. These challenges resulted in time-consuming procedures and information overload for offering and receiving countries, with a negative impact on the emergency response<sup>484</sup>. Specific challenges included:

- Complex Excel sheets used for requesting capacities are inefficient when dealing with a large number of capacities and a range of fields;
- Inability to track assistance offered and delivered;
- Systematically capturing information on the financial value of assistance provided;
- Integrating CECIS with other platforms used by national authorities;
- Automatically transferring information entered by national authorities to DG ECHO outputs.

Figure 46. Lesson: centralised data collection tool



#### Lesson learnt

##### ***Suggestions for a centralised data collection tool for emergency communication and monitoring***

National authorities considered CECIS 2.0 to have improved operational coordination by allowing data access for actors beyond civil protection. However, three key success factors to enable overall improvements to the communication and information exchange between DG ECHO and national authorities are:

- 1) Encouraging Member States to move to CECIS 2.0 as an integrated system for emergency communication and monitoring capabilities.
- 2) Transitioning from using Excel sheets to CECIS 2.0 to improve user-friendliness and data robustness.
- 3) Consistently using digital tracking devices from Request for Assistance (RfA) to delivery to enhance tracking capabilities throughout the response.

*Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation<sup>485</sup>.*

<sup>480</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (4).

<sup>481</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); national authorities (1). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.

<sup>482</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (5); DG ECHO (2); experts in civil protection (1). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023. European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020*, 2021.

<sup>483</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3); DG ECHO (1). Surveys of: DG ECHO (comments). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.

<sup>484</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1).

<sup>485</sup> Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); national authorities (5). ERCC presentation notes CECIS; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021, 2022*.



**Cooperation and coordination were occasionally hampered by the complexity and diversity of national institutional landscapes, resource limitations, and a mismatch between what the UCPM could offer and third countries' expectations.**

**The complexity and variety of national institutional landscapes affected communication between DG ECHO and Member States.** Civil protection authorities in Member States have different legislative set-ups and mandates<sup>486</sup>, including the national actors involved in emergency responses. At EU level, stakeholders several challenges for DG ECHO in establishing effective communication and coordination channels with relevant authorities:

- DG ECHO may lack access to clear and singular points of contact in decentralised national institutional systems<sup>487</sup>;
- Complex national administrative structures and procedures may entail time-consuming and complex decision-making processes for prevention, preparedness, and response efforts<sup>488</sup>. This can limit DG ECHO's planning certainty and available information on Member States<sup>489</sup>.

Overall, the majority of national authorities, experts on civil protection, and a minority of DG ECHO Desk Officers had a positive view of the impact of national-level cooperation on the UCPM's overall effectiveness<sup>490</sup>. However, the distribution of roles and decision-making powers across different national and local authorities, including some with limited familiarity of the UCPM and DG ECHO, may hamper national level cross-sectoral cooperation and effective use of the Mechanism<sup>491</sup>.

For example, during the 2021 flooding in Germany<sup>492</sup>, the EU provided early warnings, but local and regional authorities were unaware of the system or the extent of the floods and did not take appropriate action. In countries with distributed responsibility for civil protection, it is crucial to bridge the gap between the EU and responsible authorities to ensure effective communication (see Section 5.1.1).

**Resource constraints among national authorities presented a barrier to deepening cooperation and coordination with the UCPM.** National authorities believe the lack of human resources to be a greater challenge than financial resources<sup>493</sup>. Resource constraints are exacerbated by increased cross-sectoral coordination at national level and their associated labour demands<sup>494</sup>. National authorities viewed their resources as limiting their engagement with and full use of UCPM tools<sup>495</sup>. In

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<sup>486</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2). Surveys of DG ECHO Desk Officers (comment).

<sup>487</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).

<sup>488</sup> Survey of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – positive/negative impact of complex national administrative structures and procedures (6/30 and 9/30, respectively); national authorities (10/44 and 15/44, respectively); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (5/16 and 6/16, respectively). Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); national authorities (2). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022.

<sup>489</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3).

<sup>490</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (15/32); national authorities (27/44); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (12/17). European Commission and World Bank, *Understanding the needs of civil protection agencies and opportunities for scaling up Disaster Risk Management Investments*, 2021; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021*, 2022.

<sup>491</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2).

<sup>492</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).

<sup>493</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – financial resources (12/32), human resources (10/33); national authorities – financial resources (22/44), human resources (15/43); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities – financial resources (9/18), human resources (8/18). European Commission and World Bank, *Understanding the needs of civil protection agencies and opportunities for scaling up Disaster Risk Management Investments*, 2021; Protezione Civile Nazionale, *Technical odder for multi-country study, tender ECHO/2022/OP/0002 application*, 2022.

<sup>494</sup> Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. European Commission and World Bank, *Understanding the needs of civil protection agencies and opportunities for scaling up Disaster Risk Management Investments*, 2021. Interviews with: national authorities (5); DG ECHO (6).

<sup>495</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (6).

particular, national resources reportedly could not match the increasing complexity and demands of legislative amendments.

**Misalignment between beneficiaries' expectations and UCPM capacity can hinder cooperation with third countries.** Challenges arise from the inability to guarantee the provision and delivery of assistance following activation of the Mechanism, as well as the conditional nature of assistance<sup>496</sup>. Additionally, there is a potential danger of local organisations or institutions attempting to exploit the UCPM's reputation or to use their involvement with the EUCPT to justify their own actions<sup>497</sup>. Effective expectation management and consideration of local dynamics are vital to safeguard the UCPM's reputation and to ensure effective, sustainable support.

**Mutual understanding and trust between DG ECHO and its national counterparts contributed to stimulating and supporting cooperation and coordination under the UCPM.** Established cooperation patterns between Member and Participating States and DG ECHO had a positive impact and encouraged greater engagement with the UCPM<sup>498</sup>. Sweden's activation of the UCPM after the 2018 forest fires is an example of increased willingness to strengthen preparedness within the EU and offer assistance to other countries<sup>499</sup>.

- Commitment and expertise of DG ECHO staff were noted as positively contributing to collaboration with national counterparts, particularly in response activities<sup>500</sup>. Similarly, a good understanding of the UCPM among Member and Participating States was noted as an enabling factor<sup>501</sup>. In third countries, pre-existing knowledge and understanding of the UCPM and its specifics was seen as an enabler for achieving a rapid emergency response, facilitating the smooth arrival and integration of UCPM teams<sup>502</sup>.

#### Judgement criterion:

- JC3.3: Legislative amendments of the UCPM since 2017 (e.g. introduction of rescEU), as well as structural changes in the Commission and DG ECHO (e.g. new European Commission, DG ECHO Commissioner) have aided the achievement of general and specific objectives in the field of preparedness and response

**Legislative amendments and the associated organisational changes in DG ECHO enhanced cooperation and coordination in the fields of preparedness and response. The revised UCPM legislative and organisational frameworks demonstrate responsiveness and adaptability, but there is scope to substantiate and finetune recent UCPM activities or changes to activities, such as the DRM Summary Reports and Knowledge Network.**

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<sup>496</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learned Meeting on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism operations in 2017, 2018*; European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019; European Commission, *Lessons Learnt on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique*, 2019. Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>497</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020, 2021*.

<sup>498</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – positive impact of the degree of Member States/Participating States to cooperate with DG ECHO on the achievement of the UCPM's objectives (16); national authorities (33); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (12).

<sup>499</sup> Kantar, *CASE STUDY 4 – Forest fires in Sweden 2018*, 2023. Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1).

<sup>500</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1); with DG ECHO (1); experts in civil protection (1). European Commission, *Lessons and good practices identified from TAST deployments*, 2019.

<sup>501</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of preparedness activities.

<sup>502</sup> European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on UCPM activations 2020, 2021*; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2022. Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1).

**Legislative changes enabled the UCPM to evolve and meet its objectives despite an increasingly complex threat and risk landscape.** However, stakeholders expressed concerns about the lack of strategic long-term planning and low transparency of legislative revisions.

**Legislative amendments strengthened cooperation and coordination between the Union, Member and Participating States, and third countries**<sup>503</sup>. Stakeholders noted several particularly positive developments: 1) the establishment and reinforcement of the rescEU reserve pool<sup>504</sup>, 2) the reinforced mandate of the ERCC and integration of the EMC<sup>505</sup>, 3) the establishment and organisation of the Knowledge Network<sup>506</sup>, 4) DRM Summary Reports<sup>507</sup>, 5) disaster scenario building,<sup>508</sup> 6) Union Disaster Resilience Goals<sup>509</sup>.

**In the field of preparedness and response, legislative adaptability and revisions facilitated the continued functioning of the UCPM.** Some stakeholders viewed the Mechanism as exceeding initial expectations and delivering an impressive response beyond that originally planned or anticipated<sup>510</sup>. This includes crises such as COVID-19, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and the Türkiye-Syria earthquake.

**However, despite general support for the overall package of legislative revisions, stakeholders perceived risks in relation to the volume, complexity and speed of legislative amendments.** Legislative amendments to the UCPM since 2017 were adopted swiftly in light of new challenges and parallel disasters<sup>511</sup>. While the flexibility of the UCPM was one of the main factors facilitating its effectiveness, a minority of stakeholders expressed concerns about:

- **Change fatigue.** This expression was used to describe potential challenges with absorbing changes to tools and duties and being aware of developments at national level<sup>512</sup>. This includes concerns about the national capacity to mirror the expansion of resources and tools of the UCPM. Stakeholders cited the implementation of tools such as CECIS 2.0, rescEU financing, Union Disaster Resilience Goals, and the Knowledge Network<sup>513</sup>;

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<sup>503</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (survey items); national authorities (across survey items).

<sup>504</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (38/47); DG ECHO Desk Officers (average 26/34 across related survey items). Interviews with: national authorities (17); DG ECHO (7); EU stakeholders (9); international stakeholders (2); experts in civil protection (1). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022.

<sup>505</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (38/48); national authorities (29/47); DG ECHO Desk Officers (20/34 and 18/34, respectively). Interviews with: national authorities (6); international stakeholders (2). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine*, 2022.

<sup>506</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (36/47); DG ECHO Desk Officers (22/35). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Note to DG ECHO Management – Prevention and preparedness Programme: findings of recent evaluations and future outlook for the programme*, 2022; EESC, *Consolidating the EU–Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022. Interviews with: national authorities (9); experts in civil protection (3); EU stakeholders (4); DG ECHO (2); international stakeholders (3).

<sup>507</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (28/49); European Commission, *Recommendations for National Risk Assessment for Disaster Risk Management in the EU*, JRC, 2021; European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the EU may face*, 2020. Interviews with: national authorities (4).

<sup>508</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (29/48). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022. Interviews with: national authorities (4); DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (2).

<sup>509</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (26/48); DG ECHO Desk Officers (comments). EESC committee, *Consolidating the EU–Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improv' the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022. Interviews with: national authorities (2); international stakeholders (2); EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>510</sup> European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022. Interviews with: national authorities (2); DG ECHO (3); experts in civil protection (1).

<sup>511</sup> European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022.

<sup>512</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (12); DG ECHO (6).

<sup>513</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3).

- **Rushed decision-making in response to the current crises and financial resource availability.** Amendments and adjustments often focused on responding to ongoing crises, with limited consideration for future potential challenges<sup>514</sup>. Examples include the focus on developing capacity for medical emergencies. There is a need for more long-term strategic planning on resilience and capabilities, grounded in scientific evidence and strategic thinking;
- **Diverging views on the role of the UCPM, given the changing risk landscape and need for cross-sectoral cooperation**<sup>515</sup>. Interviews revealed somewhat diverging views. DG ECHO stakeholders perceived a need to add more flexibility to the legislation to mobilise assistance and adopt a creative solution-oriented approach to civil protection<sup>516</sup>. Conversely, national authorities are more reluctant to change<sup>517</sup>. This suggests a need for more exchanges and communications on legislative revisions to the Mechanism to build understanding and buy-in<sup>518</sup>.

**Legislative developments since 2017 significantly affected the achievement of general and specific objectives in the field of preparedness and response by the UCPM, such as the introduction and development of rescEU. Capacity gaps remain, however, and more work is needed outside of medical emergencies.**

rescEU was viewed as a positive development and game changer for preparedness and response efforts<sup>519</sup>. Initially focused on Hi-Lo disasters, it proved vital during the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine<sup>520</sup>. Stakeholders recognised rescEU as a powerful tool that provides a strong narrative for EU solidarity. It addresses capacity gaps for future preparedness and provides strong operational support to Member States, proactively mobilising strategic resources promptly during emergencies<sup>521</sup>. While the visibility and capability of rescEU marks its success, a small minority of stakeholders raised some concerns about the potential impact on perceived maintenance of the subsidiarity principle and role of the ECPP<sup>522</sup> (e.g. reduced justification for national spending on civil protection<sup>523</sup>). Others highlighted challenges in operational decision-making and resource allocation for rescEU capacities, particularly in the event of competing demands<sup>524</sup>.

**Organisational changes to DG ECHO were considered necessary to align with legislative amendments and their operational implications. However, the division of activities across different units within DG ECHO reportedly hindered collaboration and wider effectiveness.** DG ECHO implemented a separation into Directorate A, focusing on response and preparedness, and

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<sup>514</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (8). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>515</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>516</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (comments). Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>517</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3); DG ECHO (1).

<sup>518</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (3); DG ECHO (3).

<sup>519</sup> European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022. Interviews with: national authorities (17); DG ECHO (7); EU stakeholders (9); international stakeholders (2); experts in civil protection (1). European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020. Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (average 26 across related survey items); national authorities (38). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021*, 2022. Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>520</sup> European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; ECA, *Opinion No. 9/2020 accompanying the Co'mission's proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No. 1313/2013/EU on a UCPM*, COM(2020) 220 final; European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2020; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM*, 2020. Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (comments). Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); national authorities (2); international stakeholders (1).

<sup>521</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (17); DG ECHO (5); EU stakeholders (9); experts in civil protection (1); international stakeholders (2).

<sup>522</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (4); national authorities (7); DG ECHO (2). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>523</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>524</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1).

Directorate B, focusing on prevention and preparedness (see Section 5.4)<sup>525</sup>. Additionally, three teams in one unit were created within DG ECHO with responsibility for certifying Member States' capacity from the ECPP, for rescEU, and Humanitarian Response Capacity<sup>526</sup>. DG ECHO's organisational modifications aimed to operationalise the legislative revisions implemented since 2017<sup>527</sup>. Changes focused on enhancing the analytical and human capacities within DG ECHO to meet increased demand, such as implementing the Knowledge Network and administering rescEU<sup>528</sup>. Further changes to DG ECHO's organisation are underway.

DG ECHO Desk Officers' views on the impact of internal organisational changes varied<sup>529</sup>. Overall, the division in Directorates was seen as functioning well and facilitating implementation of the UCPM<sup>530</sup>. Combining response and operational preparedness was noted as an agile and solution-oriented approach. However, there are margins for improving coordination and integration between pillars, units, tasks, and priorities<sup>531</sup>. There is also a risk of duplicated efforts and less flexible decision-making<sup>532</sup>, stemming from overlapping posts and separate work programmes. Competition for visibility and resources further complicate coordination<sup>533</sup>. Stakeholders provided two examples. The Knowledge Network had a limited impact on DG ECHO operations, largely due to a perceived lack of ownership of its activities by the DG ECHO units involved<sup>534</sup>. One stakeholder recommended establishing a dedicated team to manage a tool of this size, with substantial contributions from other units<sup>535</sup>. Stakeholders also highlighted an incoherent approach between Directorates in liaising with third countries<sup>536</sup>. The majority of national authorities agreed that DG ECHO's organisational changes strengthened cooperation and coordination within the UCPM<sup>537</sup>, with the assignment of ERCC staff with a high technical focus on specific areas of civil protection seen as a particularly positive development in facilitating cooperation with national experts<sup>538</sup>.

**Judgement criterion:**

- JC3.4: UCPM activities across the pillars had some positive effects and limited negative repercussions beyond what was planned.

**The interim evaluation found no negative unintended effects of UCPM activities. Instead, there were positive unintended effects stemming from UCPM activities. The UCPM contributed to increased political and public awareness of civil response issues, operationalisation of scientific tools and research, and cooperation on civil protection beyond the EU.**

In relation to unintended consequences, the following emerged from the analysis:

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<sup>525</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3).

<sup>526</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>527</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (9).

<sup>528</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (4).

<sup>529</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – positive/negative effect of the reorganisation (11/34 and 7/34, respectively), positive/negative impact of the internal organisation and articulation of DG ECHO on the achievement of the UCPM's objectives (8/32 and 16/32, respectively).

<sup>530</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (5).

<sup>531</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (4). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (comments). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.

<sup>532</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (comments).

<sup>533</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>534</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>535</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>536</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>537</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (28/48 and 4/48, respectively).

<sup>538</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1); DG ECHO (1).



- The UCPM's activities played a positive role in raising awareness of civil response-related issues and challenges at policy and operational level (see Section 5.1.1.4)<sup>539</sup>. This included awareness of the evolving risk landscape and the importance of enhancing preparedness for more frequent and severe disasters in the future. It also helped to develop the understanding of connections between adaptation, disaster risk management, and the broader socioeconomic benefits of prevention<sup>540</sup>;
- The UCPM contributed to identifying use-cases and promoting the adoption of research, development, testing, and innovation products and outputs<sup>541</sup>. It actively collaborated with EU and international partners to adjust products and tools to the needs of the Mechanism and enable new activities (e.g. Copernicus project);
- The UCPM was perceived as a model for cooperation on civil protection by external stakeholders and by authorities in regions outside the EU<sup>542</sup>, as evidenced by the increased number of applications and approval of Participating States (see Figure 42). Similar regional cooperation mechanisms have been established in central Asia and are under discussion within the African Union<sup>543</sup>.

## 5.2 Efficiency

This subsection assesses the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the activities implemented under the UCPM, the adequacy of the budget allocation<sup>544</sup> per pillar, and whether the measures in place for the Mechanism's internal monitoring and evaluation contributed to the efficient and effective implementation of interventions. It also assesses the extent to which the budgeting system was sufficiently flexible to account for unanticipated events.

### 5.2.1 EQ4: To what extent were the costs of the UCPM's activities across the three pillars justified compared to their benefits?

#### Key findings

- Overall, the evidence suggests that the expected benefits of the UCPM activities were achieved somewhat efficiently;
- Stakeholders generally considered the benefits of the UCPM to outweigh the costs for all pillars;
- There were various instances of cost-effectiveness being taken into consideration at planning, implementation, monitoring and revision/expansion stages of UCPM components/ elements, but insufficient data meant it was not possible to conclude whether the UCPM was the most cost-effective solution;
- There is a need for greater clarity on the costs of the various UCPM activities;
- Opportunities for improvement of efficiency/cost-effectiveness were related to high administrative burden, overlaps and unexplored synergies, lack of data and supporting systems not fit for purpose, and insufficient human resources;
- There was limited awareness and scrutiny of the cost effectiveness of UCPM activities by DG ECHO staff, a notable exception being the contract awarding. While some DG ECHO staff indicated that this is an area that should be improved, others considered it unnecessary

<sup>539</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>540</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1). World Bank, *Economics of Disaster Prevention and Preparedness. Investment in Disaster Risk Management in Europe Makes Economic Sense*, Background Paper, 2021.

<sup>541</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>542</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>543</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>544</sup> For comparison purposes, the budget is often presented in 2022 prices, adjusted for inflation. Consequently, the amounts presented for 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 differ from those in the accounting system, which are in current/nominal prices.



## Key findings

and of limited relevance, given the nature of UCPM activities and in light of the limited resources available;

- The allocation of the budget per pillar was generally considered balanced, given short-term needs and limited funding;
- Some stakeholders indicated that a stronger focus on prevention would have been desirable from a longer-term perspective.

## Judgement criteria:

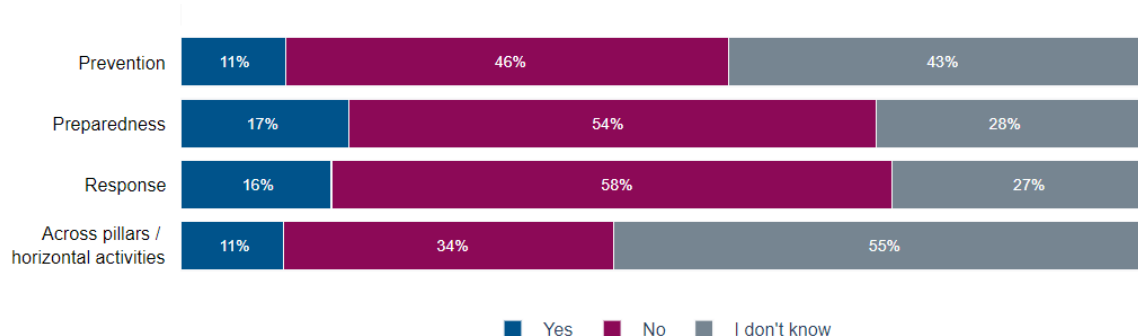
- JC4.1: The UCPM activities generated the expected benefits within the planned budget
- JC4.3: The main factors hindering the cost-efficiency of UCPM are known and being addressed

Judgment criteria JC4.1, JC4.2 and JC4.3 will be addressed collectively, as efficiency influences cost-effectiveness

**Overall, the evidence suggests that the expected benefits of the UCPM activities were achieved somewhat efficiently. However, there is a need for greater clarity about the cost of the various UCPM activities. Opportunities for improvement were identified in relation to administrative burden, overlaps and unexplored synergies, lack of data and supporting systems not fit for purpose, and insufficient human resources.**

The DG ECHO Desk Officers and national authorities surveyed considered the UCPM to contribute to a more rapid and efficient response to disasters<sup>545</sup>. No major differences across pillars were identified by the national authorities, with only a minority aware of inefficiencies in the prevention (11%)<sup>546</sup>, preparedness (17%)<sup>547</sup>, or response pillars (15%)<sup>548</sup>, and horizontal activities (11%)<sup>549,550</sup>.

Figure 47. Survey of national authorities: 'Did you identify inefficiencies for any of the UCPM pillars?'



Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation.

<sup>545</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (94% or 16/17 strongly or somewhat agreed that the UCPM allowed Member and Participating States to respond more efficiently to disasters; and 88% or 15/17 strongly or somewhat agreed that the UCPM allowed third countries to respond more rapidly and efficiently to disasters); national authorities. See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>546</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (5/46).

<sup>547</sup> Surveys of DG ECHO Desk Officers (8/46).

<sup>548</sup> Surveys of DG ECHO Desk Officers (7/46).

<sup>549</sup> Surveys of DG ECHO Desk Officers (5/47).

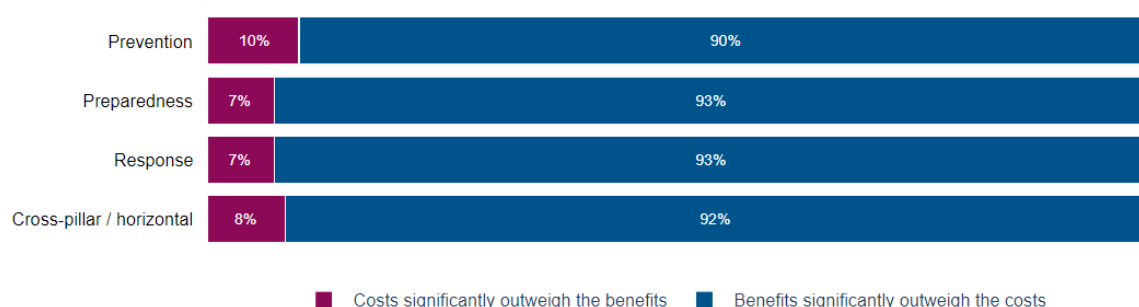
<sup>550</sup> Surveys of national authorities.

**While it is not possible to conclude if the UCPM was the most cost-effective solution, the interim evaluation identified various examples of cost-effectiveness taken into consideration at planning, implementation and monitoring and revision/expansion stages of UCPM components/elements. Stakeholders generally considered the benefits of the UCPM to outweigh the costs for all pillars. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests limited awareness and scrutiny of the cost-effectiveness of UCPM activities by DG ECHO staff, a notable exception being the contract awarding.. While some DG ECHO staff indicated that this is an area that should be improved, others considered it unnecessary and of limited relevance, given the nature of UCPM activities and the limited resources available<sup>551</sup>.**

Of the DG ECHO Desk Officers surveyed, only a small share (18%)<sup>552</sup> disagreed that the UCPM's results between 2017-2022 were achieved in the most cost-effective way.

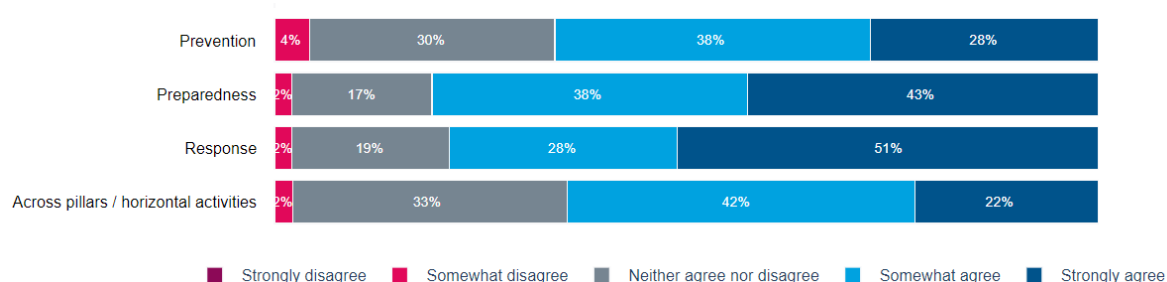
Respondents from national authorities were even more positive, with less than 10%<sup>553</sup> believing that the benefits did not significantly outweigh the costs, and less than 5%<sup>554</sup> stating that the results were not achieved in the most cost-effective way. National authorities' views did not vary significantly across pillars (see Figure 48 and Figure 49).....

Figure 48. Survey of national authorities: 'Considering the overall financial resources invested in the UCPM, please rate, for each of the UCPM pillars, the extent to which the benefits outweighed the costs during the evaluation period'



Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation.

Figure 49. Survey of national authorities: 'Please indicate to what extent you agree that the results were achieved in the most cost-effective way across each of the pillars'



Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation.

<sup>551</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>552</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (6/34).

<sup>553</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (5/46).

<sup>554</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (2/46).

In light of the potential cost-effectiveness of prevention and preparedness<sup>555</sup>, the UCPM strengthened these pillars through a revision of the Decision. The revision started in 2017<sup>556</sup> and was implemented in 2019, leading to increased financial support for capacities registered in the ECPP and to the allocation of additional financial support for rescEU.

The limitations of the UCPM highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis prompted various changes, including the expansion of the scope of rescEU capacities, the introduction of indirect management of some operations, and the possibility of direct procurement<sup>557</sup>. It also led to an increase in the budget for the UCPM (including for rescEU capacity) through the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2021/836. In addition, efficiency concerns led to the simplification of financing procedures, including the introduction of a single co-financing rate (75%) for the adaptation, repair, transport and operational costs for assets in the ECPP. No impact assessment of the adopted changes was carried out, given the extreme urgency in addressing the existing gaps in critical capacity at the time. Overall, the ECA was positive about these initiatives, but expressed some concerns:

- Indirect management may lead to some legality and regularity errors, for example related to the ineligibility of costs;
- Available information did not allow any assessment of whether the proposed budget was appropriate to achieve the intended objectives.

The documentation review did not find additional supporting evidence on how the adopted changes (in 2019 and 2021) compared to alternative approaches or measures in cost-effectiveness, nor on the adequacy of the budget<sup>558</sup>. Three stakeholders believed that these changes were cost-effective and made the UCPM more attractive for Member and Participating States, with two Member States activating the Mechanism for the first time after the revision<sup>559</sup>.

The evidence highlighted factors that may have hindered, in some instances, the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the UCPM, including:

- **Sub-optimal coordination, overlaps and unexplored synergies.** Between the UCPM and DG ECHO Humanitarian Aid, this was evident in the context of disaster risk management related to in-kind assistance and in response to specific crises. Similar challenges were noted for other EU entities, such as in the context of the pandemic response<sup>560</sup> and consular support activities<sup>561</sup>. National entities experienced challenges in stocks, warehousing, and pre-positioning of critically needed items (see Section 5.4);

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<sup>555</sup> 'The legislator recognises that prevention actions are the best way to achieve the necessary protection of populations and economic assets at risk of disasters' (European Commission, *DG ECHO Annual Activity Report 2017, 2018*). Also, according to the 2021 DG ECHO Annual Activity Report: 'One of the highlights of the year was the release of a joint DG ECHO–World Bank study on "Economics for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness", which provides new evidence to demonstrate the economic argument for investing in disaster resilience, calls for new instruments for financial preparedness to disasters and crises and for strengthening capacity of civil protection authorities'; European Commission, *DG ECHO Annual Activity Report 2021, 2022*; World Bank, *Investment in Disaster Risk Management in Europe Makes Economic Sense: Background Report. Economics for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness*, 2021.

<sup>556</sup> Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No 1313/2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism (COM(2017)772 final of 23.11.2017) and Communication COM(2017)773 final – Strengthening EU Disaster Management: rescEU Solidarity with Responsibility.

<sup>557</sup> Indirect management is the delegation of the implementation of operations under the UCPM by the Commission to specific bodies. This is already done by DG ECHO in the context of humanitarian aid.

<sup>558</sup> The 2017 interim evaluation of the UCPM did not cover the introduction of rescEU, as it was not one of its strategic recommendations.

<sup>559</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national civil protection authorities (1).

<sup>560</sup> European Commission, *Combined evaluation of DG ECHO's humanitarian response to epidemics, and of DG ECHO's partnership with the World Health Organization, 2017–2021, 2022*.

<sup>561</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the UCPM operations in 2017–2021*. See Annex 2 for DG ECHO Lessons Learnt Programme. In 2017 and 2018, the need to enhance cooperation for consular support between the UCPM (mostly training on UCPM consular assistance), with action taken in 2018 and 2019. In 2021, in the context of the COVID–19 response, improved coordination and awareness of consular authorities by EEAS, and for DG ECHO to keep the training related to the consular support. Nevertheless, there is also a need for the EEAS to further increase awareness of the UCPM for consular authorities and together with Member States, to define clearer procedures and improve coordination during consular crises, as well as for DG ECHO to keep training EU Delegations' staff on the use of the UCPM and streamlined coordination with consular authorities and MS/PS' embassies.

- **Lack of/insufficient awareness among some authorities of the possibilities provided by the UCPM and how to access/request them** due to the changes and expansion of the Mechanism during the evaluation period;
- **High administrative burden.** Calls for proposals were often characterised by overlaps in procedures and procurement timelines. Combined with the administrative burden associated with each call, this prevented some Member States with limited human resources from submitting proposals within the deadlines<sup>562</sup>;
- **Lack of data and cost-effectiveness analysis to support decision-making**<sup>563</sup>;
- **Lack of flexibility to use the additional NextGenerationEU budget in 2021 and 2022.** This stemmed from constraints on how NextGenerationEU funds could be spent, when they had to be committed (end of 2023), and spent (end of 2026). This made spending decisions more time-consuming<sup>564</sup>;
- **High turnover of staff within DG ECHO and insufficient human resources** resulted in a loss of institutional knowledge and memory.

The following sub-sections discuss the findings on the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of selected elements of the UCPM.

#### *5.2.1.1 Horizontal/cross-cutting*

Throughout the evaluation period, DG ECHO published annual calls for proposals under the **PPP**. These laid out the objectives, priorities and budget lines for prevention and preparedness activities allocated to Member and Participating States in the UCPM and to eligible third countries. The eligibility criteria for receiving funding for both prevention and preparedness projects have remained broadly similar throughout the evaluation period and include efficiency and cost-effectiveness considerations.

With the exception of 2018 and 2021 (which witnessed a decrease in funding of about 15% and 12%, respectively), funding to the PPP remained relatively constant, totalling EUR 63.5 million (at constant prices of 2022). There were some differences between prevention and preparedness projects (see Figure 50) across the years, but, on average, the funding allocated to each was relatively similar, with prevention receiving about 54% of the funds and preparedness the remaining 46%.

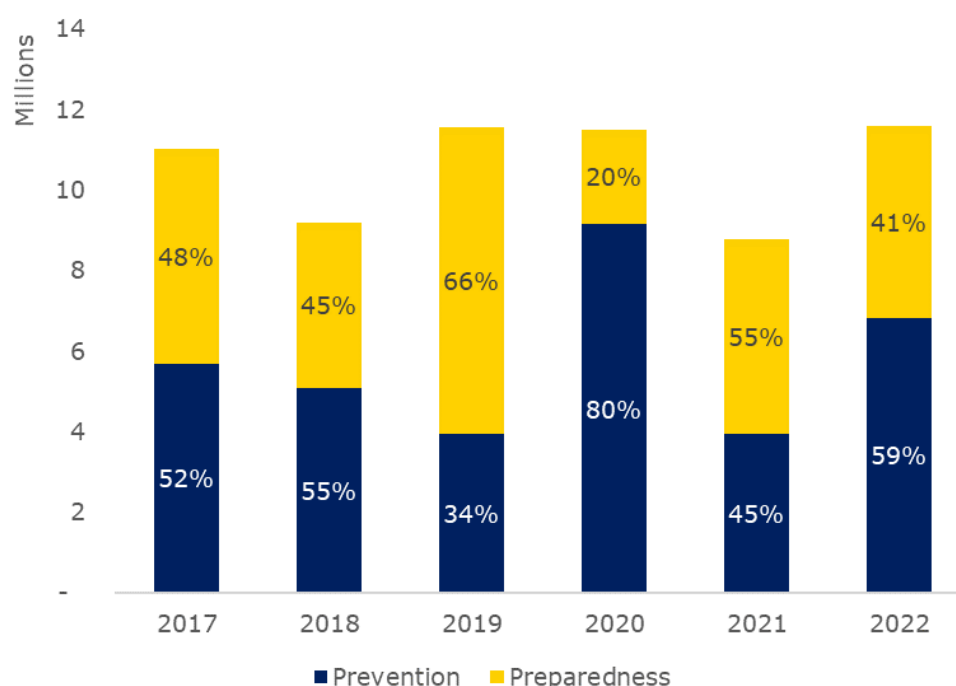
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<sup>562</sup> Interviews with: national civil protection authorities (3).

<sup>563</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the UCPM operations in 2017–2021*. See Annex 2 for DG ECHO Lessons Learnt Programme.

<sup>564</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

Figure 50. Funding to prevention and preparedness projects, 2017-2022 (EUR, 2022 prices)



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

Available evidence suggests that the PPP was considered broadly efficient and cost-effective<sup>565</sup>, despite stakeholders' limited awareness and limited availability of monitoring data. Inefficiencies in the PPP primarily related to:

- **Administrative/bureaucratic burdens.** Complex procedures impose costs on DG ECHO and on national authorities and may limit the participation of some Member States/Participating States due to lack of resources to accommodate the various calls/projects, short process timelines and management requirements<sup>566</sup>;
- **Overlaps/lack of complementarity** between UCPM calls for proposals and between the PPP and other EU funding instruments (see Section 5.4) lead to inefficient use of resources<sup>567</sup>;
- **Lack of resources and high staff turnover at DG ECHO**<sup>568</sup>;
- **Limited capitalisation on project results**, including the limited understanding among national civil protection authorities, limited direct contact with the project officer during projects, and limited funding and support for follow-up activities<sup>569</sup>.

During the evaluation period, DG ECHO made efforts to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the PPP, such as dedicated lessons learnt exercises and taking actions to address recommendations. These included<sup>570</sup>:

<sup>565</sup> Two national authorities questioned the effectiveness of providing funding to PPP projects. Surveys of: experts in civil protection (12/13 agreed that PPP prevention projects were carried out in the most cost-effective manner, all agreed that PPP preparedness projects were carried out in the most cost-effective manner). European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014–2020)*, 2021.

<sup>566</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (5). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (1/14); experts in civil protection (2/10). European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014–2020)*, 2021.

<sup>567</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (2). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (1/14).

<sup>568</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>569</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (2/14); experts in civil protection (3/10). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>570</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations*; DG ECHO (2020) *'Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2019.

- Developing a results-framework approach and introducing it on the 2019 call for the PPP;
- Having more focused calls from 2019, with fewer but more targeted priority areas per call;
- Introducing an additional call (Track 1) to focus on the needs and gaps of civil protection authorities.

In 2022, DG ECHO took further steps to address some of the inefficiencies in the PPP and the UCPM in general. This entailed merging previously separated calls for proposals, namely, prevention and preparedness projects (Track 2), Knowledge Network partnership projects, and the FSX in the KAPP calls. A more structured attribution of Desk Officers to the evaluation and overseeing of projects was also planned<sup>571</sup>, reversing the previous system of ‘volunteer’ staff acting as technical Desk Officers for projects on top of their other work duties in favour of identifying staff beforehand and ensuring that their responsibilities (managing projects/evaluating project proposals) are adequately reflected in their job description<sup>572</sup>.

Table 7. Identified inefficiencies in PPP and measures taken

Identified inefficiency source	Element identified in previous evaluation/concept notes	Measures taken during the evaluation period
Lack of cost-effectiveness monitoring data	Yes Recommendation: <i>- Establish an internal PMER policy to assess the performance and quality of the PPP</i>	Definition of specific award criteria for each topic covered by the KAPP call, including aspects of cost-effectiveness  No action identified
Administrative/bureaucratic burdens	Yes Recommendation: <i>- Continue to further simplify the PPP reporting and monitoring mechanism</i> <i>- Increase financing to 100%, as the current 5% co-financing obligation triggers lengthier approval processes</i>	Decision to merge Track 2, the Knowledge Network Partnerships call and the FSX calls into the KAPP calls. This may simplify the administrative burden, but benefits will only materialise after the evaluation period. In addition, as of 2024, the KAPP call co-financing has been increased from 85% to 90%.  TAFF introduces 100% EU co-financing  Decision to make the wording of application procedures more user-friendly  No further actions identified
Similar projects receiving funding from multiple UCPM calls for proposals, leading to double funding	No	Decision to merge Track 2, the Knowledge Network Partnerships call and the FSX calls into the KAPP calls. This is expected to reduce potential funding of similar projects within the UCPM, but benefits will only materialise after the evaluation period
Similar projects receiving funding from the UCPM and other EU funding sources,	Yes Recommendation:	Discussions between DG ECHO and DG HOME to improve the complementarity between the Community for European Research and Innovation for Security

<sup>571</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>572</sup> European Commission, *Note to DG ECHO Management: Prevention and Preparedness programme: findings of recent evaluations and future outlook for the programme*, 2022.



Identified inefficiency source	Element identified in previous evaluation/concept notes	Measures taken during the evaluation period
potentially leading to double funding	- <i>Specific contact points could be set up within DG ECHO and other Commission services to establish areas of complementarity and potential overlap and to ensure more consistent EU-wide funding and activities</i>	(CERIS) and the Knowledge Network, as well as interconnected funding (e.g. Horizon Europe)
Limited capitalisation on project results	Yes Recommendation: - <i>Increase awareness, accessibility and engagement with ongoing and past EU-funded projects on civil protection prevention and preparedness and their results</i> - <i>Introduce the possibility to request project extension/expansion</i>	Development of an online platform to share project results in one place. This will contribute to increased sharing (and ultimately impact) of project results, but benefits will only materialise after the evaluation period  The 2023 KAPP call introduced the obligation for the consortium to deliver a mapping of relevant initiatives within the UCPM, including an evaluation of potential synergies between ongoing initiatives or incorporation of existing results within the first six months
Lack of resources and high staff turnover at DG ECHO impacts the efficiency of the projects staff are overseeing	No	Decision to attribute Desk Officers to the evaluation and overseeing of projects in a more structured way  No actions to address lack of resources

The **Lessons Learnt Programme** continued to identify lessons and good practices from UCPM deployments and cross-cutting activities, as well as recommendations to enhance the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the Mechanism as a whole. Between 2017 and 2022, the Lessons Learnt Programme organised between one to two workshops a year. In 2020 and 2021, meetings were organised remotely due to the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stakeholders consider the **Lessons Learnt Programme** to be efficient and cost-effective<sup>573</sup>. Several indicated that having a platform to continuously collect and share lessons could increase its efficiency and effectiveness<sup>574</sup>. Two national authorities highlighted the cost-effectiveness of the **Peer Review Programme**<sup>575</sup>.

The Lessons Learnt Programme identified challenges in implementing lessons and good practices, particularly where external actors were involved. This led to the appointment of focal points in DG ECHO under the Lessons Learnt Programme and to the incorporation of lessons and best practices in implementing acts, policy documents and discussions at expert group meetings, where possible<sup>576</sup>.

<sup>573</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3); DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (1). Surveys of: experts in civil protection (1/1 strongly agreed that advisory missions on preparedness were cost-effective). European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014–2020)*, 2021.

<sup>574</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>575</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2).

<sup>576</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020.

In 2021, the **Knowledge Network** was launched to aggregate, process and disseminate knowledge and information relevant to the UCPM. It incorporated several elements of the UCPM from the prevention and preparedness pillars, including the Training Programme, civil protection exercises, Lessons Learnt Programme and the PPP. It brought together relevant civil protection and disaster management actors, centres of excellence, universities and researchers and was considered a step towards increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the UCPM. As yet, DG ECHO Desk Officers are unable to assess its impact on cost-effectiveness<sup>577</sup>, but 30% agreed that the impact was positive, while 7% considered it negative<sup>578</sup>.

#### 5.2.1.2 Prevention

Decision No 1313/2013/EU requires Member States to develop **risk assessments** at national or appropriate sub-national level and to share a summary covering key risks with the Commission. Stakeholders views on the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of this obligation varied. While they generally considered the **National Risk Assessments** useful, they voiced concerns about the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of their current format. Concerns stemmed from:

- Limited availability of resources to deal with the significant workload required to produce the assessments;
- Use of different methodologies and the lack of a common dataset among Member States;
- Difficulty of ensuring the necessary involvement of authorities other than civil protection authorities (see Section 5.1)<sup>579</sup>.

When asked about **dissemination and development of research outputs and/or attending workshops on disaster risks**, the great majority of experts in civil protection strongly or somewhat agreed that they were cost-effective.

#### 5.2.1.3 Preparedness

As part of the **UCPM Training Programme (Core UCPM courses)**, 248 training courses implemented through five training cycles during the evaluation period, with over 3,800 experts participating in at least one such course between 2017 and 2022 (cycles 14 to 18). Between 2017 and 2022, 12 European Commission-UN joint courses and eight ad hoc training courses (including workshops) were also carried out.

The contracted budget for the Training Programme remained similar in 2017 and 2018, at approximately EUR 4.7 million<sup>580</sup>. That budget almost doubled in 2019, before contracting significantly in 2020 and 2021. In 2022, however, the budget again grew to approx. EUR 10 million, more than twice the 2017 figure.

The average cost per course, per place offered and per participant varied (see Figure 51). 2020 and 2021 presented significantly lower costs than other years, due to the replacement of face-to-face training with online courses as a result of restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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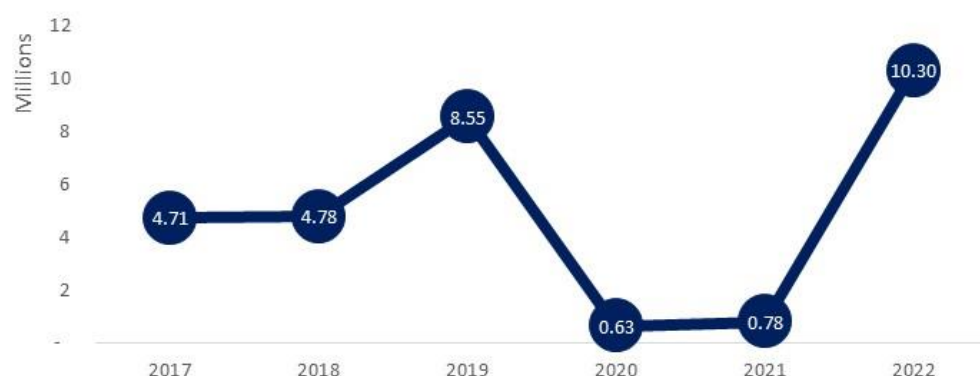
<sup>577</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – 63% neither agreed nor disagreed that the establishment and organisation of the Knowledge Network had a positive impact on the cost-effectiveness of the implementation of the UCPM.

<sup>578</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers.

<sup>579</sup> Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); national authorities (2).

<sup>580</sup> 2022 prices: EUR 4 million in 2017 and EUR 4.1 million in 2028.

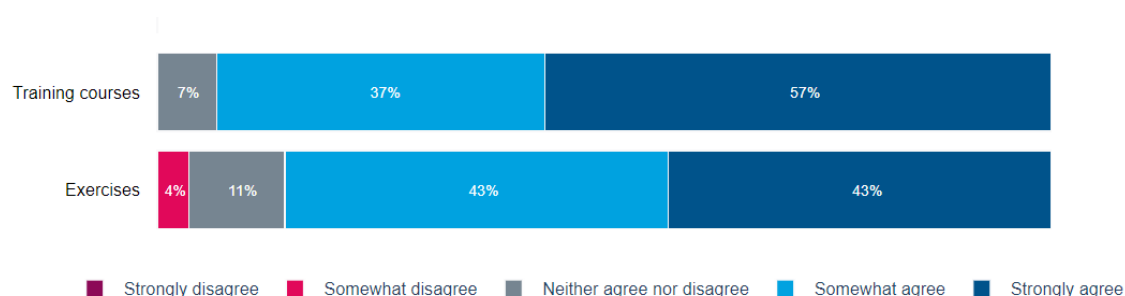
Figure 51. Training funding, 2017-2022 (EUR million, 2022 prices)



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

The level of participation was high, with about 91% of the available places taken up, showing efficient use of resources. The courses were assessed very positively by participants<sup>581</sup>. Stakeholders reported that the Training Programme was generally efficient and cost-effective. The great majority of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that **training courses** were delivered efficiently (73%)<sup>582</sup> and in the most cost-effective way (94%)<sup>583</sup> (see Figure 52).

Figure 52. Survey of training stakeholders: 'Please indicate to what extent you agree that the UCPM Training and Exercises Programme's results were achieved in the most cost-effective way'



Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation.

Analysis of the final training reports highlighted some good practices that contributed to efficiency and cost-effectiveness<sup>584</sup>:

- Using continuous evaluation, supported by an online tool available 24/7;
- Mixing participants from different backgrounds;
- Fostering synergies with other UCPM training activities;
- Providing opportunities for informal networking.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, training was delivered online, with participants giving broadly similar evaluation marks as for face-to-face courses. However, participants noted the lack of opportunities for informal networking during online training (see Section 1.1.2).

<sup>581</sup> Progress reports and final reports on the training in the period. See Annex 2 for Training Programme. Interviews with: professional organisations (2).

<sup>582</sup> Surveys of: training experts (19/26).

<sup>583</sup> Surveys of: training experts (28/30).

<sup>584</sup> Progress reports and final reports on the various training in the period. See Annex 2 for Training Programme. Interviews with: professional organisations (1).

One report indicated that some courses and content could be delivered online in preparation and/or combination with face-to-face training (when possible). This opinion was shared by some stakeholders, who indicated that a hybrid solution, with some or part of the training offered online and the remainder face-to-face, could lead to efficiency and cost-effectiveness gains<sup>585</sup>.

Aspects hindering the cost-effectiveness of some training included:

- **Inadequate profile of participants.** This could be due to insufficient information about the training content, language barriers (particularly for candidates from third countries), non-compliance with background requirements (e.g. graduate of OPM or PPRD courses), or inadequate requirements (e.g. insufficient English proficiency or UCPM familiarity, see Section 5.1.1.3)<sup>586</sup>;
- **Lack of a common tool for course management, delivery and evaluation**<sup>587</sup>;
- **Lack of access to the latest documentation on the UCPM**, such as mission reports for the TEC course and the DG ECHO Field Security Handbook<sup>588</sup>;
- **Insufficient follow-up and use of knowledge.** Many of the experts who were trained used their skills and abilities at national level, but were never deployed<sup>589</sup>.

The interim evaluation found that many of the key findings and recommendations of the 2019 evaluation of the Training Programme in relation to efficiency and inefficiencies were still valid, including:

- **Lack of common result indicators and guidelines** on how to assess and report training results. This should be improved by the monitoring and evaluation process required in the new Training and Exercises Programme (for both the deployable training path and the ad hoc training framework)<sup>590</sup>;
- **Limited analysis of the assessment data reported by contractors** prevents effective incorporation and sharing of lessons from individual courses at programme level;
- **Lack of common outcome indicators** to measure the short, medium and long-term impacts of the Training Programme.

During the evaluation period, DG ECHO made significant efforts to address the inefficiencies and implement recommendations by redesigning the Programme, resulting in the **new Training and Exercises Programme**<sup>591</sup>. Two adjustments are particularly relevant to cost-effectiveness:

- **Introduction of a 'deployable training path'**, with more stringent selection criteria and potential additional assessment of candidates for courses;
- **Provision of some content online**, reducing the time necessary for face-to-face training.

The changes are expected to be implemented from September 2023<sup>592</sup>.

In the context of the **Exercises programme**, during the evaluation period, 87 exercises were financed, including 67 EU MODEX, 14 FSX and six others (see Figure 6). With the exception of 2020, when only seven exercises took place, the annual number of exercises remained relatively stable throughout the period evaluated with an average of 16 exercises (ranging from 12 in 2022 to 20 in 2019).

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<sup>585</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); national authorities (2); professional organisations (1).

<sup>586</sup> Progress reports and final reports on the various training in the period. See Annex 2 for Training Programme.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid. Surveys of: training and exercise programme stakeholders (1/26).

<sup>588</sup> Progress reports and final reports on the various training in the period. See Annex 2 for Training Programme.

<sup>589</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (2). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

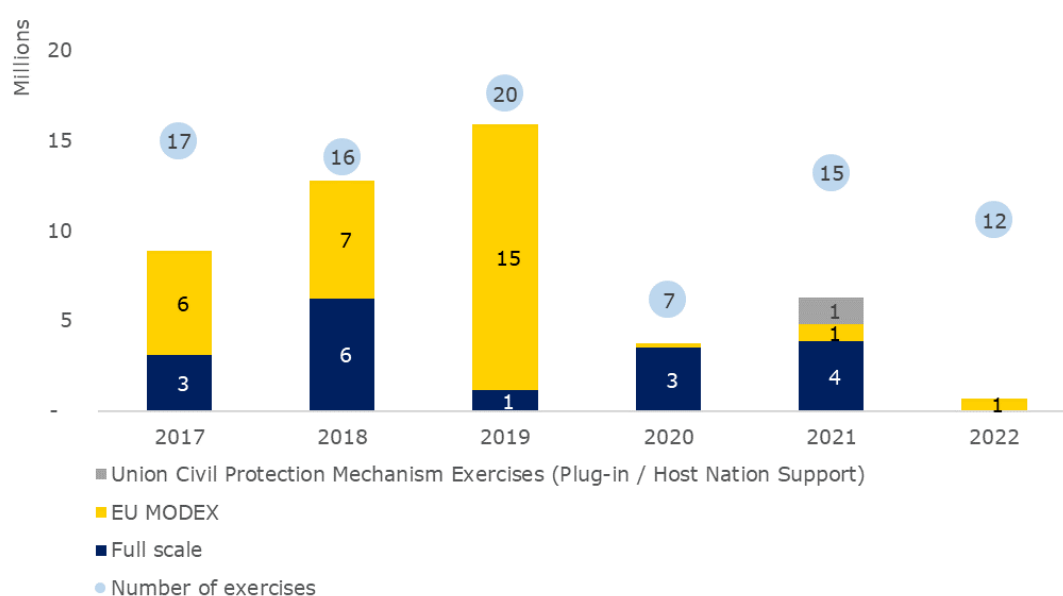
<sup>590</sup> European Commission, Call for tenders ECHO/2021/OP/0010 – UCPM Training Programme for deployable experts, modules, response capacities, civil protection and disaster management stakeholders, 2021; European Commission, Call for tenders ECHO/2021/OP/0010 – UCPM Training Programme: Online Modules, Ad hoc Training Courses, Training of Trainers, Thematic Seminars – Workshops, 2021.

<sup>591</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid.

The contracted budget for exercises increased significantly until 2020, when it declined sharply, due to the impossibility of organising exercises during COVID-19-related restrictions. Since then, the amounts allocated to exercises (in particular EU MODEX) remained lower than in the pre-pandemic period (see Figure 53).

Figure 53. Exercises financed and total cost, by exercise type, 2017-2022 (EUR million, 2022 prices)



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

The costs per FSX varied between EUR 0.9 million and EUR 2 million, while the cost per EU MODEX varied between EUR 58,000 and EUR 778,000 (see Table 8). This can be (partially) explained by variations in the characteristics of the specific exercises each year.

Table 8. Evolution of average cost per exercise, 2017-2022 (EUR, 2022 prices)

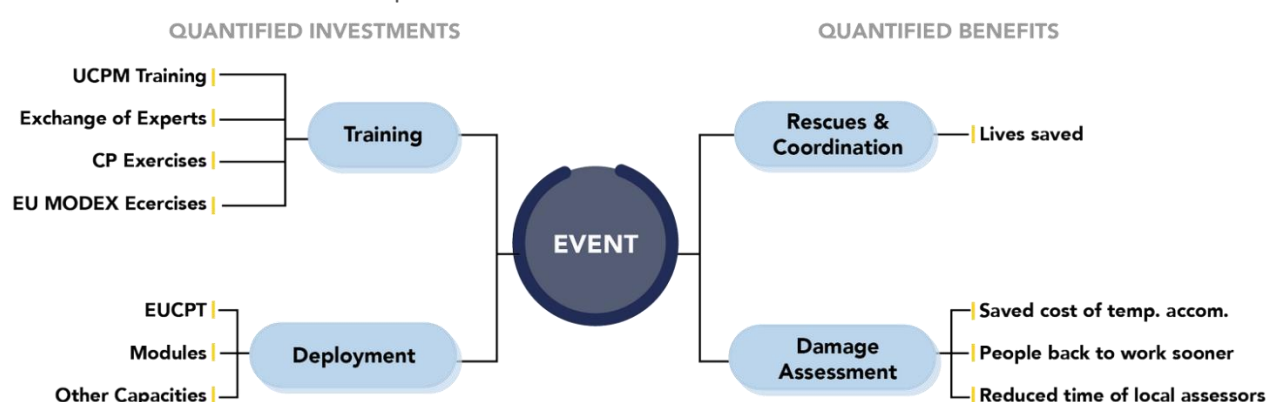
Exercise type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
FSX	1,537,701	2,073,079	1,137,131	872,288	964,271	-
EU MODEX	386,842	502,546	777,928	93,803	85,588	58,583

Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

The review of the calls for proposals concluded that award decisions took into account the cost-effectiveness of offers, ranking them using a cost-benefit ratio. Despite some exceptions, the final reports of the exercises did not cover efficiency considerations, but stakeholders were generally very positive about the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the Exercises Programme (see Figure 52)<sup>593</sup>.

The World Bank analysed the impacts of investments in UCPM training and exercises for emergency responders and in the UCPM response coordination. It focused on two interventions during disaster events, in Albania (November 2019) and in Croatia (March 2020)<sup>594</sup>. It concluded that the benefits of these activities outweighed the costs in both cases, with positive net present value (NPVs) of EUR 5 million in Albania and EUR 0.3 million in Croatia.

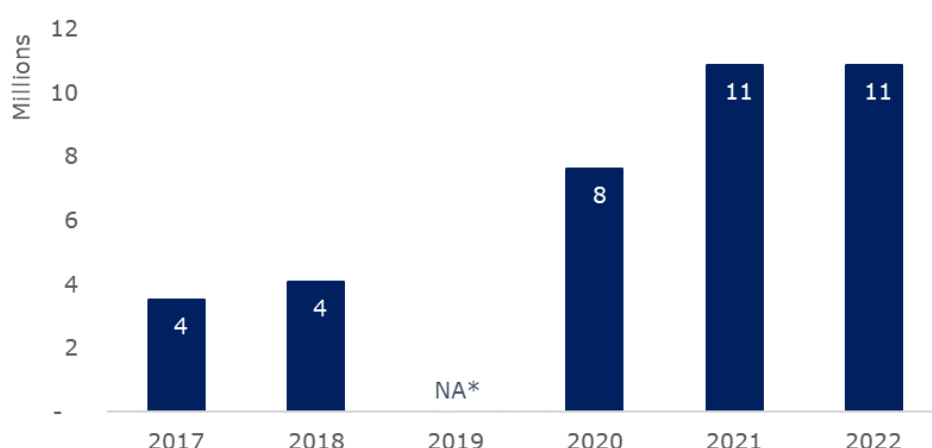
Figure 54. Costs and benefits considered by the World Bank study for the quantitative analysis of the impacts of investments in UCPM training and exercises for emergency responders and in the UCPM response coordination



Source: ICF elaboration, based on World Bank, *Investment in Disaster Risk Management in Europe Makes Economic Sense: Background Report. Economics for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness*, 2021.

**EWS** were considered an important element in an efficient emergency decision-making process. During the evaluation period, the funding to EWS increased consistently, almost tripling between 2017 and 2022 (see Figure 55).

Figure 55. Contracted budget for Early Warning Systems, 2017-2022 (EUR million, 2022 prices)



<sup>593</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercise Programme stakeholders. Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (2); experts in civil protection (2).

<sup>594</sup> "World Bank, *Investment in Disaster Risk Management in Europe Makes Economic Sense: Background Report. Economics for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness*, 2021.



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

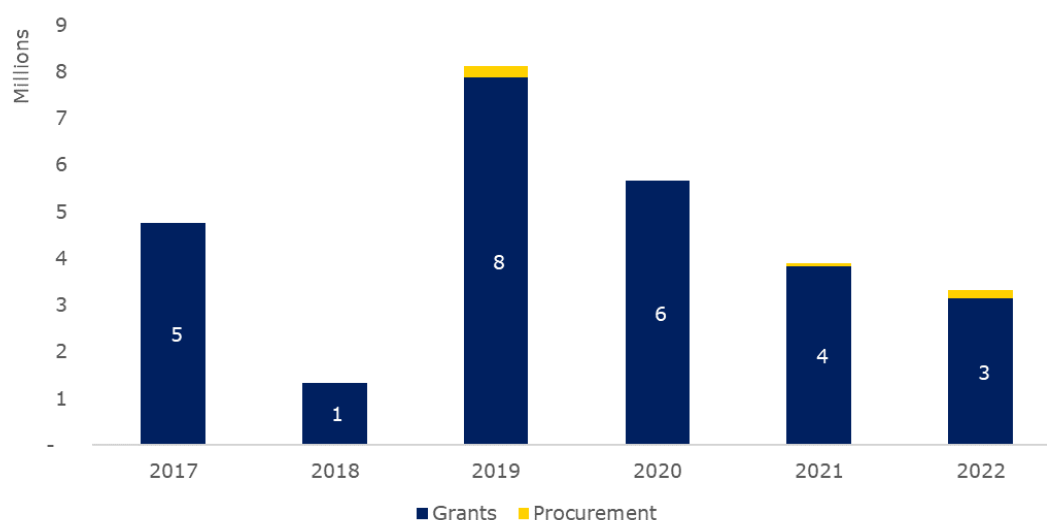
Note: \*It was not possible to disaggregate the costs of EWS from other cost categories in 2019.

The review of the minutes of EWS meetings found evidence of cost-effectiveness concerns, but stakeholders did not highlight inefficiencies with this activity<sup>595</sup>. Some factors were identified as potentially leading to sub-optimal cost-effectiveness and efficiency:

- Insufficient synergies among the various European detection and alert systems (see Section 5.1.1);
- Lack of access to data and insufficient use of applied science (see Section 5.1.1);
- Lack of data and methodologies to support CBA, including methodologies;
- Some overlaps with national systems (see Section 5.4).

Funding to the **ECPP** during the evaluation period was around EUR 27 million, representing about 2% of the MMF budget and less than 1% of the total UCPM budget. The distribution of the funds varied. After peaking in 2020, the funds to ECPP steadily decreased until the end of the period (see Figure 56). Funding to the ECPP was disbursed primarily through grants, with adaptation grants, in particular, used to upgrade or repair Member/Participating States' response capacities to the state of readiness and availability required to be deployable as part of the ECPP<sup>596</sup>. The funding and number of adaptation grants across the period varied (see Figure 31). A review of DG ECHO's award criteria for grants shows that efficiency and cost-effectiveness were considered as part of review and award decisions.

Figure 56. Contracted funding to European Civil Protection Pool, 2017-2022 (EUR million, 2022 prices)



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

By February 2023, the ECPP contained 85 registered capacities. The most common were<sup>597</sup>:

- Ground forest firefighting using vehicles capacities (~18%);
- High-capacity pumping capacities (~16%);
- Heavy USAR capacities (~12%).

<sup>595</sup> European Commission, EWS Meeting Minutes 2017–2022. See Annex 2 on Disaster risk mapping and assessment and EWS.

<sup>596</sup> European Commission, *UCPM – European Civil Protection Pool Adaptation Grants*, (UCPM–2023–ECPP–URC–IBA) , 2023.

<sup>597</sup> As of December 2022, the committed/offered capacities were 124. Germany withdrew its SEC in January 2023.

An assessment of the alignment of the number of registered capacities per type with the goal set for that type in Annex III of the implementing Decision of 16 October 2014 (see Section 5.1.1)<sup>598</sup> shows that the goals were exceeded in nine cases (20% of the total capacities for which goals were set)<sup>599</sup>. For six of those types of capacities, there are ongoing registration processes. This may indicate some inefficiencies in the allocation of funds or processes, in particular when the majority of ECPP capacities registered have not met set capacity goals (see Section 5.1)<sup>600</sup>. However, as the decision on the type of response capacity to develop depended on Member States' willingness to commit, there were constraints to how cost-effectiveness could be taken into consideration.

Overall, the stakeholders did not highlight inefficiencies in the ECPP. Some, however, indicated that ECPP cost-effectiveness might have been negatively affected by:

- In some periods, lack of budget to carry out the EU MODEX required in the certification of capacities<sup>601</sup>;
- Low co-financing rate compared to rescEU, reducing its attractiveness<sup>602</sup>;
- Labour-intensive proposal requirements to apply for adaptation grants<sup>603</sup>.

A minority (26%) of DG ECHO Desk Officers agreed that the redefinition of the EMC into the ECPP had a positive impact on cost-effectiveness. Similarly, a minority (39%) agreed that the redefinition of the ECPP in 2019 had a positive impact on the cost-effectiveness of the Mechanism<sup>604</sup>.

Decision 2019/420 established rescEU, after which various transition and proper capacities (see Section 2.2.2) were developed. A great majority of DG ECHO Desk Officers either did not have an opinion on the impact rescEU related developments on cost-effectiveness or considered the impact positive (see Figure 57). Figure 57 The great majority of national authorities did not highlight efficiency and cost-effectiveness issues with rescEU. Several indicated that they consider the benefits of rescEU to outweigh the costs, as it allows for a faster response<sup>605</sup>. However, several others expressed concerns about the transparency of the justification for rescEU and its costs<sup>606</sup>.

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<sup>598</sup> Commission Implementing Decision of 16 October 2014 laying down rules for the implementation of Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism and repealing Commission Decisions 2004/277/EC, Euratom and 2007/606/EC, Euratom (notified under document C(2014) 7489) (Text with EEA relevance) (2014/762/EU)Text with EEA relevance, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec\\_impl/2014/762#:~:text=Consolidated%20text%3A%20Commission%20Implementing%20Decision%20of%2016%20October,%28Text%20with%20EEA%20relevance%29%20%282014%2F762%2FEU%29Text%20with%20EEA%20relevance](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2014/762#:~:text=Consolidated%20text%3A%20Commission%20Implementing%20Decision%20of%2016%20October,%28Text%20with%20EEA%20relevance%29%20%282014%2F762%2FEU%29Text%20with%20EEA%20relevance)

<sup>599</sup> HCP, HUSAR, CBRNDET (CBRN detection and sampling), GFFF, GFFF-V, FRB, EMT type 2, TAST, teams with unmanned aerial vehicles/RPAS.

<sup>600</sup> The budget for grants in Table 5.6 is for adaptation grants and is not directly used for certification activities.

<sup>601</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>602</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (2). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

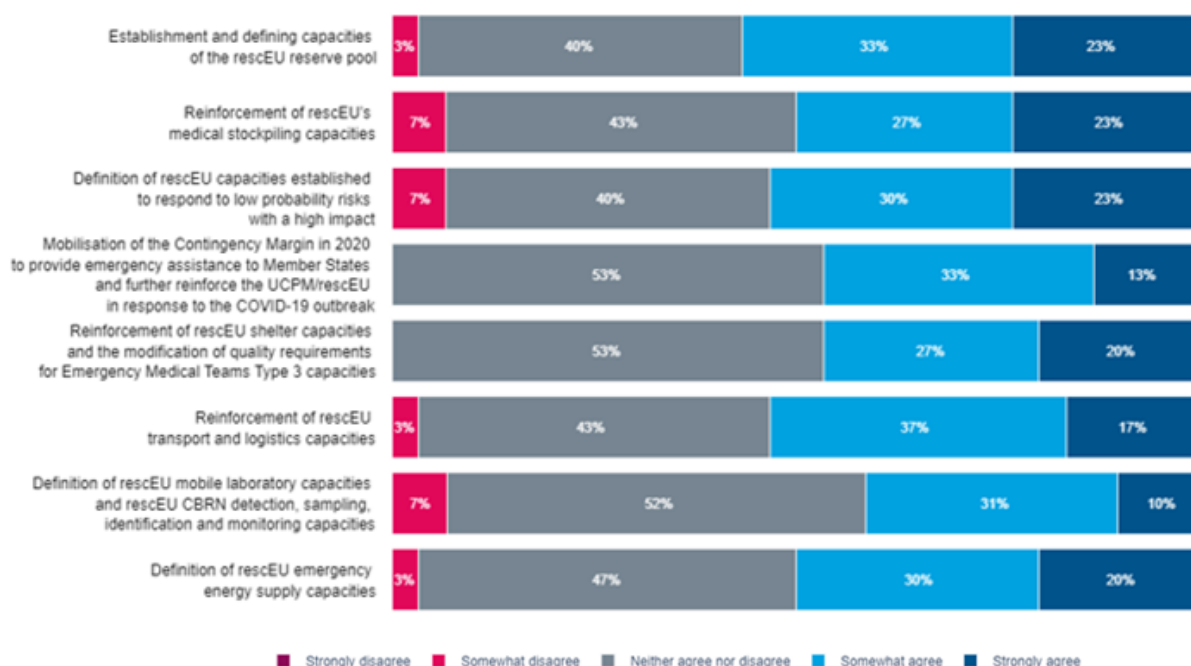
<sup>603</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2).

<sup>604</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers.

<sup>605</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3).

<sup>606</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (4).

Figure 57. Survey of DG ECHO Desk Officers: ‘To what extent do you agree that the following developments since 2017 have had a positive impact on the cost-effectiveness of the implementation of the UCPM?’



Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation.

The selection of the necessary rescEU capacities considered the gaps in the ECPP to address evolving needs (e.g. during the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine) and the speed of developing the necessary capacity. The interim evaluation did not have access to formal efficiency and cost-effectiveness analyses and assessments for various scenarios that may have supported DG ECHO’s decision on the development of specific rescEU capacities. National authorities did not have access to those assessments, with some indicating that rescEU capacities should have been driven by strategic analytical needs assessments rather than the availability of budget or ongoing crises/disasters<sup>607</sup>.

A review of the grant application forms and invitations or calls for proposals shows that 12 of 28 mentioned efficiency and cost-effectiveness as important elements to be considered when developing offers or as part of the criteria to decide the award of the grant. In some cases, however, the Commission awarded direct grants to Member States without a call for proposals, in order to build those capacities more rapidly.

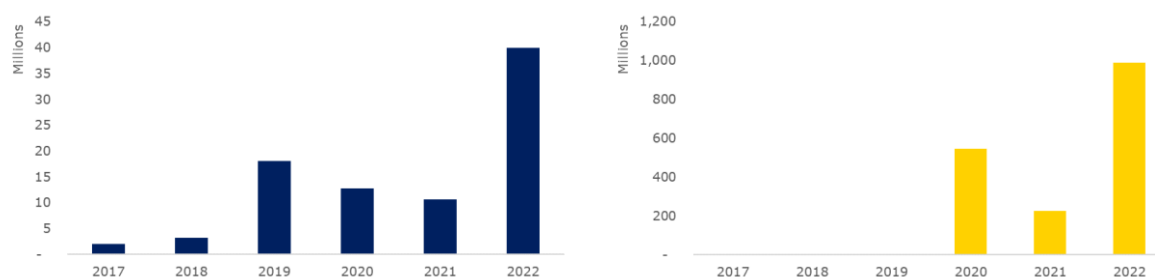
Between 2017 and 2019, all capacities developed were transition capacities related to forest fires. In the context of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020, stockpiling capacities represented about 78% of the proper capacities developed. In 2022, in light of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, new capacities relating to CBRN stockpile, energy supply, transport and shelters were developed. The total allocated budget to rescEU in 2021 was around EUR 235 million and in 2022 it was about EUR 1,026 million, of which 58% had been contracted by the end of 2022.

Figure 58. Contracted budget to rescEU, 2019-2022 (EUR million, 2022 prices)

Transition capacities

Proper capacities

<sup>607</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (4). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

During 2021 and 2022, most (77%) of the budget for rescEU came from the NextGenerationEU budget, with the remainder from the MFF. Some stakeholders expressed some concerns about efficiency and cost-effectiveness of rescEU, due to:

- **Restricted scope and timeframe of NextGenerationEU.** This significantly influenced the choices of what capacities to develop and when. It also left limited time for preparing and responding to a significant number of calls<sup>608</sup>;
- **The temporary nature of NextGenerationEU.** This means that maintaining the developed rescEU capacities in the future may not be feasible with a significantly lower budget (MFF only), risking the cost-effectiveness of much of the investment in rescEU capacities<sup>609,610</sup>. One national authority highlighted that a lack of a long-term approach to managing stocks may hinder building on expertise and lead to duplication of costs.

### Box 3. Cost-effectiveness of channelling private donations to Ukraine

The UCPM started channelling private donations in the context of its response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, supported by HERA in its establishment. The positive impact of this innovation on the cost-effectiveness of the response was highlighted by donors, DG ECHO and national authorities. Data on the donations processed by the Belgian and Polish hubs suggest that the overall value of medicines, medical equipment, CBRN counter-measures and hygiene and sanitation items donated (about EUR 7 million of completed donations and EUR 4.2 million in ongoing donations) was about 11 times the cost of operating the hubs (which DG ECHO estimates to be less than EUR 1 million on personal, subcontracting and purchasing costs). This means that the return on investment was extremely high and that the cost-effectiveness of processing donations was positive in principle.

The fact that the UCPM requires the acceptance of offers by Ukraine and ensures the delivery of goods to the authorities was viewed by donors as contributing to cost-effectiveness. Nevertheless, the relationship between costs and benefits appears to depend on the type of goods and the associated complexity of requirements and procedures. In some cases, interviewees stated that the resources required to control the quality/process some of the goods donated (e.g. laptops) were higher than the expected benefits of those goods.

Source: See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

#### 5.2.14 Response

The **ERCC** mobilised and coordinated assistance to disaster-stricken countries in response to requests to the ERCC or through/by (i) the UN and its agencies, or (ii) an international organisation. The ERCC

<sup>608</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (2).

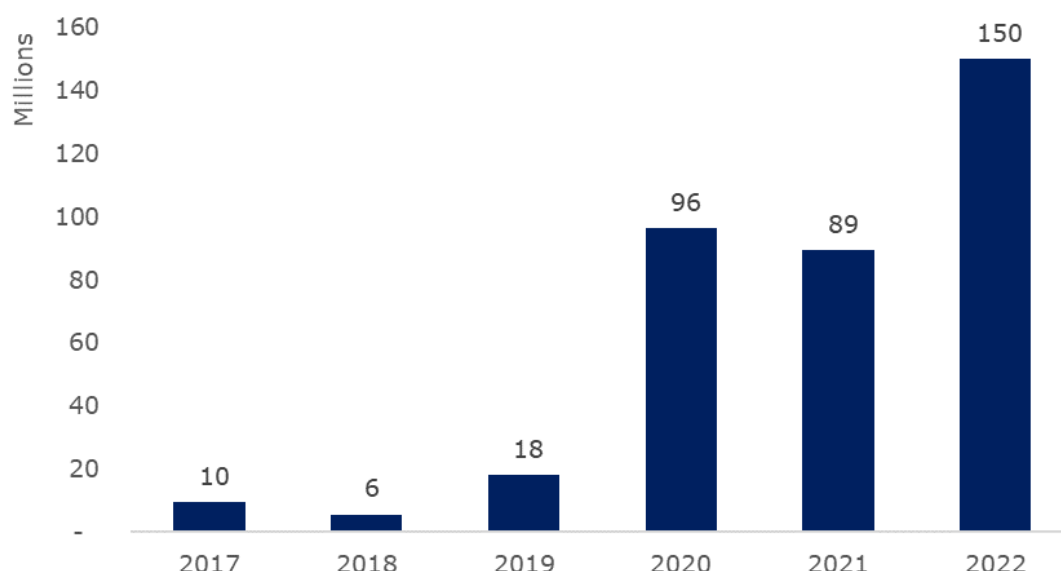
<sup>609</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (1).

<sup>610</sup> For example, a significant share of the rescEU budget was used to set stockpiles, but these capacities need to be maintained in the coming years or they will expire.

response assistance took the form of in-kind assistance, mobilisation of ECPP capacity, and, as a last resort tool, mobilisation of rescEU capacities.

The budget allocated to the ERCC increased 15-fold during the evaluation period, mirroring the significant increase in the number of activations (see Figure 59).

Figure 59. Contracted budget to ERCC, 2017-2022 (EUR million, 2022 prices)



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

Stakeholders were generally positive on the contribution of the ERCC to the cost-effectiveness of the Mechanism.

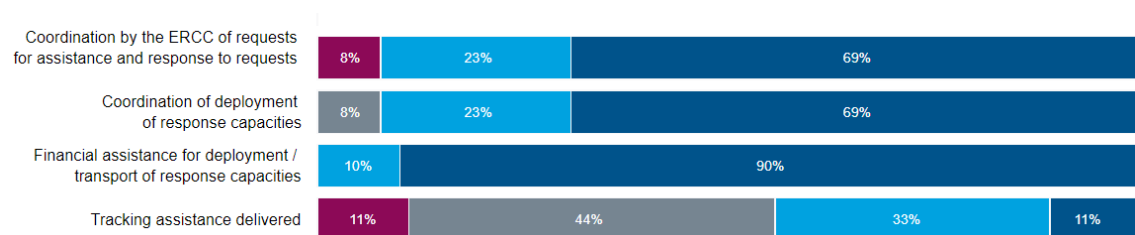
Nearly all DG ECHO Desk Officers strongly or somewhat agreed that coordination of RfA and response to requests by the ERCC and coordination of deployment of response capacities were successful in facilitating a rapid and efficient response (see Figure 60)<sup>611</sup>. Similarly, the great majority of national authorities strongly or somewhat agreed that the ERCC's coordination of RfA and response to requests by Member States and Participating States (90%, or 45) and the coordination of deployment of response capacities (88%, or 43) were successful in facilitating a rapid and efficient response<sup>612</sup>.

Figure 60. Survey of DG ECHO Desk Officers: 'Please indicate the extent to which you think they were successful in facilitating a rapid and efficient response to (imminent) disasters in Member/Participating States and third countries'

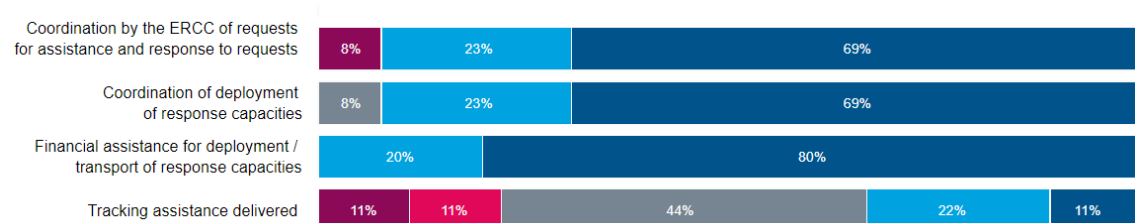
### In Member States

<sup>611</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers.

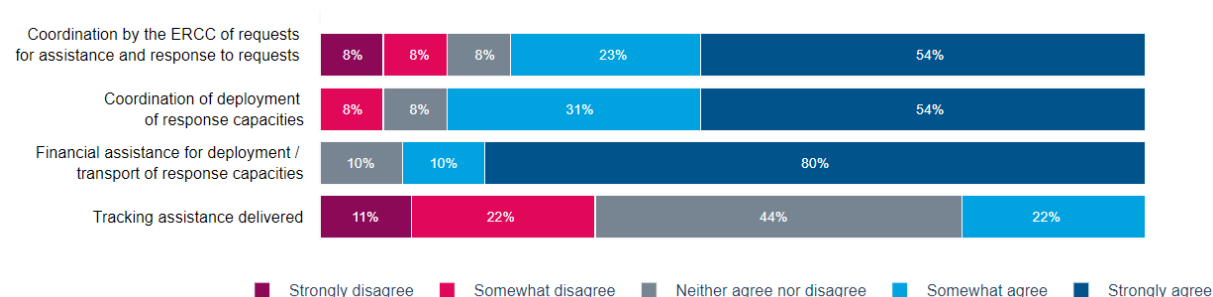
<sup>612</sup> Surveys of: national authorities.



### In Participating States



### In third countries



■ Strongly disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Strongly agree

Source: ICF elaboration, based on data gathered for the interim evaluation.

DG ECHO Desk Officers were less positive about the extent to which tracking of assistance delivered was successful in facilitating a rapid and efficient response, in particular in the context of responses across third countries (see Figure 60). This was particularly highlighted for operations related to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine<sup>613</sup>. The majority of respondents from national authorities (72%, or 34) strongly or somewhat agreed that tracking of assistance delivered was successful in facilitating a rapid and efficient response.

**The inadequacy of CECIS to deal with the volume of requests was mentioned by stakeholders as a cause of inefficiencies<sup>614</sup>.** The fact that only some Participating States and no third countries had access to CECIS imposed a significant burden on the ERCC, as it received all RfA by email, which it then uploaded to the CECIS platform. The data model/structure of CECIS limits standardisation and data analysis. A new version of CECIS began to be developed during the interim evaluation and is expected to address several key limitations.

Some stakeholders expressed concerns about potential causes of inefficiencies in the ERCC in future<sup>615</sup>:

- Potential preference for rescEU instead of ECPP, given its more attractive payment/reimbursement procedures and co-financing rates;
- Administrative burdens of submitting/responding to requests;

<sup>613</sup> See Annex 7 for case studies on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and on forest fires.

<sup>614</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); experts in civil protection (1); national authorities (3). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (1). See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>615</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); experts in civil protection (1); national authorities (4). 7 *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018–2022*. Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.



- Lack of dedicated IT tools to collect and monitor data;
- Risk of possible inefficiencies and duplications brought by the additional layer of coordination with HERA<sup>616</sup>.

Examples of efficiency and cost-effectiveness were highlighted by DG ECHO Desk Officers, including considerations to prioritise local/regional procurement, pooling assistance from different Member States to send it in one shipment where feasible and cost-effective, and the use of alternative transport and logistical hubs<sup>617</sup>.

The UCPM response to activations in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine brought additional challenges and highlighted that the model of the ERCC was not optimised for long-lasting operations (and without access to the territory), creating difficulties in needs assessments and tracking assistance, as well as new challenges in the constant rotation of EUCPT deployments<sup>618</sup>. The ERCC was able to adapt to the new context by setting up hubs, increasing contact with DG ECHO humanitarian assistance teams in Ukraine, and overlapping EUCPT teams to ensure proper handovers.

**Judgement criterion:**

- JC4.4: The allocation of the budget per pillar is balanced when considering the expected achievements

**The allocation of the budget per pillar was generally considered balanced in light of short-term needs and limited funding. However, some stakeholders indicated that a stronger focus on prevention would have been desirable from a longer-term perspective.**

The UCPM budget increased significantly between 2017 and 2022 (by about 24 times). The budget to each UCPM pillar also increased during the evaluation period but at different rates (see Figure 61). Most, but not all, of the increase was due to rescEU. As of 2022, excluding rescEU:

- The budget allocated to prevention and preparedness was three times that of 2017;
- The budget allocated to preparedness was seven times that of 2017;
- The budget allocated to response was about 22 times that of 2017, with most of the change between 2020 and 2022.

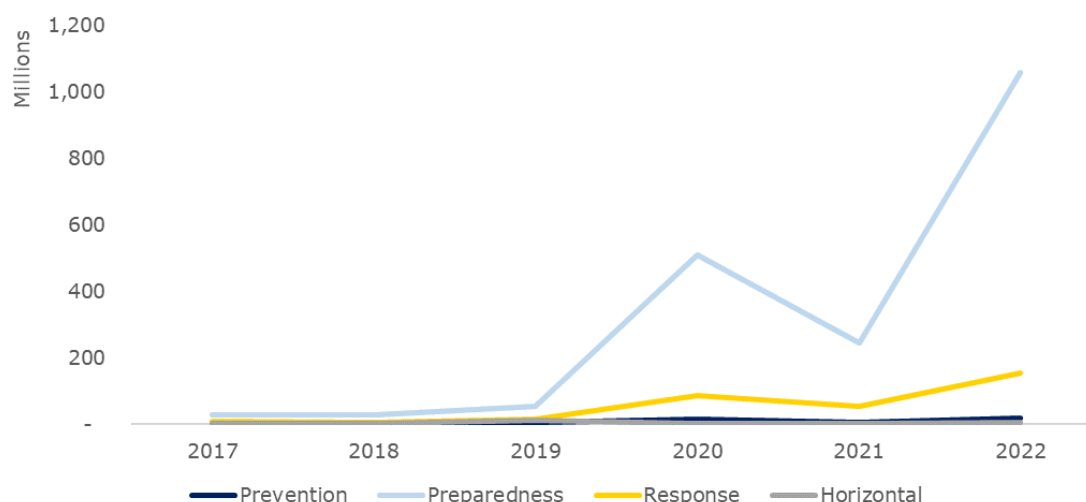
Figure 61. UCPM budget, per pillar, 2017-2022

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<sup>616</sup> Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023. To ensure clarity on their respective mandates, ECHO and HERA worked together by establishing Standard Operating Procedures, which are in the process of being signed (as of December 2023).

<sup>617</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2). See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>618</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

The adoption of Regulation (EU) 2021/836 changed the minimum level of spending in each pillar, reducing the minimum level for prevention and response, and increasing the level for preparedness (see Table 9). The change signals the intention to focus more on preparedness and less on response<sup>619</sup> and prevention<sup>620</sup>.

Table 9. Minimum and maximum levels of UCPM spending, per pillar, before and after adoption of Regulation (EU) 2021/836

Pillar	Before	After	Variation
Prevention	20% (+/- 8 percentage points (pp))	10% (+/- 4 pp)	↓ (75%)
Preparedness	50% (+/- 8 pp)	85% (+/- 10 pp)	↑ (70%)
Response	30% (+/- 8 pp)	10% (+/- 9 pp)	↓ (66%)

Source: ICF elaboration .

While horizontal activities limit a full disaggregation of budget per pillar, an analysis of the allocated and contracted UCPM budget shows that those limits were, in principle, only met in all pillars in 2021 and 2022. In other years, the share of budget allocated to response was below the relevant limit. In 2019 and 2020, the share of budget allocated to prevention was also lower than the limit (see Table 10). In 2017, 2018 and 2019, the budget allocated to preparedness exceeded the maximum limit<sup>621</sup>.

Table 10. Share of budget allocated per pillar, 2017-2022

Pillar	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Prevention	14%	14%	5%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Preparedness	64%	73%	64%	83%	80%	86%	83%

<sup>619</sup> New limit is three times lower than the previous limit.

<sup>620</sup> New limit is four times lower than the previous limit

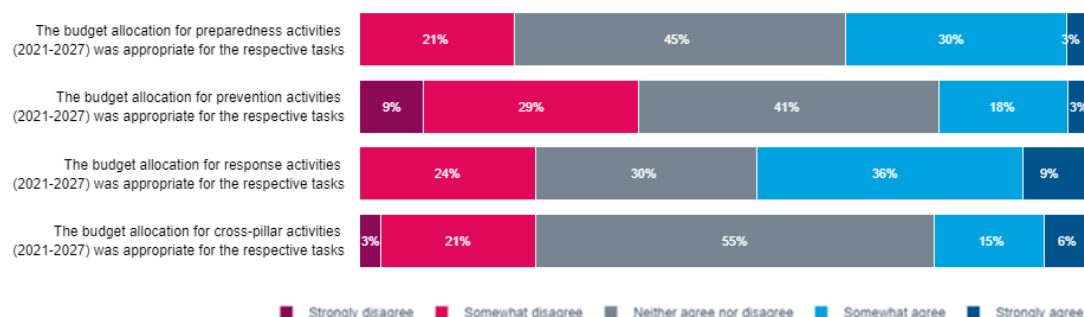
<sup>621</sup> The budget to horizontal activities was allocated equally across the three pillars.

Response	17%	10%	18%	14%	17%	12%	14%
Cross-pillar	5%	4%	13%	0%	1%	0%	1%

DG ECHO Desk Officers held mixed views on the adequacy of the allocation of budget per pillar (see Figure 62). The relative majority did not have a clear opinion and the remainder were split between agreeing and disagreeing with the allocation per pillar. Prevention had a higher number of DG ECHO Desk Officers expressing disagreement<sup>622</sup>, suggesting:

- **A need for a more strategic approach.** While focusing on response is a good short-term approach, the increasing number and variety of disasters requires a more strategic and long-term approach, including more investment in prevention;
- **Investments in prevention are cost-effective.** A higher focus on prevention can bring net benefits in the longer term, as shown by the World Bank study that demonstrated that the great majority of a selection of prevention and preparedness investments (including some of the UCPM activities) had expected benefits higher than their cost<sup>623</sup>;
- **Legislative amendments to the UCPM made prevention/anticipatory disaster risk management even more of a priority.** For example, this was achieved through the introduction of the Union Disaster Resilience Goals;
- **The lack of predictability/stability of the budget for prevention has an impact on the effectiveness of the UCPM.** The budget for prevention experienced high variability during the evaluation period, both in the short term (due to reshuffling of the budget initially allocated to prevention to response capacities/response) and in the longer term (due to the European Commission's multiyear cycle), hindering implementation and the scaling-up of the UCPM prevention programme.

Figure 62. DG ECHO Desk Officers views on allocation of budget per pillar



Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation.

Similarly, national authorities and other stakeholders had mixed views on the allocation of budget per pillar, with some highlighting the need for an increase in the budget for prevention<sup>624</sup>, and others believing that the UCPM might not be the best framework/forum for financing and enhancing prevention initiatives, as it often requires the involvement of other (non-civil protection) actors<sup>625</sup>.

<sup>622</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (8). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers.

<sup>623</sup> "World Bank, *Investment in Disaster Risk Management in Europe Makes Economic Sense: Background Report. Economics for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness*, 2021.

<sup>624</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (7).

<sup>625</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

5.2.2 EQ5: To what extent was the UCPM budgeting system flexible to adapt to evolving needs on the ground and unanticipated events?

**Key findings**

- The UCPM underwent various modifications, motivated by evolving needs and gap assessments, indicating its flexibility to adapt;
- It was not possible to assess whether the additional costs triggered by those revisions were compensated by efficiency savings;
- The budgeting system was flexible to support Member and Participating States to prepare and respond to evolving needs on the ground and unanticipated events, in particular from 2019 onwards. Changes to the regulation and the significant and swift increase of the UCPM budget by the budgetary authority to react to the growing budgetary needs (mainly in light of the COVID-19 and to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine) were key ensure this flexibility
- Factors that, in some instances, somewhat limited the flexibility of the UCPM budget included restrictions to the scope and timing of the NextGenerationEU budget, , reliance on overwhelmed Member States, and complex procedures and rules.

**Judgement criteria:**

- JC5.2: Legislative developments since 2017 (Decision 2019/1310) triggered additional costs, which were compensated by efficiency savings
- JC5.3: Legislative developments since 2017 (e.g. Regulation 2021/88) reinforced the UCPM's budget flexibility to adapt to evolving needs on the ground and unanticipated events

**During the evaluation period, the UCPM underwent various modifications, motivated by evolving needs and gaps assessments, indicating its flexibility to adapt (JC5.3). However, it is not possible to assess whether the additional costs triggered by those revisions were compensated by efficiency savings.**

The time lag between identification of the need to revise the UCPM and its amendments varied. While the changes adopted in 2019 had been under discussion since at least 2017, subsequent changes were adopted more quickly, given the urgency of their underlying needs.

The changes to the UCPM, including the budget increase, suggest efforts to increase flexibility while ensuring the predictability of support to Member and Participating States to prevent, prepare and respond to unanticipated events and evolving needs. Interviewed DG ECHO staff highlighted that without these modifications the UCPM would have not been able to have implemented many of its activities, in particular in the context of the unprecedented crises experienced in the period (COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine).<sup>626</sup>

Key examples are the introduction of rescEU in 2019 and the subsequent revision of the legal framework to incorporate new type of rescEU capacity. This allowed, for example, the stockpiling of medical counter-measures (vaccines, therapeutics), as well as intensive care medical equipment, PPE and laboratory supplies to respond to the emerging needs related to the COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

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<sup>626</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

The introduction of indirect management and empowerment of the Commission to adopt delegated acts in certain circumstances are also expected to enable greater flexibility and timeliness of support.

Furthermore, the Regulation (EU) 2021/836 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism introduced a greater flexibility on various levels:

- It removed the need to allocate the budget to four different budget lines and allowed the entire UCPM budget (per pillar and inside and outside Europe) to be allocated under a single budget line;
- It introduced the possibility to carry over (and consume) unused commitment and payment appropriations for the Response pillar to the following year.
- It introduced the possibility to conclude budgetary commitments over several years, for example allowing the acquisition of costly Aerial Fire Fighting capacities (planes and helicopters).

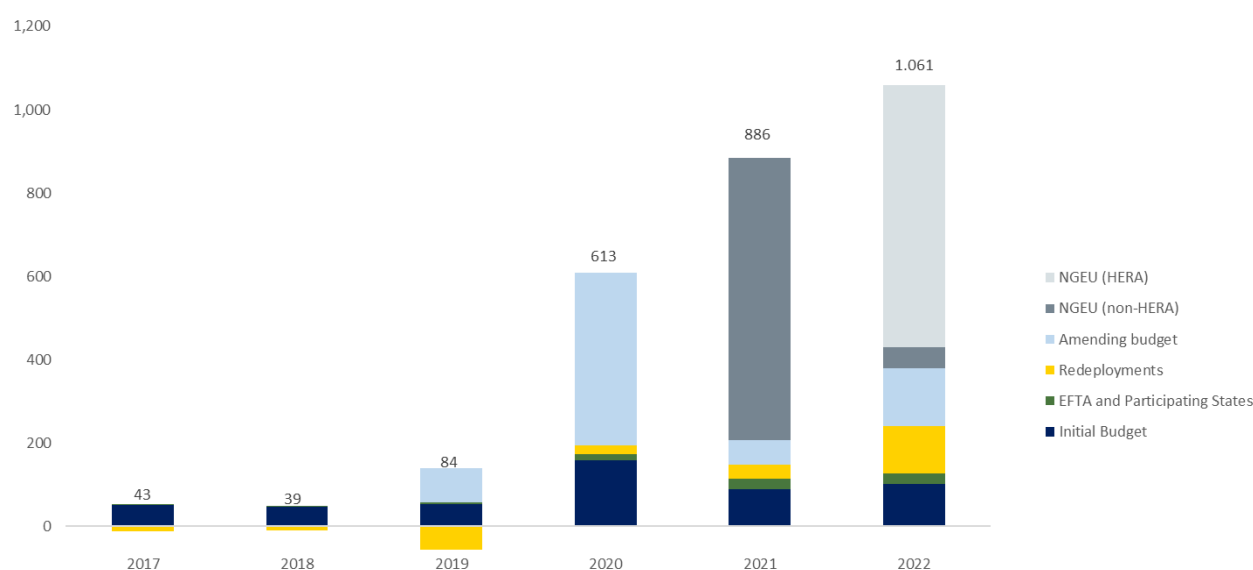
#### Judgement criterion:

- JC5.1: The budgeting system has been sufficiently flexible for the UCPM to sustainably support Member and Participating States to prevent, prepare and respond to evolving needs on the ground and unanticipated events (e.g. COVID-19 response)

**The budgeting system was flexible support Member and Participating States to prepare and respond to evolving needs on the ground and unanticipated events. Nevertheless, some opportunities for further improving the flexibility of the system were identified.**

As mentioned above, the UCPM budget experienced a massive increase during the evaluation period. While in 2017 the UCPM budget was about EUR 52 million and there were absorption problems, at the end of the evaluation period the total budget was 20 times higher, reaching EUR 1,061 million (of which EUR 354 million was MFF) (see Figure 63).

Figure 63. DG ECHO budget 2017 -2022 (EUR million)

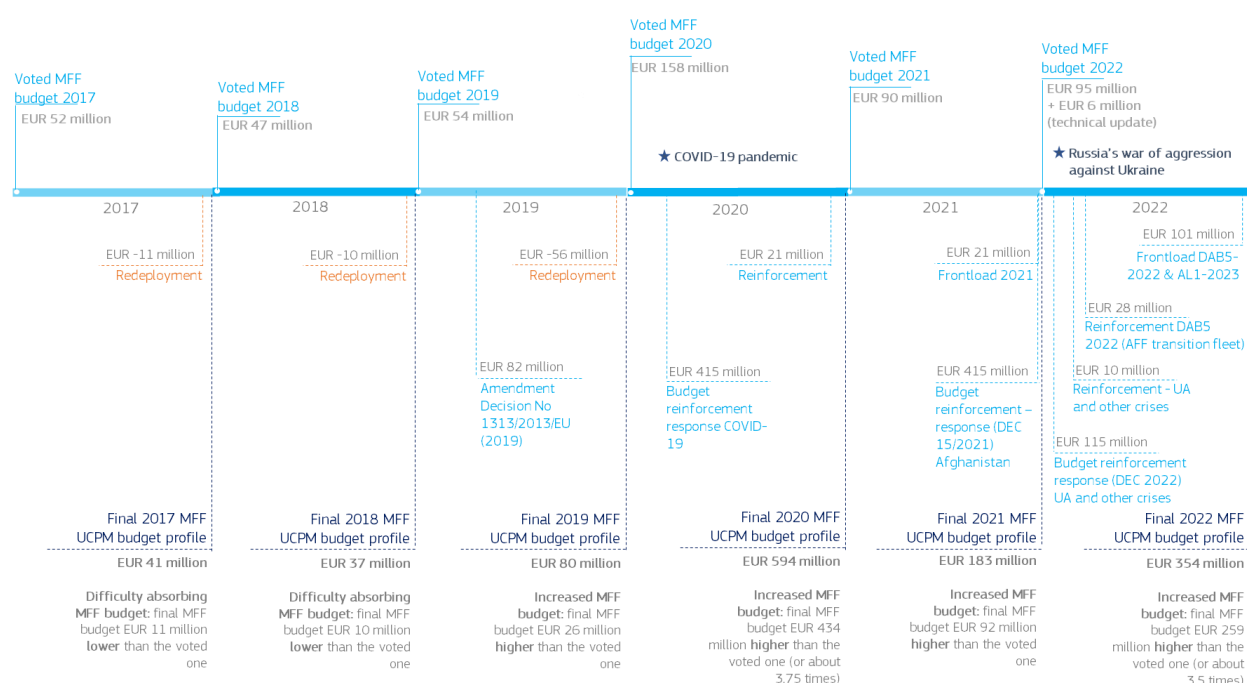


Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

A review of annual reports and evolution of the budget highlighted the flexibility of the allocation of budget to UCPM to respond to emerging needs during the evaluation period, not only through an increase in the voted MFF budget and the allocation of NGEU budget to UCPM, but also through ad hoc budget adjustments to the voted MFF budget throughout the years, (see ). These adjustments were made possible by:

- Changes to the legislation and subsequently increased flexibility of the budgetary system (i.e., carry over, single budget line, multi-year budgetary commitments) as mentioned above, which allowed DG ECHO to swiftly proceed to transfers or frontloads from one strand to another or one activity to another when necessary;
- A reactive and supportive budgetary Authority, which since 2019 responded positively to all DG ECHO's requests for necessary reinforcements in a time range of three weeks to two months (as a result of the fact that the growing number and intensity of crises started to have a serious impact on the UCPM budget).

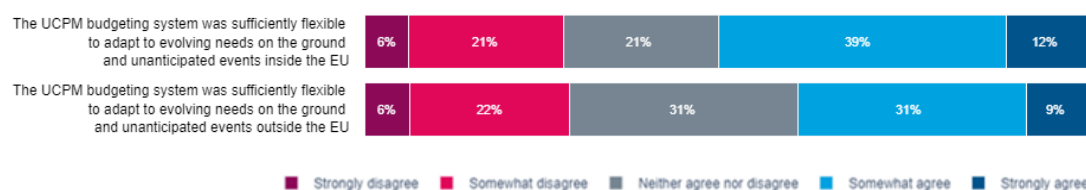
Figure 64. Flexibility of DG ECHO MFF budget 2017 -2022



Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal data.

DG ECHO Desk Officers generally agreed that there was an improvement in budget flexibility during the evaluation period (see Figure 65)<sup>627</sup>. However, some highlighted that this flexibility was sometimes achieved through budget reshuffles as the budget was not sufficient to address emerging needs. This had, in their view, negative consequences for prevention and non-operational preparedness activities of DG ECHO.<sup>628</sup>

Figure 65. DG ECHO Desk Officers' views on the flexibility of the UCPM budget



<sup>627</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (11).

<sup>628</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (5).



Source: ICF elaboration, based on data gathered for the interim evaluation.

Overall, a relative majority of DG ECHO desk officers agreed that the UCPM budget was sufficiently flexible to adapt to evolving needs on the ground and unanticipated events within (51%) and outside (40%) the EU. However, many highlighted that the following elements may have limited that flexibility<sup>629</sup>:

- **Part of the budget in 2021 and 2022 came from the NextGenerationEU Fund**, which had a narrow scope in terms of what it could be used for (i.e., to address health-related needs);
- **Timeframe of budget adoption (i.e. yearly)**. The MFF budget allocation was annual and the NextGenerationEU budget came with a strict timeframe to be committed and spent (even if the budget could be carried over across the period). The new regulation introduced the possibility to adopt a multi-annual approach in certain cases and the possibility to carry over and frontload;
- **Overwhelmed Member States**. DG ECHO had to rely on overwhelmed Member States to develop capacity, instead of directly procuring some capacities;
- **Complex procedures and rules**. For example, rules on the financing of transport grants became particularly burdensome (for both DG ECHO and Member States) with the significant increase of requests due to COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

One DG ECHO Desk Officer highlighted that the UCPM budget shares the same budget headings with Cohesion Policy and those narrow margins limit its flexibility<sup>630</sup>. Another element of some concern mentioned by a few DG ECHO staff regarding the existing system going forward, was the lack of certainty on whether and how quickly additional funds may arrive to deal with emerging needs, with some mentioning that a less discretionary approach to budget adjustments (e.g., access to a reserve or buffer funds) in face of emerging needs would be of added value.<sup>631</sup>

5.2.3 EQ6: To what extent do the measures in place for the internal monitoring and evaluation of the UCPM contribute to the efficient and effective implementation of the intervention?

#### Key findings

- Overall, there was a lack of indicators to monitor and assess the performance of the results of each UCPM component/activity and their outcomes/impacts consistently and homogeneously;
- UCPM data collection and management systems and tools were not appropriate to support sound collection and analysis of the data. The tracking of assistance was particularly limited;
- There were monitoring and controlling actions at various levels, including missions, collection of feedback by participants on activities, monitoring exercises, and audits (by the Internal Audit Service, ECA, etc.), but results of these actions were not consistently recorded and explored.

#### Judgement criterion:

- JC6.1: The indicators selected allowed the UCPM to identify and correct inefficiencies or any other issues associated with the implementation of the Decision

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<sup>629</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (10).

<sup>630</sup> Feedback from DG ECHO September 2023.

<sup>631</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (5).

**The UCPM made progress in monitoring and evaluation by introducing two key strategic performance indicators (KPIs) and various result and output indicators. However, assessment of the available documentation and feedback from DG ECHO Desk Officers suggests a lack of indicators to monitor and assess the quality of the results of each UCPM component/activity and their outcomes/impacts and the resources used to deliver them consistently and homogeneously (JC 6.1).** Nevertheless, contracts were awarded based on concrete criteria and their fulfilment was assessed accordingly by DG ECHO.

During the evaluation period, the progress of UCPM was monitored and reported through strategic indicators, predefined result indicators and specific output indicators.

At strategic level, only speed/time of response was consistently monitored. In 2020, an additional strategic indicator was introduced to assess the adequacy of response of the UCPM<sup>632</sup>. Result indicators were also defined in the strategic plans for 2019-2020<sup>633</sup> and 2020-2024<sup>634</sup> and in the annual management plans. Draft outcome indicators were developed for the Knowledge Network.

Despite the positive developments in monitoring and reporting against strategic KPIs, the existing indicators and processes were not adequate to assess and monitor efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the evaluation period, as they focus on results without incorporating quality, use of resources/cost and outcomes/impact considerations. In practice, this limited the influence of cost-effectiveness and efficiency considerations on: (i) the decision-making process on allocation of funds per pillar and activity, and (ii) the selection of alternative options (e.g. projects, transport solutions)<sup>635</sup>. DG ECHO Desk Officers highlighted a lack of awareness of UCPM KPIs, their adequacy to measure efficiency, and the effectiveness of internal monitoring and evaluation systems to assess efficiency of the implementation of the Decision (see Figure 66)<sup>636</sup>.

The evaluation also showed some limitations related to the KPIs and monitoring systems, including:

- The indicator on average speed was not highly informative because the timeliness of response is influenced by the type of disaster and reaction of Member States<sup>637</sup>;
- The indicator on adequacy of response can be misleading/overly general, as it captures both full and partial responses to RfA. The ERCC makes an appropriate judgement call on where the UCPM presents added value and this should be captured in the indicators;
- Risk awareness of the public (Article 3(2)(d)) is difficult to measure in a single indicator. The indicator on progress in implementing the prevention framework by the number of DRM Summary Reports submitted (Article 3(2)(a)) is not fit for purpose as it does not consider the extent to which DRM Summary Reports were used, for example<sup>638</sup>;

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<sup>632</sup> The Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and Strategic Plan 2020-2024 include indicators for the assessment of reasonable assurance (multiannual residual error rate for the 2016-2020 SP; estimated risk at closure for the 2020-2024 plan). The residual error rate is the ratio between the amount at risk and the final budget. The amount at risk is the representative detected error rate multiplied by the part of the budget which has not been audited, added to the amount of detected ineligible expenditure that has not yet been corrected, i.e. recoveries orders issued, awaiting cashing.

<sup>633</sup> 'The average speed of interventions under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (from the acceptance of the offer to deployment), 'The number of modules included in the voluntary pool of the European Emergency Response Capacity'; 'The number of national risk assessments submitted by IPA II14 and EU Neighbourhood countries'; 'The number of beneficiaries reached through the European Union Aid Volunteers initiative'; 'The number of offers received and coordinated by the ERCC'; 'The average speed of interventions under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism for deployments related to the EU refugee crisis'; 'The number of risk assessments submitted to the Commission by Member States'; 'The number of modules included in the voluntary pool of the European Emergency Response Capacity'.

<sup>634</sup> 'Number of countries participating in UCPM that have adopted and implemented national disaster risk reduction strategies'; 'Number of scientific and technical assessments and advice provided to the ERCC support of UCPM operations'; 'Areas where there is an increase of the country's response capacity to given events'; 'Response time of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism to a request of assistance'; 'Adequacy of response of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism'.

<sup>635</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO Desk Officers (5).

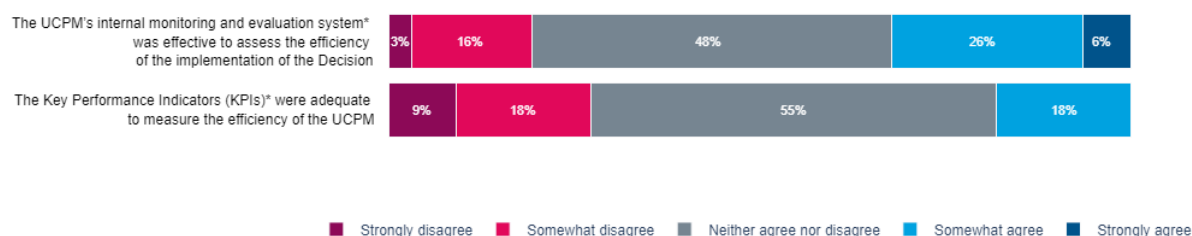
<sup>636</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO Desk Officers (3), indicating that UCPM does not use the KPI.

<sup>637</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO Desk Officers (3).

<sup>638</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO Desk Officers (2).

- The evidence base to set targets was sometimes not robust<sup>639</sup>;
- The indicators focused mainly on results and less on outcomes/impact, as well as mainly on response rather than prevention<sup>640</sup>;
- There were no clear links to the existing indicators or the UCPM's specific and general objectives.

Figure 66. DG ECHO Desk Officers' views on adequacy of UCPM KPIs and monitoring systems



Source: ICF elaboration, based on data gathered for the interim evaluation.

Some stakeholders agreed that there is a need to improve existing KPIs and develop further indicators. They noted that the Union Disaster Resilience Goals represent a positive development<sup>641</sup>. By contrast, others expressed concerns about the workload connected with monitoring KPIs, given the limited human resources<sup>642</sup>.

#### Judgement criterion:

- JC6.2: Monitoring and evaluation data have been properly collected and analysed

#### UCPM data collection and management systems and tools were not appropriate to support sound collection and analysis of the data. The tracking of assistance was particularly limited (JC 6.2).

Several DG ECHO Desk Officers and experts noted significant room for improvement in data collection and management and stated that further efforts should have been taken to promote consistent and harmonised data collection by Member States<sup>643</sup>. Existing UCPM data collection systems and tools were considered outdated, inadequate, and inefficient<sup>644,645</sup>. The development of CECIS 2.0 was seen as a potential step forward in improving data collection and reporting on activities in the response sector. Whether this will be effective will depend on Member States' use of this integrated system<sup>646</sup>.

During the evaluation period, there were monitoring and controlling actions at various levels, including missions, collection of feedback by participants on activities, monitoring exercises, and audits (by the Internal Audit Service, ECA, etc.). However, results were not consistently recorded and explored.

#### Judgement criterion:

<sup>639</sup> Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.

<sup>640</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO Desk Officers (3). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.

<sup>641</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO Desk Officers (2). Focus group:: cost-effectiveness on 26 May 2023; with DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.

<sup>642</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO Desk Officers (2).

<sup>643</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO Desk Officers (4). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.

<sup>644</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO Desk Officers (2). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.

<sup>645</sup> The lack of data made a CBA unfeasible in the context of the case studies.

<sup>646</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO Desk Officers (1). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.

- JC6.3: There is scope for some simplification or burden reduction in the activities carried out by the UCPM. This criterion is covered in EQ4 and EQ5 (see Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2)

### 5.3 Relevance

This subsection explores how well the UCPM addressed EU and national needs during the evaluation period. It includes an examination of whether the UCPM's general and specific objectives, as well as its activities, were aligned with EU and national needs. It then assesses the extent to which the UCPM was flexible in adapting to emerging needs and developments (including unanticipated events) and whether it is perceived as sufficiently flexible to adapt to future needs. Finally, it examines the extent to which the UCPM was able to incorporate recommendations and lessons.

- 5.3.1 EQ7: To what extent were the UCPM activities and objectives relevant to the civil protection needs of the EU and to the European Commission's priorities for 2023-2024, as well as to the needs of Member and Participating States and third countries?

#### Key findings

- During the evaluation period, the UCPM effectively identified and addressed EU and national needs in the field of civil protection. This showed the relevance of UCPM's objectives in the field of prevention, preparedness and response;
- Several activities indicated that the UCPM effectively identified EU and national needs in the field of prevention. These included DG ECHO's funding of research projects on understanding the needs of civil protection authorities, the compilation of the overview document of disaster risks in the EU, as well as recent changes to the PPP. Although evidence shows a need for further investment in prevention initiatives, some stakeholders questioned whether the UCPM constitutes the right forum for such further investment;
- UCPM preparedness activities were relevant to meeting EU and national needs. However, concerns were raised about the prioritisation of rescEU over the ECPP, as well as the need for increased focus on safety and security during UCPM deployments. The CECIS platform and the procedure for nomination of experts could be refined;
- UCPM response activities were appropriate to address EU and national needs. However, evidence shows that KPIs on the adequacy and speed of response were not fit for purpose;
- UCPM activities were relevant to the European Commission's priorities for 2023-2024, including the European Green Deal, the proposed Single Market Emergency Instrument, and the EU's enlargement priorities. However, the environmental sustainability of the UCPM should be strengthened.

#### Judgement criteria:

- JC7.1: Main EU and national (MS/PS/TC) needs addressed by the UCPM in the evaluation period were identified;
- JC7.2: The UCPM's general/specific objectives were appropriate to address identified EU and national needs;
- JC7.3: The UCPM's activities were suitable to address identified EU and national needs;

The former JC7"4 ("All current and expected future needs within the scope of the UCPM are adequately addressed") will be addressed in EQ8. This EQ will focus on whether the UCPM

addressed national and EU needs during the evaluation period, while EQ8 explores whether the UCPM was/will be sufficiently flexible to address national and EU emerging needs. A new judgement criterion was added in this EQ, namely: 'JC7.4. The UCPM's activities were relevant to the European Commission's priorities for 2023-2024'.

**Overall, civil protection authorities and experts indicated that their countries' civil protection needs were identified and addressed during the evaluation period<sup>647</sup>.** National authorities also expressed positive views about cooperation with DG ECHO, which allowed them to voice their needs<sup>648</sup>. However, given the numerous changes within UCPM activities between 2017 and 2022, it was sometimes challenging for national authorities to stay fully informed and up to date with all initiatives<sup>649</sup>. A small minority of civil protection authorities highlighted a need for greater transparency about the cost of different UCPM activities (see Section 5.2.1)<sup>650</sup>. Only a minority of stakeholders indicated that some civil protection needs could remain unaddressed<sup>651</sup>, primarily related to the future role of the UCPM and whether it will address all emerging needs (see Section 5.3.2).

During the evaluation period, the UCPM identified national and EU **prevention** needs. The UCPM funded research to better understand the needs of **civil protection authorities** for scaling-up disaster risk management investments. Indeed, DG ECHO and the World Bank undertook a study that resulted in three publications modelling the potential impact of floods and earthquakes on Europe's society and economy, and quantifying the costs and benefits of investment in disaster resilience<sup>652</sup>. '**Understanding the Needs of Civil Protection Agencies and Opportunities for Scaling up Disaster Risk Management Investments**' summarised insights into the challenges and opportunities for civil protection authorities to leverage investments for disaster prevention and preparedness.

The study identified a set of overarching challenges for scaling-up investment in prevention activities<sup>653</sup>. These include:

- **Limited funding for disaster risk management initiatives**, with a high focus and share of related funds being oriented towards disaster response;
- **Low political buy-in for investments in prevention**, mitigation and preparedness, exacerbated by the lack of compelling evidence showcasing their benefits;
- **Challenges in accessing and using EU funds** for ex ante disaster risk management investment, including institutional and technical limitations;
- **Insufficient human resources within civil protection authorities dedicated to ex ante disaster risk management interventions**. Given that prevention and disaster risk management policies involve different sectors, authorities and policy fields, civil protection authorities face difficulties in collecting and analysing data and information, limiting their ability to advocate for the necessary resources.

DG ECHO produced **overviews of natural and man-made disaster risks that the EU may face** in 2017 and 2020, providing valuable data on trends, priorities and emerging disaster risks. A minority of stakeholders highlighted the relevance of the overview document of disaster risks in the EU, which

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<sup>647</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (22/48); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (10/18). However, 17/48 national authorities and 10 experts in civil protection did not have a strong opinion.

<sup>648</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (20)

<sup>649</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3); DG ECHO (1). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>650</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (4).

<sup>651</sup> Surveys of: experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (6/18); national authorities (9/48).

<sup>652</sup> World Bank, *Understanding the Needs of Civil Protection Agencies and Opportunities for Scaling up Disaster Risk Management Investments*, 2021; World Bank, *Investment in Disaster Risk Management in Europe Makes Economic Sense*, 2021; World Bank, *Financial Risk and Opportunities to Build Resilience in Europe*, 2021.

<sup>653</sup> World Bank, *Understanding the Needs of Civil Protection Agencies and Opportunities for Scaling up Disaster Risk Management Investments*, 2021.

provides useful insights on cross-border risks<sup>654</sup>. Two EU stakeholders noted that the DG ECHO-commissioned World Bank study was an important tool to help national authorities to provide grounding on further investments in prevention<sup>655</sup>.

**However, a minority of stakeholders underlined that prevention (and, to a certain extent, preparedness) initiatives under the UCPM did not completely meet their needs.**

They underlined that the process of compiling the DRM Summary Reports is resource-intensive, expressing concerns about the limited expertise and resources within national civil protection authorities to effectively implement prevention initiatives<sup>656</sup>. While stakeholders agreed that further investments on prevention are needed (see Section 5.1.1.1)<sup>657</sup>, a minority questioned whether the UCPM constitutes the right forum and framework to further invest or collaborate on certain prevention initiatives when synergies could be developed with other EU level or research and innovation funding programmes (e.g. Horizon Europe)<sup>658</sup>.

Stakeholders expressed a need to improve alignment between the development of capacity in the ECPP and rescEU with the results of systematic needs assessments, emphasising the importance of using strategic and analytical assessments to inform decision-making and allocation of resources<sup>659</sup>. They recommended that capacity in both the ECPP and rescEU be consistently selected on the basis of insights and findings from risk mapping and scenario-building activities.

DG ECHO Desk Officers indicated that the flexibility of the UCPM budget was sometimes achieved through budget reshuffles, with negative impacts for prevention and non-operational preparedness activities, which were occasionally deprioritised and their funding reduced or removed (see Section 5.2.2).

For the **PPP**, projects carried out under single-country grants (**Track I**) provided civil protection authorities with a valuable funding source to invest in prevention initiatives<sup>660</sup>. However, scope for improvement was identified, including the tight timeline to apply and implement grants, and lack of clarity on some aspects, such as co-financing rules, procurement, beneficiaries, and eligible activities<sup>661</sup>. These issues suggest that Member States' needs were not consistently addressed. For projects carried out under multi-country grants (**Track II**), the 2021 external evaluation found that projects' objectives, priorities, and activities were generally well aligned with the needs of Member/Participating States and eligible third countries<sup>662</sup>. However, scope for improvement was identified in the priority-setting process, as well as in addressing the lack of an accessible mapping of all EU/UCPM civil protection projects in the field of prevention and preparedness to avoid duplication of efforts at EU level.

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<sup>654</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (4); international stakeholder (1).

<sup>655</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (5).

<sup>656</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3); EU stakeholder (1). Focus group with: national authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. See Annex 7 for case study on COVID-19.

<sup>657</sup> European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021, 2022*; EESC, *Consolidating the EU-Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022. Interviews with: DG ECHO (13); EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (6); international stakeholders (2).

<sup>658</sup> Focus group with: national authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. Interviews with: national authorities (6); EU stakeholders (2).

<sup>659</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (5); experts in civil protection (2). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. European Committee of the Regions, *Preparing for and dealing with crises: strengthening the resilience of the Union, its regions and cities*, 2023.

<sup>660</sup> World Bank, *Understanding the Needs of Civil Protection Agencies and Opportunities for Scaling up Disaster Risk Management Investments*, 2021.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid.

<sup>662</sup> European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020)*, 2021.



Looking ahead, in 2023, DG ECHO transformed<sup>663</sup>:

- **Former Track I grants into 'Technical Assistance for Disaster Risk Management'**. These grants will provide national civil protection and other disaster risk management authorities with financial support to develop strategic disaster risk management actions. Grants aim to prepare investments or strengthen the institutional and policy framework for disaster risk management. DG ECHO intends to speed-up the application process and address Member States' specific needs for technical assistance (as opposed to addressing thematic priorities pre-defined by the Commission);
- **Former Track II grants into KAPP**, which merges Prevention and Preparedness, the Knowledge Network, and FSX. Additionally, DG ECHO plans to develop an online hub to map different funding opportunities, thereby increasing coordination with and accessibility of other EU programmes<sup>664</sup>.

While these changes aim to better align activities with national needs and increase coherence among prevention and preparedness projects, it is too early to assess whether these changes will enhance the relevance of the PPP. Similarly, the **Union Disaster Resilience Goals** (adopted after the evaluation period) are perceived as an important and relevant initiative that will increase the visibility of disaster prevention and make disaster risk reduction outputs more accessible<sup>665</sup>.

**On preparedness, UCPM activities between 2017 and 2022 met EU and national needs by strengthening EU and national capacities to prepare and respond to disasters.** This was particularly true in the establishment of **rescEU**, which strengthened Union and national preparedness by creating a common European reserve of resources to be mobilised when assistance from the ECPP is unavailable or insufficient. Stakeholders agreed that the development of rescEU was relevant to addressing both EU and national needs, as it contributed to enhanced national preparedness<sup>666</sup>. Under the ECPP, adaptation grants effectively supported national authorities to upgrade and repair their response capacities, resulting in enhanced preparedness of the UCPM<sup>667</sup>.

**Although rescEU was established as a last resort tool for when ECPP capacities are insufficient, stakeholders (mainly national authorities) raised concerns about its prioritisation over the ECPP**<sup>668</sup>. While an increased focus on rescEU between 2019 and 2022 was normal, given its recent entry into force, civil protection authorities stated that the ECPP should remain the central instrument when it comes to UCPM preparedness<sup>669</sup>. To ensure compliance with the principle of subsidiarity, the purpose and task of rescEU should remain a last resort, while facilitating greater interaction among

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<sup>663</sup> European Commission, *Note to DG ECHO management: Prevention and Preparedness Programme: findings of recent evaluations and future outlook for the programme, 2022*.

<sup>664</sup> Where relevant, the evaluation team mentions activities taking place beyond the evaluation period where they (will/may) have an impact on evaluation findings.

<sup>665</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (4); EU stakeholders (5); international stakeholders (2); national authorities (5). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (11/14); national authorities (31/48).

<sup>666</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (11); national authorities (24); international stakeholders (6); EU stakeholders (11); experts in civil protection (2). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (12/12); national authorities (36/46). See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>667</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (9).

<sup>668</sup> Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023; DG ECHO on 10 May 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (4); national civil protection authorities (8).

<sup>669</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (8); DG ECHO (3). Focus group with DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

affected Member States<sup>670</sup>. A minority of stakeholders reported that the balance between ECPP and rescEU is maintained<sup>671</sup>, or that rescEU could be grown further<sup>672</sup>.

Between 2017 and 2022, the UCPM's **financial support for transport and assistance** gained in prominence and use, largely due to the increased number of offers of assistance in response to climate-related events, COVID-19 and, from the start of 2022, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. However, the procedures for co-financing transport costs were not adapted to the increasing number of operations coordinated and co-financed by the ERCC, leading to delays in processing transport and operations grants. There were 50 grants and three transport service order forms processed in 2019, compared to 345 grants and 131 transport service order forms in 2022. Beneficiaries experienced delays in processing co-financing of their operations and perceived the system as excessively bureaucratic and cumbersome<sup>673</sup>. Stakeholders advocated for an increase in the 75% co-financing rate for the transport and operation of ECPP modules<sup>674</sup> and for financial support to cover administrative, VAT, and back-office costs within rescEU grants<sup>675</sup>.

The **Training and Exercises Programme** adequately addressed civil protection needs at national and EU level<sup>676</sup>. A majority of stakeholders involved in the Programme agreed that the number of participants was adequate, that participants had the right set of skills and experience, and that experts trained were more likely to be deployed<sup>677</sup>. However, evidence suggests that the profile of participants was not always adequate, due to insufficient information about the training content prior to the training or to language barriers (see Section 5.1.2)<sup>678</sup>.

Stakeholders indicated that participants were generally satisfied with the content of the activities carried out during online and in-person training, table-top exercises and EU MODEX<sup>679</sup>, as well as the methodology<sup>680</sup> and usefulness of learning<sup>681</sup>.

However, a minority indicated that **some national training needs remained unmet**<sup>682</sup>, including the practical use of CECIS, aerial coordination and evacuation procedures, geological risks, **safety and security** within UCPM deployments, and better awareness of humanitarian aid actors (see Section 5.4.3). Although a security course is provided as part of the UCPM Training Programme, UCPM activations in high-risk locations revealed the need to emphasise this aspect. For instance, the 2022 UCPM activation in Pakistan highlighted a need to focus on safety and security aspects for team

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<sup>670</sup> 'The new reserve is aimed at coordinating, supporting and supplementing the action of Member States, rather than giving the EU its own resources or new competences' (European Committee of the Regions, *Opinion on the review of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism*, 2018). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities.

<sup>671</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (1).

<sup>672</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholders (1). European Committee of the Regions, *Preparing for and dealing with crises: strengthening the resilience of the Union, its regions and cities*, 2023.

<sup>673</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); national authorities (4).

<sup>674</sup> Focus group with: national authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. Interviews with: national authorities (2); DG ECHO (3); experts in civil protection (1). Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation 2020-2022*, 2023.

<sup>675</sup> Focus group with: national authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (9). Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation 2020-2022*, 2023.

<sup>676</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (24/32 and 31/34, respectively).

<sup>677</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (33/36, 24/35 and 23/34, respectively).

<sup>678</sup> Progress reports and final reports on the various training in the period.

<sup>679</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (31/36, 39/40, 21/25 and 23/27, respectively).

<sup>680</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – online training (28/36), in-person training (38/40), table-top exercises (20/25), EU MODEX (23/27).

<sup>681</sup> Surveys of: training and Exercises Programme stakeholders – online training (30/35), in-person training (37/38), table-top exercises (20/24), EU MODEX (22/25).

<sup>682</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (11/33). Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); experts in civil protection (3).

members deployed in UCPM missions<sup>683</sup>. Similarly, during the 2021 UCPM activation in Haiti, there was a lack of physical security awareness and communication on the security situation<sup>684</sup>. However, there is no evidence that the security of civil protection personnel was compromised<sup>685</sup>.

**Evidence suggests a low deployment rate among the total number of experts trained<sup>686</sup> and many deployed experts did not undergo all necessary training before being deployed<sup>687</sup>.** Looking ahead, the new Training and Exercises Programme will introduce a deployable training path, targeting experts to be deployed. In parallel, it will introduce a set of non-deployable courses for civil protection and disaster risk management actors who hold a support function and are not expected to be deployed. This curriculum change is expected to better meet participants' expectations and needs<sup>688</sup>. Stakeholders noted that the procedure for the **nomination of experts** for UCPM deployments could be improved to better meet EU and national needs. DG ECHO stakeholders underlined that the availability and diversity of experts was not always assured because of insufficient nominations by national authorities<sup>689</sup>. However, a minority reported that experts proposed by Member States were not always nominated and criticised the lack of transparency in the nomination procedure, as well as inadequate gender balance<sup>690</sup>.

Evidence also shows that during the period evaluated, the following UCPM activities effectively met national needs, albeit with margins for further improving their offer:

- **EWS.** Stakeholders underlined the relevance of developing and enhancing EWS<sup>691</sup>. National stakeholders from Member and Participating States reported that while EU-level EWS are not their primary tool, they effectively complement national tools<sup>692</sup>. During the evaluation period, EWS were systematically improved to help their contribution to enhancing preparedness. They could, however, be more effective (see Section 5.1.1.2);
- The **host nation support** guidelines were seen as highly relevant. Stakeholders underlined their value as an important tool to coordinate relief efforts<sup>693</sup>. Some national authorities reported using the UCPM's guidelines to develop their own national guidelines and coordinate response efforts under UCPM activations or bilateral agreements<sup>694</sup>. However,

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<sup>683</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>684</sup> European Commission, *Outcome of the Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022.

<sup>685</sup> Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation 2020-2022*, 2023.

<sup>686</sup> European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019. Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); experts in civil protection (2); professional organisations (1); national authority (1). See Annex 7 for coherence of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>687</sup> European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019. Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); experts in civil protection (2); professional organisations (1); national authority (1). See Annex 7 for coherence of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>688</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on coherence of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>689</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*; European Commission, *Outcome document. Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting on 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019; European Commission, *Outcome document. Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting on 2017 UCPM activations*, 2018; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022. Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>690</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*. Interviews with: professional organisation (1); national authority (1); experts in civil protection (2).

<sup>691</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (16); experts in civil protection (3); DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (3); international stakeholders (2). See Annex 7 for case studies on floods and on forest fires.

<sup>692</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers - Member States (6/7), Participating States (6/7), third countries (3/7); national authorities (38/38); DG ECHO (3/24). Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); experts in civil protection (2); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (16). See Annex 7 for case study on floods.

<sup>693</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); experts in civil protection (1); international stakeholders (2); national authorities (18). European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2020 UCPM activations*, 2021.

<sup>694</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (1); national authorities (4).

stakeholders agreed that the guidelines could benefit from an update and expansion, for example by including best practices<sup>695</sup>. The guidelines are due to be updated in 2023<sup>696</sup>;

- The limited data available suggest that **advisory missions** carried out during the period evaluated addressed national needs, primarily in third countries<sup>697</sup>. They start with a preparatory phase in which DG ECHO and the requesting country define the needs, scope, and objectives of the mission so as to tailor it to the country's needs;
- **Peer Review Programme** was seen as particularly relevant to national authorities<sup>698</sup>. Peer reviews result in tailored short, medium, and long-term recommendations, designed to improve a country's disaster risk management and civil protection systems. In North Macedonia, the peer review output became an important reference document, as it was comprehensive, identified gaps in their system and provided practical suggestions<sup>699</sup>.

On forest fires, national authorities expressed their appreciation that Lessons Learnt Meetings were held in Member States rather than Brussels, which they said better addressed the specific needs of Member and Participating States<sup>700</sup>.

Opportunities to improve the relevance of **CECIS** were identified, as the platform did not fully meet EU and national needs. Despite facilitating real-time exchanges between competent national authorities and contact points designated by Member States, Participating States and the ERCC, its current functionalities are limited<sup>701</sup>. For instance:

- It does not allow an overview of the available capacities per type (e.g. available aerial forest fight capacities), but only by level of commitment (e.g. number of each capacity type under rescEU or the ECPP);
- Given the lack of a secured Trans-European Services for Telematics between Administrations (sTESTA), the majority of Participating States (and all third countries) do not have access to CECIS. This creates additional workload for the ERCC in uploading email RfA and offers from these countries.

CECIS is currently being updated and improved, with a new version, CECIS 2.0, due. One solution envisioned for CECIS 2.0 is to include the development 'CECIS Lite', allowing users to access the CECIS portal through different tools and avoid the complications of sTESTA. The use of CECIS Lite would be relevant for Participating States without access to sTESTA, experts deployed on UCPM missions, and other organisations in Member and Participating States to which civil protection authorities would like to provide access to CECIS (e.g. Ministries of Health or Foreign Affairs)<sup>702</sup>.

Stakeholders agreed that UCPM activities in the field of **response** addressed Member, Participating States and third countries' needs<sup>703</sup>. RfA and offers of assets were tailored to the requesting State's needs. On disaster types, a majority of DG ECHO Desk Officers indicated that UCPM activities were

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<sup>695</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (5); DG ECHO (3). European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022.

<sup>696</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>697</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (6/7); national authorities (22/35). European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting on 24/25 April 2023*. See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>698</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (20/35). Interviews with: national authorities (9); experts in civil protection (1).

<sup>699</sup> Feedback from EU delegations (AL, TR, MK) to DG ECHO, shared on 9 December 2022.

<sup>700</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>701</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (6); national authorities (6). European Commission, *Study on the Development of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre ERCC*, 2023. See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>702</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>703</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (20); DG ECHO (9); EU stakeholders (6); experts in civil protection (6). See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

effective in supporting national authorities to address meteorological and geo-physical disasters, pandemics, CBRN accidents, marine events, other man-made disasters, and multi-hazard events<sup>704</sup>.

Challenges were identified in the **KPIs** on the adequacy and speed of response, which are deemed insufficient to accurately monitor the UCPM's performance given the evolving risk landscape (see Section 5.1.1.3). For instance, the KPIs do not distinguish between disaster types, preventing a more accurate evaluation of the UCPM's performance over time (see Sections 5.1 and 5.2) and failing to meet EU and national needs<sup>705</sup>. Ensuring accurate monitoring of the UCPM's performance on response activities is important for Member and Participating States, given the potential to develop tailored response strategies depending on the crisis.

**Third countries** account for around two-thirds of UCPM activations, showcasing the importance of the **UCPM's external dimension** and its international relevance in response activities. Although the UCPM provides support both within and outside the EU, it was initially conceived as an instrument for intra-EU solidarity, and a minority of stakeholders remain cautious about the increased involvement of the UCPM in third countries, noting the need for more clarity on the future role of the UCPM<sup>706</sup>. This was also linked to concerns about the future sustainability of the UCPM, given the expanding complexity and frequency of disasters within and outside the EU (see Section 5.3.2)<sup>707</sup>.

#### Judgement criterion:

- JC7.4. The UCPM's activities were relevant to the European Commission's priorities for 2023-2024

Overall, the UCPM activities implemented during the evaluation period were relevant to several of the **European Commission's legislative priorities for 2023 and 2024** that touch directly or indirectly on civil protection and contingent fields<sup>708</sup>. These include:

- **European Green Deal.** The European Commission plans to advance the proposals for a European Green Deal, notably the 'Fit for 55' package. This will contribute to EU leadership in the global fight against climate change. Between 2017 and 2022, several activities were implemented to ensure that climate change considerations were considered within the UCPM framework. Examples included the 2019 Article 6 reporting guidelines, which advise Member States to identify climate change impacts and adaptation measures in their DRM Summary Reports. Similarly, the recently introduced Union Disaster Resilience Goals integrate climate change considerations within the UCPM framework. They recognise that disaster resilience should be sustainable, paying special attention to minimising the environmental impact of civil protection operations<sup>709</sup>. However, research suggests that more can be done to improve the environmental sustainability of the UCPM, including collecting environmental footprint data, promoting the purchase of greening vehicles at

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<sup>704</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (33/34); national authorities (31/34); national authorities (31/34); national authorities (18/34); national authorities (30/34); national authorities (23/32); national authorities (19/33).

<sup>705</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting on 2022 UCPM activations on 24/25 April 2023*. Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>706</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from the Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*. Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (2); DG ECHO (1).

<sup>707</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3); DG ECHO (7); EU stakeholders (1). Surveys of: national authorities (1). EESC, *Consolidating the EU-Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022; European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2023; Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022*, 2023. See Annex 7 for case studies on forest fires and on COVID-19 repatriations/consular services. European Commission, *Study on the Development of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre ERCC*, 2023; European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>708</sup> European Commission, *Joint Declaration of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission. EU Legislative Priorities for 2023 and 2024*, 2022.

<sup>709</sup> European Commission, *Recommendation of 8 February 2023 on Union Disaster Resilience Goals 2023/C 56/01*, 2023.

national level, and increasing the visibility of good green practices after UCPM deployments (see Section 5.4.3)<sup>710</sup>;

- **Strengthen the single market, including by working on the Single Market Emergency Instrument.** In 2022, the European Commission proposed a Single Market Emergency Instrument (SMEI), intended to protect the functioning of supply chains and the free movement of persons, goods and services when these are affected by emergencies. The impact assessment report on the Regulation on a Single Market Emergency refers to the UCPM as an EU instrument ‘for general crisis response’<sup>711</sup>. The SMEI will complement other EU instruments for crisis management, such as the UCPM<sup>712</sup>;
- **Continue cooperation with candidate countries** in the Western Balkans, along with Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, in view of their future accession to the Union. Overall, the UCPM was also relevant to the EU’s priority to continue cooperation with EU Neighbouring countries. As of June 2023, the UCPM counts nine Participating States<sup>713</sup>, with Albania and Bosnia Herzegovina joining in 2022, and Ukraine in 2023. Regional cooperation with the Western Balkans and the Southern Neighbourhood (non-UCPM Participating States) is also ensured through the IPA regional programmes and Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and man-made Disasters (PPRD) (see Section 5.4.3)<sup>714</sup>;
- Beyond the work falling under the ordinary legislative procedure, the European Commission declared its commitment to **stand by Ukraine** and tackle the impact of Russia’s war of aggression<sup>715</sup>. UCPM activations responded to the Ukrainian crisis between 2021 and 2022, alongside the private donation initiative overseen by DG ECHO to support response activities. The development of energy and CBRN rescEU capacities indicate that the UCPM activities were relevant for this EU priority.

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<sup>710</sup> European Commission, *Study on greening the Union Civil Protection Mechanism*, 2023.

<sup>711</sup> European Commission, Impact Assessment Report for a Single Market Emergency Instrument, Staff Working Document, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=SWD%3A2022%3A289%3AFIN>

<sup>712</sup> Ibid. Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>713</sup> Iceland, Norway, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Türkiye, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine.

<sup>714</sup> Focus group with: national authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>715</sup> European Commission, *Joint Declaration of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission. EU Legislative Priorities for 2023 and 2024*, 2022.



5.3.2 EQ8: Is the UCPM sufficiently flexible to adapt to evolving needs on the ground (including unanticipated events) and emerging developments in the field of civil protection?

**Key findings**

- The UCPM was sufficiently flexible to adapt to evolving needs on the ground, including unanticipated events. Its cooperation with the private sector and activations in response to the Ukrainian crisis and to the COVID-19 pandemic showed the flexibility and adaptability of the UCPM to respond to unexpected emergencies and changing demands. However, DG ECHO's organisational set-up is only partially appropriate to support Member and Participating States and address new needs. Evidence suggests that DG ECHO's organisational structure did not ensure sufficient coordination among units working on different UCPM pillars;
- The UCPM integrated a focus on identifying ways to address emerging needs and developments in its activities, with scientific and technological research and development used to explore emerging issues. For instance, the ERCC 2.0 initiative provided the ERCC with the tools to better anticipate events and act as a cross-sectoral hub;
- There are some concerns that the UCPM might not have the flexibility and adaptability needed to address new and emerging needs and developments stemming from an increasingly complex threat and risk landscape. Stakeholders highlighted the future sustainability of the UCPM and the ERCC, in particular, and their ability to cope with crises and emergencies with increasing complexity, scope and frequency (such as climate change). Some noted the need to better define the role of the UCPM in third countries and during man-made disasters. This suggests that a wider discussion about the EU crisis management framework might be useful, particularly the degree to which it is adequate to withstand future challenges and threats in its current set-up.

**Judgement criteria:**

- JC8.1: New and emerging needs (including: developments in drivers (e.g. climate breakdown), (un)anticipated needs, high impact low probability events Hi-LO (e.g. COVID-19 crisis, Russia's war against Ukraine)) and emerging developments (e.g. scientific and technological research) in the field of civil protection had, and may have in the future, an impact on the UCPM;
- JC8.2: The UCPM's objectives and activities are appropriate to address new and emerging needs;
- JC8.3: Emerging developments (e.g. scientific and technological research and development that has become available since the creation of the UCPM) were taken on board and integrated into its functioning and activities;
- JC8.4: DG ECHO's organisational set up and capacity in the field of the UCPM is appropriate to support Member and Participating States to address the new and emerging needs and developments identified;
- JC8.5: Internal/external factors enabling/inhibiting the UCPM's ability adapt to new needs and developments were identified;
- JC7.4 All current and expected future needs within the scope of the UCPM are adequately addressed.

This subsection discusses the extent to which the UCPM had the necessary flexibility during the evaluation period to adapt to new and emerging needs and developments on the ground. It also discusses whether DG ECHO's organisational set-up effectively supported Member and Participating States.

It then explores the factors that might hinder/enable the flexibility and adaptability of the UCPM beyond the period evaluated. More specifically, it assesses the extent to which the UCPM is perceived as able to incorporate emerging needs and developments.

#### *5.3.2.1 Flexibility and adaptability of the UCPM during 2017-2022*

**Evidence suggests that the UCPM was sufficiently flexible to adapt to evolving needs and developments during the evaluation period**<sup>716</sup>. National authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities agreed that the UCPM prevention<sup>717</sup>, preparedness<sup>718</sup>, and response<sup>719</sup> activities could to adapt to emerging needs and developments on the ground. DG ECHO stakeholders also agreed<sup>720</sup>, although around 34% of DG ECHO Desk Officers did not state an opinion<sup>721</sup>.

On **prevention**, the 2021 evaluation of the **PPP** found that the projects implemented were suitable to address some of the emerging needs identified<sup>722</sup>. Facilitating factors included:

- DG ECHO's formulation of UCPM's general and specific objectives when drafting calls for proposals enabled close alignment between projects and PPP objectives;
- Ad hoc consultations with several DG ECHO units and EU institution stakeholders at priority-setting stage;
- Merging the prevention and preparedness calls for proposals avoided duplication of effort and made calls easier to monitor.

There is limited evidence on the flexibility of other prevention activities, including integration of National Risk Assessments into the overview document of disaster risks in the EU and the Union Disaster Resilience Goals. The **Union Disaster Resilience Goals** aim to address emerging needs and developments<sup>723</sup> by promoting an approach that considers interdependencies between multiple risks, the impacts of climate change, and coherence among relevant policy sectors<sup>724</sup>. It remains too early to assess the extent to which they have been successful in doing so.

For **preparedness** activities, the establishment of the **rescEU** reserve was highlighted as a prime example of the UCPM's flexibility and ability to maintain its relevance despite changing requirements and pressures<sup>725</sup>. The diversity of RfA during the evaluation period prompted a flexible approach to capability development, including the development of rescEU capacities as varied as medical stockpiles, MEDEVAC, aerial forest firefighting, emergency shelters, and energy supply capacities. While this 'adapt as we fight' approach<sup>726</sup> proved the flexibility of the UCPM, stakeholders raised

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<sup>716</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (15); EU stakeholders (16); experts in civil protection (3); national authorities (22); professional organisations (2).

<sup>717</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (39/45); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (11/17).

<sup>718</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (34/46); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (10/16).

<sup>719</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (38/46); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (9/15).

<sup>720</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO - prevention (17/31), preparedness (18/30), response (19/29).

<sup>721</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO - prevention (11/31), preparedness (12/30), response (9/29).

<sup>722</sup> European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020)*, 2021.

<sup>723</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); EU stakeholders (4); national authorities (3).

<sup>724</sup> European Commission, *Recommendation of 8 February 2023 on Union Disaster Resilience Goals 2023/C56/01*, 2023.

<sup>725</sup> See Annex 7 for case studies on floods, on forest fires, and on COVID-19. Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022*, 2023.

<sup>726</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

concerns about the development of capacities within rescEU and the ECPP, noting that the process seemed to be steered by existing crises rather than informed by a scientific or needs-assessment-based approach (see Section 5.3.1 and Section 5.1.1.2)<sup>727</sup>. During COVID-19, DG ECHO ensured that capacities continued to be certified by introducing the possibility to conduct some certification steps online, and also deploying some capacities before being registered, where necessary. **Evidence shows that the Training and Exercises<sup>728</sup> and EoE Programmes were flexible to adapt to emerging needs and requirements.** For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, some training courses and exercises were conducted remotely<sup>729</sup>. Stakeholders generally agreed that emerging training needs were covered by the UCPM training courses and exercises<sup>730</sup>. The Training and Exercises Programme aimed to incorporate emerging developments in its activities, with stakeholders expressing positive views on the scenario-building exercises<sup>731</sup>. However, suggested improvements included the potential to incorporate more innovative solutions to training and exercise activities (e.g. a minority of stakeholders suggested the use of virtual or augmented reality) and ensuring that exercises better represent real-life situations and align with national needs (e.g. the use of virtual reality in the discussion-based exercise on marine pollution in 2023)<sup>732</sup>. Finally, the EoE Programme was valuable in responding to changing needs due to the different areas of expertise covered by the exchanges<sup>733</sup>.

EWS incorporated a strong focus on emerging needs and developments. They built on recommendations in the 2017 interim evaluation of the UCPM and EWS expert group meetings to: i) incorporate more scientific expertise; ii) build closer synergies between systems; and iii) improve functionalities<sup>734</sup> (see Section 5.1.1.2). However, evidence an ongoing need to better integrate EU and national level EWS<sup>735</sup>.

Stakeholders did not comment on the flexibility of the UCPM in relation to the recently established **Knowledge Network**. Evidence suggests that the Knowledge Network has the potential to incorporate emerging needs and developments within the UCPM by bringing together different stakeholders to ensure cross-sectoral cooperation and ensure links with the scientific community<sup>736</sup>.

**The number of UCPM activations grew substantially during the evaluation period, from 32 in 2017 to 232 in 2022<sup>737</sup>. The nature of emergencies prompting activation also changed and evolved.** Between 2017 and 2018, natural events accounted for the largest share of annual activations (60%). However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the more recent monkeypox outbreak, health emergencies accounted for a substantially larger share of activations between 2020 and 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a surge in UCPM multi-hazard<sup>738</sup> activations, as countries sought

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<sup>727</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (5); experts in civil protection (2). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. European Committee of the Regions, *Preparing for and dealing with crises: strengthening the resilience of the Union, its regions and cities*, 2023.

<sup>728</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>729</sup> Training Consortium, *UCPM Training Programme 18<sup>th</sup> cycle. UCPM Introduction Course (CMI)*, 2021; European Commission, *Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022.

<sup>730</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (20/24).

<sup>731</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (2); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (5). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – Member States (9), Participating States (9).

<sup>732</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); experts in civil protection (2); national authority (1); professional organisations (2). See Annex 7 for case study on the integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>733</sup> THW, *'Exchange of Experts in civil Protection Programme*, 2018. Interviews with: professional organisation (1).

<sup>734</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*; European Commission, *Early Warning System Meeting Minutes*, 2018, 2020, 2022. –

<sup>735</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on floods. Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); national authorities (2); experts in civil protection (1); EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>736</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (5); experts in civil protection (2); international stakeholders (3); national authorities (6).

<sup>737</sup> There were 20 UCPM activations in 2018 and in 2019.

<sup>738</sup> The multi-hazard category was introduced as a new event type in the CECIS system to capture the complexity when two or more hazards interact with one another and create one disaster event.

assistance with citizen repatriation. 2022 was marked by 126 RfA (~50% of activations for this year) in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Accordingly, while the average annual number of natural events leading to a UCPM activation remained constant between 2017-2022, they accounted for only one-quarter of total activations between 2020 and 2022, compared to 60% in previous years. The UCPM needed to respond to i) disasters previously not confronted, in countries that did not traditionally activate the UCPM and had no experience with some disasters (e.g. Sweden), ii) an increased number of disasters occurring yearly; and iii) disasters occurring simultaneously (e.g. responding to the earthquake in Croatia at the same time as wider COVID-19 response efforts). This proved the flexibility of UCPM's response activities.

**The UCPM showed its ability to adapt to new demands and challenges of increasing volume, complexity and scope.** Challenges in recent years included natural disasters, Hi-Lo events, a surge in man-made disasters and a heightened occurrence of complex emergencies. Stakeholders noted that the UCPM maintained a high level of quality of response and significant adaptability<sup>739</sup>, particularly DG ECHO's cooperation with the private sector<sup>740</sup> and activations in response to the unfolding of the war against Ukraine<sup>741</sup> and the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>742</sup>. Although these unprecedented crises implied major challenges for the UCPM, they also prompted the Mechanism to evolve (see Section 5.1.3).

**The flexibility and adaptability of modules** to changing circumstances was recognised as a best practice during UCPM deployments. For example, water purification modules supported the rehabilitation of affected structures<sup>743</sup>. The flexibility, adaptability, and scalability of TAST during UCPM deployments was similarly regarded as a good practice<sup>744</sup>.

**Stakeholders noted that financing procedures were not sufficiently flexible and offered limited opportunities for adaptation to different crises situations**<sup>745</sup>. For example, in the response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, transport co-financing ensured that only 75% of the cost of transport from the logistics hubs in Romania, Slovakia, and Poland to Ukraine was co-financed by ECHO, placing a high burden on the Member States hosting those hubs<sup>746</sup>. However, in the second half of 2023, the Commission agreed to cover 100% of pooled assistance going from the logistical hubs to Ukraine, leading to increased offers of assistance from UCPM Member and Participating States and increased use of logistical hubs<sup>747</sup>.

During the evaluation period, the increased frequency, scope and complexity of **unexpected emergencies highlighted the need to improve cross-sectoral coordination, as well as strategic**

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<sup>739</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (9); national authorities (3); international organisations (3). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's War on Ukraine, 2022*; Kantar, *'Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023. See Annex 7 for case studies on forest fires and on Ukrainian response.*

<sup>740</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); EU stakeholders (4); national authority (1); European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme annual meeting 24/25 April 2023*; European Commission, *'UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's war on Ukraine, 2022.*

<sup>741</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1); DG ECHO (6); EU stakeholders (6).

<sup>742</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (10); DG ECHO (4); EU stakeholders (4). European Commission, *'Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe, 2023.*

<sup>743</sup> European Commission, *'Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations', 2022*; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt meeting on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique, 2019*; European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*; European Commission, *'Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations, 2022.*

<sup>744</sup> European Commission, *'Lessons and good practices identified from TAST deployments, 2019.*

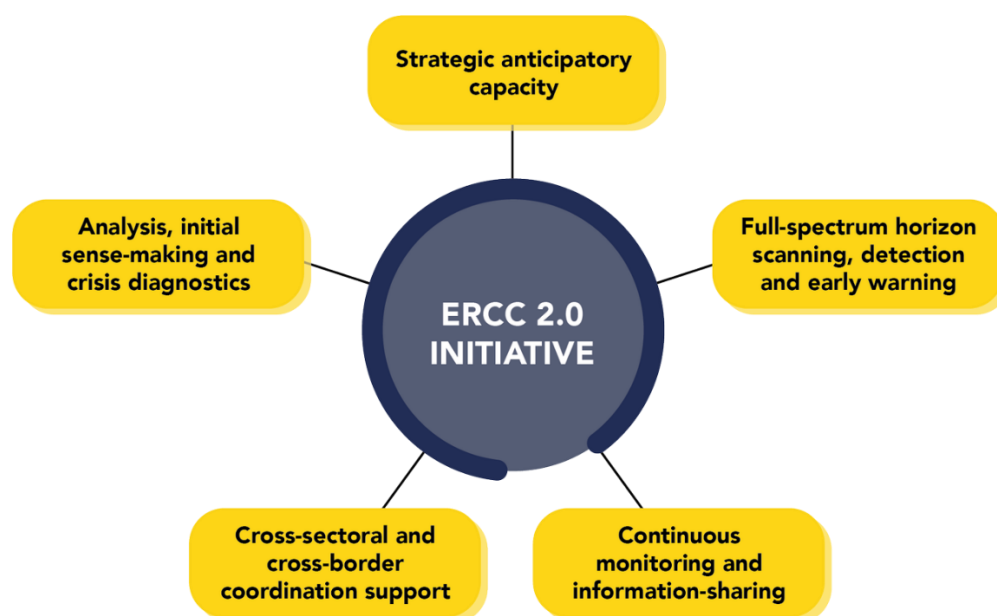
<sup>745</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (6); EU stakeholders (1). Kantar, *'Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023. Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023.*

<sup>746</sup> Kantar, *'Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023.*

<sup>747</sup> Feedback from ISG.

**anticipatory capacity, including through foresight and contingency planning**<sup>748</sup>. To address these needs, in 2021, DG ECHO launched the **ERCC 2.0 initiative**. This comprises several work strands aimed at strengthening the understanding of risks to which Europe will be exposed in the medium and long-term. It seeks to strengthen the ERCC's role as an operational hub and enhance its anticipatory capacity (see Figure 67).

Figure 67. ERCC 2.0 initiative



Source: ICF elaboration<sup>749</sup>.

More specifically, the proposed main activities of the ERCC 2.0 initiative include:

- Establishing a multi-hazard alert dashboard – the **Global Situation System**;
- Developing a set of **foreseeable worst-case scenarios** that Europe may face in the decades to come;
- Developing a **Scientific and Technical Advisory Facility (STAF)** to provide the ERCC with advisory services on emergency services, operational preparedness services, and strategic anticipation. These services are based on existing capacities within the European Commission (such as DG JRC, DG RTD), and scientific partnership (European Natural Hazard Scientific Partnership, or ‘Aristotle’).

**The ERCC 2.0 initiative depends on a coordinated decision to develop the ERCC as a true cross-sectoral hub**, providing it with the necessary tools to anticipate events and develop foresight

<sup>748</sup> European Commission, ‘Strategic Crisis Management in the EU, 2022; European Commission, ‘UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting: Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe, 2022; European Commission, ‘UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting: Preliminary lessons from Russia’s war on Ukraine, 2022; European Commission, ‘Outcome of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations, 2020; European Commission, ‘Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM Activations, 2022; European Commission, ‘Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2020 UCPM activations, 2021. European Commission, *Minutes from the Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting on 24/25 April 2023*; European Commission, ‘Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe, 2023; Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission’s civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022, 2023*. Interviews with: DG ECHO (16); EU stakeholders (12); national authorities (6); international stakeholder (1). Surveys of: DG ECHO (11). ”

<sup>749</sup> European Commission, ‘Minutes of the Early Warning Systems Expert Group Meeting, 2022; European Commission, ‘Enhancing foresight capacity of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre, 2023.

capabilities for increased situational awareness and to identify emerging capacity gaps (such as rescEU CBRN, shelter, energy)<sup>750</sup>.

**The evidence suggests that DG ECHO's organisational set up is somewhat appropriate to support Member and Participating States and address new needs.** However, it did not ensure sufficient coordination among units working on different UCPM pillars.

DG ECHO Desk Officers indicated that the internal reorganisation somewhat hindered coordination across UCPM activities<sup>751</sup>. More specifically, the division between Directorate A (emergency management and rescEU) and Directorate B (disaster preparedness and prevention) was not conducive to coherence between response activities and those related to prevention and preparedness (see Section 5.4.1). Other DG ECHO stakeholders indicated that the organisational set-up was not sufficiently flexible to adapt to emerging needs and developments beyond the evaluation period. Concerns were raised about governance and the adequacy of the human and financial resources allocated<sup>752</sup>.

Conversely, national authorities and experts in civil protection believed that the DG ECHO organisational set-up was sufficiently flexible to adapt to emerging needs and developments after 2022<sup>753</sup>. They also felt positively about their communication with DG ECHO<sup>754</sup>.

Overall, DG ECHO's organisational set-up appears somewhat appropriate to support national needs, albeit with room for improvement in its structure to enhance internal coherence among UCPM activities across the three pillars (see Section 5.4.1).

### 5.3.2.2 Flexibility and adaptability of the UCPM beyond the evaluation period

Beyond the period evaluated, the UCPM will need to continue to address new and emerging needs and developments. These will be shaped by the consequences of **climate change**, a threat multiplier expected to affect the **frequency and severity** of natural disasters, with political, sociological and economic repercussions<sup>755</sup>. Man-made disasters will exacerbate the disaster risk landscape, adding layers of complexity.

Future emergencies are expected to become increasingly **complex** and multi-faceted and to have cross-sectoral or cascading effects. **UCPM will need to face more complex emergencies and offer access to:**

- **Improved cross-sectoral cooperation and crisis management**<sup>756</sup>. Complex emergencies require a holistic approach, with the involvement of multiple actors and sectors, all of which need to coordinate to prevent, prepare and respond to disasters at EU and national level. Both natural and man-made disasters will require the UCPM to effectively coordinate its activities with a variety of sectors and related actors;

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<sup>750</sup> European Commission, 'UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme meeting: preliminary lessons from Russia's war on Ukraine, 2022.

<sup>751</sup> Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (10). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (3). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>752</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (12/29), 7/29 respondents agreed that DG ECHO organisational set-up was sufficiently flexible to adapt to emerging needs and developments, and 10/29 neither agreed nor disagreed.

<sup>753</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (24/45); experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities (6/14).

<sup>754</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (20).

<sup>755</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (9); EU stakeholders (8); national authorities (11). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (11/21); national authorities (12/25).

<sup>756</sup> European Commission, *Strategic Crisis Management in the EU*, 2022; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting: Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2022; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting: Preliminary lessons from Russia's war on Ukraine*, 2022; European Commission, *Outcome of the Lessons Learnt meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM Activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2020 UCPM activations*, 2021; European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2023; European Commission, *Minutes from the Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting on 24/25 April 2023*. Interviews with: DG ECHO (16); EU stakeholders (12); DG ECHO (16); national authorities (6); international stakeholder (1). Surveys of: DG ECHO (11/21). See Annex 7 for case study on floods.



- **Enhanced resilience and strategic foresight capabilities**<sup>757</sup>. Risk-based crisis management should be complemented with a resilience-oriented crisis management approach that fully acknowledges the challenges associated with large-scale, transboundary and complex systemic interdependencies. The assessment of complex emergencies can also benefit from foresight and horizon scanning, which can help to mitigate the risk of missing early warnings;
- **An approach grounded in scientific knowledge** and facilitating its operationalisation, including through the use of new technologies. The UCPM should strive to increase access and use of scientific knowledge and results by Member and Participating States. The importance of access to **technical and scientific experts** during UCPM deployments was noted as an emerging need<sup>758</sup>;
- **Efficient and secure information management systems**. Given the increased complexity and frequency of disasters, there remains a need to improve information management systems, including handling classified information and managing communications and public messaging<sup>759</sup>;
- Other emerging needs include the importance of scaling-up **investments in prevention** and **raise awareness on disaster risks** among the general public<sup>760</sup>. Public risk awareness and preparedness raising is recognised as an important progress area for civil protection – the Union Disaster Resilience Goals call on Member States to strengthen civil protection authorities' capacities to develop preventive action (Goal 1). However, cross-sector cooperation and information exchange for reporting (e.g. compiling DRM Summary Reports) can be cumbersome for civil protection authorities (see Section 5.3.1). While cross-sector cooperation is acknowledged as central to improved risk assessment and civil protection action, the feasibility of involvement of other sectors is highly contingent on the institutional set-up of civil protection in a given country. Some stakeholders considered that non-civil protection authorities and their funding frameworks would be better placed to lead certain sectoral risk assessments or prevention investment initiatives<sup>761</sup>.

Figure 68 presents a non-exhaustive overview of the main disaster types that triggered UCPM activations during the evaluation period, along with external factors/drivers (climate change, conflicts, and associated migratory flows) that have had, and will continue to have, an impact on the UCPM.

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<sup>757</sup> European Commission, *Scientific Advice Mechanism: Scientific Advice to European Policy in a Complex World*, 2019; European Commission, *Strategic crisis management in the EU*, 2022; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Study on the Development of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre ERCC*, 2023; European Commission, *7<sup>th</sup> European Civil Protection Forum. Final Report*, 2022. Interviews with: DG ECHO (6); EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (2).

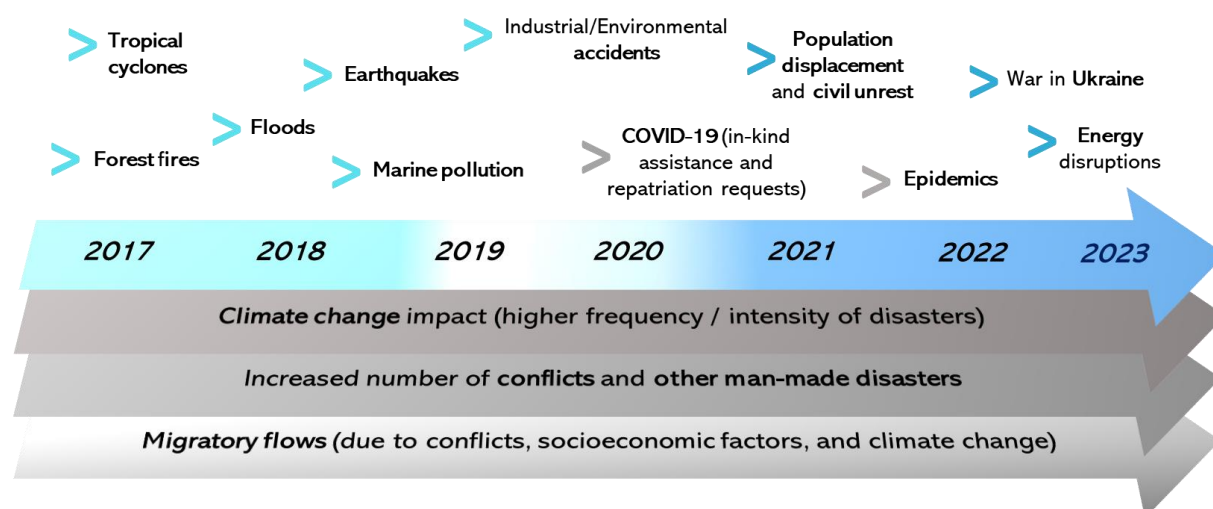
<sup>758</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (3); International stakeholders (3); experts in civil protection (1); national authorities (4). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (10/21). European Commission, *7<sup>th</sup> European Civil Protection Forum. Final Report*, 2022; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting: Lessons identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2021; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Early Warning System Expert Group. Meeting Minutes*, 2019; European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020)*, 2021; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2020 UCPM activations*, 2021. European Commission, *Minutes of the Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting on 24/25 April 2023*. See Annex 7 for case Study on COVID-19.

<sup>759</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); experts in civil protection (1); national authorities (2). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023. European Commission, *Study on the Development of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre ERCC*, 2023; European Commission, *Enhancing foresight capacity of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre*, 2023.

<sup>760</sup> See Annex 7 for case studies on forest fires and on COVID-19. Interviews with: DG ECHO (5); national authorities (6); EU stakeholders (3). European Commission, *7<sup>th</sup> European Civil Protection Forum. Final Report*, 2022; World Bank, *Investment in Disaster Risk Management in Europe Makes Economic Sense*, 2021; World Bank, *Financial Risk and Opportunities to Build Resilience in Europe*, 2021.

<sup>761</sup> Focus group with: national authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. Interviews with: national authorities (6); EU stakeholders (2).

Figure 68. Evolving risk landscape: natural disasters, man-made disasters, external factors



Source: ICF elaboration.

According to stakeholders, the UCPM objectives<sup>762</sup>, as well as its prevention<sup>763</sup>, preparedness<sup>764</sup> and response activities<sup>765</sup> are sufficiently flexible to adapt to the emerging needs and developments forecast beyond the evaluation period.

However, concerns were raised about the sustainability of the UCPM's – particularly the ERCC's – ability to cope with future emergencies. The ERCC is already facing an increase in workload due to the widening of its mandate and the increasing frequency, scope and complexity of crises within and outside the EU (see Section 5.1.3). While the ERCC is well equipped and ready to respond to more circumscribed events and disasters (floods, earthquakes, extreme weather events), there are concerns that it may not have all the capacities required to address multiple and concurrent complex crises affecting different regions of Europe and the globe<sup>766</sup>. For example, according to the EESC, the UCPM 'is no longer sufficiently sized to respond to natural disasters linked to climate change in terms of prevention, warning, planning, forecasting, and operational capacity'<sup>767</sup>. **The UCPM's ability to continue to respond to large-scale, complex and protracted crises is limited by its human resources capabilities, its co-financing set-up, IT systems, staff turnover, and access to specific transport resources<sup>768</sup>.**

While the flexibility and adaptability of the UCPM are recognised, some capacities and mechanisms would benefit from strengthening, with a view to tackling current and future challenges.

Stakeholders agreed that **cross-sectoral cooperation** is needed to prevent, prepare and respond to disasters, which requires coordination with sectors beyond the civil protection field. At EU level, where civil protection is a support competence, DG ECHO needs to regularly and meaningfully

<sup>762</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (15/29); national authorities (34/45).

<sup>763</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (14/30); national authorities (30/45).

<sup>764</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (14/30); national authorities (34/45).

<sup>765</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (38/45); DG ECHO Desk Officers (11/29), while 15/29 did not have a strong opinion.

<sup>766</sup> European Commission, *Study on the Development of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre ERCC*, 2023; Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022*, 2023.

<sup>767</sup> EESC, *Consolidating the EU's civil protection mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022.

<sup>768</sup> Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022*, 2023; European Commission, *Study on the Development of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre ERCC*, 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (3).

involve Member States to ensure that national needs are taken into account. This proves particularly challenging because civil protection authorities are not the only actors with which DG ECHO needs to cooperate. Cooperation with other actors (EU stakeholders and national authorities) inevitably leads to increased workload. Some DG ECHO stakeholders suggested strengthening civil protection authorities at national level and ensuring that Member States are more vocal about their needs<sup>769</sup>. At national level, cross-sectoral cooperation is challenging given the limited resources of civil protection authorities (see Section 5.3.1).

**Stakeholders raised concerns about the perceived 'excessive flexibility' of the UCPM, especially given its current mandate and future sustainability<sup>770</sup>.**

It was questioned whether the UCPM should continue to operate in **man-made disasters, particularly during conflicts**<sup>771</sup>. In fact, during complex emergencies, recourse to civil protection assets should be the exception rather than the rule, as it risks compromising the perception of the neutrality and impartiality of the relief effort<sup>772</sup>. During the UCPM activation in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, humanitarian actors found it challenging to cooperate with UCPM actors, due to the risk of being associated with EU Member States or Ukraine, thereby compromising their perceived neutrality and impartiality<sup>773</sup>.

Stakeholders highlighted a need to better define the future role of the UCPM in **third countries**, particularly given the extensive travel distance and substantial allocation of resources to these activations<sup>774</sup>.

While DG ECHO and EU stakeholders advocated for an expansion of the UCPM to respond to so-called **hybrid threats**<sup>775</sup> and cooperate with the **private sector**<sup>776</sup>, national authorities expressed concerns about the dilution **of the UCPM's identity** as a forum primarily focused on **civil protection**.<sup>777</sup> For instance, some national authorities were less favourable to increased involvement of the private sector, considering civil protection a national competence that the private sector should only complement with in-kind assistance (e.g. logistics, transport) to address temporary shortages or capacity gaps<sup>778</sup>.

Overall, while changes are necessary to ensure that the UCPM maintains its relevance and effectiveness in today's and tomorrow's crises, this process must ensure the buy-in of Member and Participating States<sup>779</sup>.

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<sup>769</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (7).

<sup>770</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (7); EU stakeholders (3); international stakeholders (3); experts in civil protection (2); national authorities (12).

<sup>771</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (12). EESC, *Consolidating the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022.

<sup>772</sup> European Commission, *Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid*, 2008.

<sup>773</sup> Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022*, 2023. See Annex 7 for case study on Ukrainian response.

<sup>774</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (2). European Commission, *Minutes from the Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>775</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (7); EU stakeholders (5).

<sup>776</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (6). European Commission, *Minutes from the Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting on 2022 UCPM activations on 24/25 April 2023*; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Preliminary Lessons from Russia's war on Ukraine*, 2022.

<sup>777</sup> Focus group with: national authorities and experts civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. Interviews with: national authorities (12). Surveys of: national authorities (8).

<sup>778</sup> Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>779</sup> Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022*, 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); national authorities (5).

5.3.3 EQ9: To what extent was the UCPM able to incorporate recommendations and lessons learnt?

**Key findings**

- The UCPM made efforts to address recommendations derived from external evaluations of the Mechanism, especially for the PPP and UCPM training and exercises;
- The introduction of the KAPP call for proposals and the new Training and Exercises Programme will address many recommendations of external evaluations;
- DG ECHO could improve communications to key stakeholders on how changes to the UCPM are based on evaluations;
- The UCPM could advance the implementation of strategic recommendations from external evaluations;
- The UCPM was able to capitalise and implement some of the lessons from the Lessons Learnt Programme and, to a lesser extent, EU presidency workshops;
- Improvements were introduced to increase the likelihood that lessons identified through the Lessons Learnt Programme would be implemented, such as the introduction of focal points and clearer attribution of responsibility;
- Further adjustments to improve the uptake of lessons identified in the Lessons Learnt Programme included:
  - Enhanced systematic implementation of lessons to ensure that they are consistently and effectively applied;
  - Increased identification of lessons on prevention and preparedness to strengthen proactive measures and risk mitigation;
  - Streamlined lessons to focus on the most critical and impactful, while also ensuring a clearer attribution of responsibility to the relevant stakeholders.

**Across the period evaluated, DG ECHO made significant efforts to address recommendations from external evaluations and lessons from internal UCPM initiatives.**

**Judgement criterion:**

- JC9.1: Recommendations and issues identified in external evaluations and studies of the UCPM (e.g. 2017 interim evaluation, study on the UCPM Training Programme) were addressed.

**The UCPM capitalised on and implemented some of the recommendations made as part of the following external evaluations:**

- 2017 interim evaluation of the UCPM<sup>780</sup>;
- ECA reports (2016<sup>781</sup> and 2020<sup>782</sup>);
- Evaluation on the definitions, gaps and costs of UCPM response capacities (2019);
- Study on the UCPM Training Programme (2019<sup>783</sup>);

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<sup>780</sup> European Commission, *Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016, 2017*.

<sup>781</sup> ECA, *Union Civil protection Mechanism: the coordination of responses to disasters outside the EU has been broadly effective*, Special report, 2016.

<sup>782</sup> ECA, *Opinion No. 9/2020 accompanying the Commission's proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No. 1313/2013/EU on a UCPM (COM(2020) 220 final)*, 2020.

<sup>783</sup> European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019.

- Evaluation of PPP projects (single country grants Track 1<sup>784</sup> and multi-country grants Track 2 - 2021<sup>785</sup>).

**Key stakeholders acknowledged the UCPM's efforts to address recommendations derived from external evaluations of the Mechanism. However, the communications of those justifications for changes to the UCPM could be improved.** The majority of stakeholders agreed that the UCPM made significant efforts to address recommendations from external evaluations<sup>786</sup>. Only a small minority of DG ECHO stakeholders disagreed that key recommendations from external evaluations were taken on board (although 42% had no opinion, suggesting a potential lack of awareness<sup>787</sup>). National and expert stakeholders suggested that DG ECHO could enhance its communication of the rationale behind changes to the UCPM<sup>788</sup>, including highlighting relevant justifications for changes based on findings from evaluations and impact assessments<sup>789</sup>.

**The UCPM made efforts to address recommendations that apply to all aspects of the UCPM, including its pillars, as well as recommendations related to certain UCPM activities. The UCPM made the most progress in implementing recommendations on cross-pillar activities that had standalone, dedicated evaluations (PPP, Training and Exercises Programme). The UCPM also made progress in addressing recommendations on the field of response (delivery of assistance, CECIS), preparedness (ECPP) and prevention (DRM Summary Reports). Progress towards implementing general strategic recommendations could be improved.**

The UCPM made significant progress towards implementing recommendations on its cross-pillar activities, especially those that had dedicated, standalone evaluations:

- **PPP:** DG ECHO responded proactively to the evaluations of projects funded under the PPP at both single and multi-country level. It developed an internal document that mapped the Programme's strengths and weaknesses, as well as planned actions to address recommendations<sup>790</sup>. The UCPM responded to external recommendations on the PPP by implementing three key measures: KAPP calls, the Knowledge Network online platform spaces, and guidance for applicants on their grant applications (see Table 11). The KAPP calls combine existing mechanisms funded by the UCPM to enhance consistency in the projects funded and the evaluation process for proposals. The Knowledge Network includes comprehensive information and outputs from all funded projects, aiming to make the impacts of these projects more sustainable<sup>791</sup>. Applicants for the 2023 KAPP call were given guidance on the essential information to provide to national authorities responsible for granting approval for their applications. This will allow national authorities to provide more informed decisions when approving grants, ensuring closer coherence and complementarity with ongoing national initiatives;

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<sup>784</sup> European Commission, *Note to DG ECHO Management: Prevention and Preparedness Programme1: findings of recent evaluations and future outlook for the programme*, 2022.

<sup>785</sup> European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020)*, 2021.

<sup>786</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); experts in civil protection (3); national authorities (6); professional organisations (2). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (17/33s).

<sup>787</sup> Survey of: DG ECHO Desk Officers – disagree (2/33), neither agree nor disagree (14/33).

<sup>788</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1); national authorities (3). Joint Letter from Member States to the Commission on UCPM budget transparency.

<sup>789</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3).

<sup>790</sup> European Commission, *Note to DG ECHO Management: Prevention and Preparedness Programme: findings of recent evaluations and future outlook for the programme*, 2022.

<sup>791</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on the integration of UCPM preparedness activities. European Commission, *Commission Notice Reporting Guidelines on Disaster Risk Management*, Art. 6(1)d of Decision No 1313/2013/EU2019/C 428/07, 2019.

- **Training and Exercises Programme:** The design of the new Training and Exercises Programme (which will be implemented from September 2023 onward) incorporates a substantial number of elements derived from external evaluations. Steps have been taken to increase structural ties between UCPM training and exercises by including them under the same activity (see Table 11). The introduction of a deployable training path is a significant advance, requiring participants to take part in EU MODEX and undergo evaluation/assessment of their performance to certify them as deployable experts in the ECPP<sup>792</sup>. This ensures a more tailored approach to UCPM training, targeting a higher number of effectively trained experts to be deployed (see Section 5.1).

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<sup>792</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on the integration of UCPM preparedness activities. European Commission, *UCPM Training and Exercises – Participant Performance Assessment and Evaluation in the UCPM Training Courses*, 2021.



Table 11. Overview of key recommendations on PPP and Training and Exercises Programme

UCPM activity	Recommendations	Progress made/planned
PPP	Increase awareness, accessibility and engagement with ongoing and past EU-funded projects on civil protection prevention and preparedness and their results	<p>The Knowledge Network online platform project spaces includes all project outputs, as well as links to other relevant EU funding sources. Its impact will depend on the extent of its dissemination to key stakeholders</p> <p>The merging of disaster resilience calls into KAPP calls will help to address the duplication of funding across UCPM funding</p> <p>The 2023 KAPP call introduced the obligation for the consortium to deliver a mapping of relevant initiatives within the UCPM, including an evaluation of potential synergies between ongoing initiatives or incorporation of existing results within the first six months</p>
	Establish an internal PMER policy to assess the performance and quality of the PPP	DG ECHO will develop results-oriented monitoring of projects and reporting
	Continue to simplify the PPP reporting and monitoring mechanism	DG ECHO will work towards administrative simplification and increased efficiency for itself and Member States
	Provide soft guidance on the minimum information to be provided to national authorities for endorsement	In the context of the 2023 KAPP call for proposals, applicants were provided with recommendations for minimum project descriptions to be submitted to national civil protection authorities when seeking endorsement for an application for a project grant through the Knowledge Network
	Introduce clearer requirements for DG ECHO Desk Officers, including enhanced communication and engagement with PPP beneficiaries	DG ECHO will strive for high quality projects, by providing increasingly robust and technical guidance to beneficiaries during implementation
Training and	Improve Programme design, implementation and review, structure, curriculum and objectives, including:	The new Training and Exercises Programme will include online introductory sessions on the UCPM, available to a wider audience (such as EU delegations, DG ECHO field

UCPM activity	Recommendations	Progress made/planned
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identification of needs</li> <li>- introductory seminar on UCPM for awareness-raising</li> <li>- pyramid structure for more advanced courses on the basis of deployment needs</li> <li>- more online and refresher courses</li> <li>- stricter criteria for the selection of trainers</li> <li>- courses in more languages</li> </ul>	office staff, EU Neighbourhood national authorities). The new Programme will also have a deployable training path, refresher courses and stricter criteria for trainers
	Enhance the governance of the training programme by 1) moving towards online delivery, and 2) establishing an internal monitoring and evaluation system to enhance performance and quality	The UCPM online platform and registration tools are to the functioning of the Training and Exercises Programme and were developed across the evaluation period
	Improve links between UCPM pillars (mainly prevention and preparedness) and the new Training and Exercises Programme	The new Training and Exercises Programme introduces structural links between training and exercises
	Enhance the selection of participants for training and nomination for deployment	The new Training and Exercises Programme includes stricter criteria for participants for the deployable training path, offering more online courses on the UCPM for a wider audience
	Streamline existing database of trained experts	Databases of trained experts (and deployments) appear to have been developed during the evaluation period. However, Directorate A and Directorate B have separate databases, which could be streamlined to avoid inconsistencies and duplication of effort
	Evaluate performance of the expert	In the deployable training path, the assessment of performance could be linked to the certification of experts registered in the ECPP

*Source: ICF elaboration, based on data collected for the interim evaluation*<sup>793</sup>.

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<sup>793</sup> European Commission, *Note to DG ECHO Management: Prevention and Preparedness Programme: findings of recent evaluations and future outlook for the programme*, 2022; European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014-2020)*, 2021<sup>1</sup>; European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019; European Commission, *UCPM Training and Exercises – Participant Performance Assessment and Evaluation in the UCPM Training Courses*, 2021. See Annex 7 for case study on the integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

The limited data available show that the UCPM made efforts to address recommendations on its activities in preparedness, response and prevention:

- **Response activities**, such as **CECIS** and the delivery of assistance. Recommendations to improve the CECIS platform are being addressed through the design of CECIS 2.0<sup>794</sup>. The extent to which this platform will address these recommendations will be verified once the new platform is finalised, albeit promising revisions and adjustments are envisioned (e.g. accessible to Participating States). On the **delivery of assistance**, the UCPM has made efforts to address recommendations to establish more targeted pools of experts, including technical experts, through the potential development of a ‘pool of deployable experts’, encompassing experts who completed the deployable training path and technical expert profiles responding to particular criteria for types of disasters<sup>795</sup>. The UCPM is addressing recommendations to assess the speed of response, with significant room for improvement on monitoring (see Section 5.2)<sup>796</sup>. It made some progress on strengthening cooperation with EU delegations, such as offering more online training on the UCPM<sup>797</sup>, although the EESC noted the room for further improvement here<sup>798</sup>;
- **Preparedness activities**, primarily the **ECPP**. DG ECHO commissioned an external evaluation of ECPP capacity in 2019 and subsequently revised most certification procedures, tools and capacity goals<sup>799</sup>;
- **Prevention activities**, primarily **DRM Summary Reports**. The UCPM adapted the reporting guidelines to incorporate recommendations to include climate change adaptation and health risks in the reporting process<sup>800</sup>.

**Limited available evidence suggests that the UCPM could do more to address strategic recommendations, particularly scope of intervention, monitoring and data collection activities.** The 2017 interim evaluation highlighted the need to clarify the exact scope of civil protection interventions outside the EU, as well as the specific scope for the UCPM’s intervention for man-made disasters<sup>801</sup>. However, these issues are still outstanding, with persistent concerns about the scope of UCPM activities and its sustainability in the evolving disaster risk landscape<sup>802</sup> (see Section 5.3.2).

The 2017 interim evaluation recommended introducing KPIs and monitoring. While KPIs were subsequently introduced in the field of response, this recommendation remains to be addressed

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<sup>794</sup> ECA, *Union Civil protection Mechanism: the coordination of responses to disasters outside the EU has been broadly effective*, Special report, 2016; European Commission, *Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016*, 2017. Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>795</sup> Interview with: DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Note for the Attention of Head of Cabinet ALEŠKA SIMKIĆ. UCPM strategy for the Southern Neighbourhood*, 2021; European Commission, *Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016*, 2017. See Annex 7 for case study on the integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>796</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016*, 2017; European Commission, *Civil Protection – Performance*, 2023, [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/civil-protection-performance\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/civil-protection-performance_en)

<sup>797</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016*, 2017.

<sup>798</sup> EESC, *Consolidating the EU-Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022.

<sup>799</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1). Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services, *Evaluation Study of Definitions, gaps and costs of Response Capacities for the Union Civil Protection Mechanism*, 2019.

<sup>800</sup> European Commission, *Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016*, 2017.

<sup>801</sup> Ibid.

<sup>802</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (3). Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

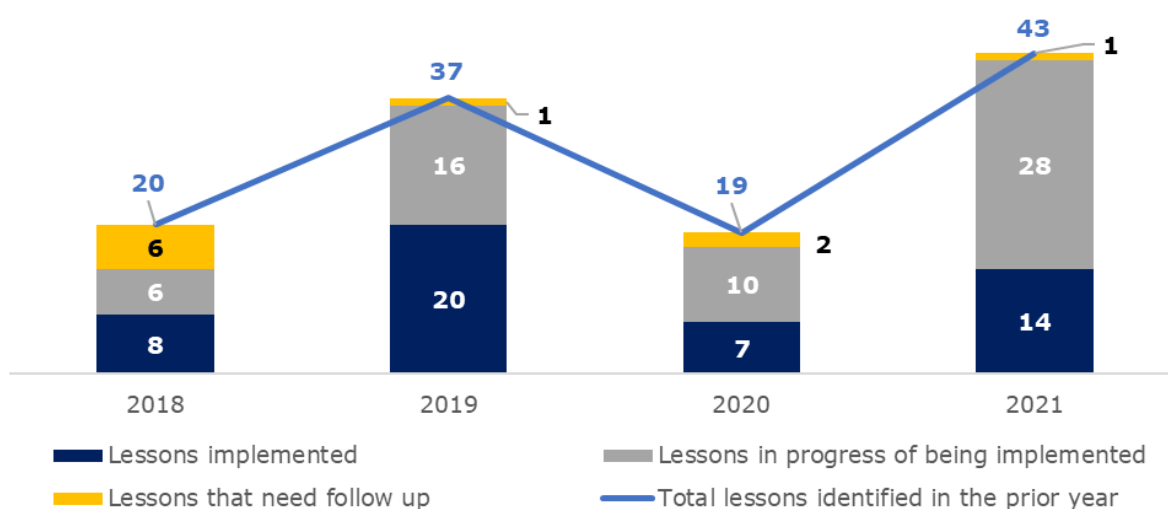
across all pillars consistently, alongside the establishment of monitoring efforts focusing on the UCPM as a whole (see Section 5.2)<sup>803</sup>.

#### Judgement criterion:

- JC9.2: Recommendations and lessons learnt identified within UCPM initiatives (e.g. Lessons Learnt Programme, Workshops with the EU Presidency) were taken on board

**The UCPM capitalised on and implemented some of the lessons identified from the Lessons Learnt Programme and, to a lesser extent, from Workshops with the EU Presidency.** Key stakeholders agreed that the UCPM identified and took on board lessons and recommendations from the Lessons Learnt Programme<sup>804</sup> and to a lesser extent from the Workshops with the EU Presidency<sup>805</sup>. Across the evaluation period, DG ECHO made increasing efforts to identify and address lessons identified through the Lessons Learnt Programme (see Figure 69). The total lessons identified through the Lessons Learnt Programme throughout the period evaluated increased from 20 in 2018 to 43 in 2021<sup>806</sup>. The increase in the number of lessons identified is accompanied by a corresponding increase in the processing and implementation of those lessons. There was a decrease in the number of lessons requiring follow-up, indicating DG ECHO's ongoing efforts to actively consider and address the lessons identified.

Figure 69. Overview of lessons identified and implemented from the Lessons Learnt Programme, 2018-2021



Source: ICF elaboration, based on Lessons Learnt Outcome reports 2018-2021.

<sup>803</sup> European Commission, *Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, 2014-2016, 2017*; European Commission, *Civil Protection – Performance*, 2023, [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/civil-protection-performance\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/civil-protection-performance_en); ECA, *Opinion No. 9/2020 accompanying the Commission's proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No. 1313/2013/EU on a UCPM (COM(2020) 220 final)*, 2020.

<sup>804</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (7); experts in civil protection (3); professional organisations (2); EU stakeholders (1); national stakeholders (12). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (24/33); experts in civil protection (1/10).

<sup>805</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (20/33).

<sup>806</sup> European Commission, *Lessons Learnt Programme Outcome Reports, 2017-2022*.

**The UCPM improved the Lessons Learnt Programme to increase the likelihood of effective integration and implementation of lessons identified.** DG ECHO introduced several improvements to ensure that lessons identified were taken on board more often and consistently at EU and national level:

- **Introduction of designated focal points within units working directly with the Programme.** The focal points' responsibility is to ensure that lessons are integrated into their respective unit's activities<sup>807</sup>;
- **Increasing attribution of lessons to stakeholders.** Since 2018, Programme outcome reports clearly specify the lessons that are relevant at EU or national level<sup>808</sup>, facilitating a culture of accountability;
- **Thematic Lessons Learnt Meetings.** Lessons Learnt Meetings are conducted following specific deployments or large-scale response efforts (e.g. COVID-19, forest fire seasons, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine) and have been instrumental in generating targeted lessons for specific disaster types. These meetings have facilitated the identification of specific insights and recommendations that can be effectively incorporated and applied for future similar events<sup>809</sup>;
- **Lessons Learnt Meetings taking place in Member States rather than Brussels.** In the context of forest fires, the Meeting in January 2023 in a Member State rather than in Brussels was particularly valued by stakeholder and facilitated national engagement with lessons (see Figure 70).

Figure 70. Lesson: organising Lessons Learnt Programme meetings outside Brussels



Source: ICF elaboration, based on case study on forest fires (see Annex 7).

**There is room for a more systematic approach to implementing lessons identified, increasing identification of lessons on preparedness and response, and attributing lessons to key audiences.** The following opportunities for improvement were identified:

- **More systematic implementation of lessons.** The majority of stakeholders agreed that the rate of implementation of lessons identified at EU and national level could be improved<sup>810</sup>. Some stakeholders highlighted that the current low rate may be due to a lack of follow-up and dissemination of lessons identified to relevant stakeholders<sup>811</sup>. Despite the improvements to the attribution of lessons at EU and national level, stakeholders argued that further clarification of the assignment of responsibilities (i.e. identification of

<sup>807</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020.

<sup>808</sup> European Commission, *Lessons Learnt Programme Outcome Reports, 2017-2022*.

<sup>809</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>810</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (5); national authorities (5); experts in civil protection (1); international stakeholders (1).

<sup>811</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (2); experts in civil protection (1).



a task owner) for each lesson, both within and outside DG ECHO, could improve implementation<sup>812</sup>. A minority of stakeholders highlighted that too many lessons are identified and suggested that fewer lessons be attributed a priority level to ensure that critical lessons are more meaningfully incorporated<sup>813</sup>;

- **More lessons could focus on prevention and preparedness, as the majority are in the field of response.** Stakeholders emphasised that the majority of lessons pertain to response activities<sup>814</sup>, with a need for a greater focus on identifying lessons in prevention and preparedness<sup>815</sup>. This would be valuable in improving overall disaster management and enhancing proactive measures to mitigate risks before they escalate into crises.

**The main lessons identified through UCPM internal initiatives and taken on board across the evaluation period were:**

- **Training and Exercises Programme.** Stakeholders agreed that lessons identified for the Training and Exercises Programme were successfully taken on board<sup>816</sup>. A professional organisation supporting the implementation of UCPM activities underlined that training and exercises have a lot of activities embedded to identify and reflect on potential improvements<sup>817</sup>. Similarly, a professional organisation supporting the implementation of exercises is creating a database to collect and monitor lessons<sup>818</sup>;
- **Logistical hubs.** Lessons Learnt Meetings in 2017 and 2019 identified the need for storage facilities or regional hubs to enhance response capabilities<sup>819</sup>. These lessons were put into action and resulted in the establishment of logistical hubs during the response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine<sup>820</sup>;
- **Cooperation with EU delegations.** Enhancing response through further engagement and cooperation with EU delegations was identified as a lesson during the evaluation period. Although certain improvements have been made, such as the introduction of online UCPM training for EU delegations, the need persists<sup>821</sup>.

**Some stakeholders argued that the Knowledge Network may improve the uptake of lessons identified in the Lessons Learnt Programme.** Stakeholders suggested that the incorporation of the Lessons Learnt Programme within the Knowledge Network could have an impact<sup>822</sup> by disseminating the lessons more widely and creating a structural link to other UCPM activities.

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<sup>812</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1). European Commission, *Lessons Learnt Programme Outcome Reports*, 2017-2022.

<sup>813</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1); DG ECHO (1).

<sup>814</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (2).

<sup>815</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (2).

<sup>816</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (2).

<sup>817</sup> Interviews with: professional organisations (1). EU MODEX, *Final Progress Report EU MODEX 2019-2020 lot 3*, 2020.

<sup>818</sup> Interviews with: professional organisations (1).

<sup>819</sup> European Commission, *Lessons Learnt Programme Outcome Reports*, 2017, 2019.

<sup>820</sup> European Commission, *Lessons Learnt Programme Outcome Report on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine*,.

<sup>821</sup> European Commission, *Lessons Learnt Programme Outcome Reports*, 2017, 2019; EESC, *Consolidating the EU-Civil Protection: Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022

<sup>822</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (2); DG ECHO (1); national authorities (1); EU stakeholders (1).

#### 5.4 Coherence

This subsection examines the extent to which the activities of the UCPM were coherent with one another and whether they worked well with other actions outside the Mechanism. It investigates potential complementarities, overlaps or unexploited synergies.

More specifically, it discusses the internal coherence of the UCPM activities and whether they worked together and reinforced one another. It then assesses external coherence, i.e. the extent to which the UCPM coordinated its activities with other national interventions in the civil protection field and other policy fields, as well as whether and how UCPM activities were coherent with other EU and international interventions in relevant policy fields.

##### 5.4.1 EQ10: To what extent are the UCPM activities across the three pillars internally coherent and complementary to one another?

#### Key findings

- The UCPM Decision sufficiently defines the prevention, preparedness, and response pillars to allow for a balance within and between activities;
- The expansion of the UCPM activities between 2017 and 2022 did not affect its internal coherence, with several synergies and complementarities within and across its three pillars;
- Although the 2019 Article 6 reporting guidelines ensured greater coherence across DRM Summary Reports, heterogeneity persists in the methodologies used, risks covered, and sectors involved;
- Preparedness activities were coherent with one another. However, concerns were raised about the perceived prioritisation of rescEU over the ECPP. More time is needed to adequately evaluate synergies among more recent activities;
- The coherence of response activities within the UCPM was largely ensured by the ERCC, which coordinated, monitored and supported real-time responses to emergencies within and outside the EU. The logistical portfolio of the UCPM was also internally coherent;
- There was a good level of coherence across the three UCPM pillars, notwithstanding some room for improvement. The Lessons Learnt Programme provided a good forum to exchange lessons and good practices on prevention, preparedness and response activities. However, the internal reorganisation of DG ECHO somewhat hindered coordination and coherence across UCPM activities. Stakeholders indicated that the process of developing capacity at UCPM level should be better informed by scientific evidence and adequate needs assessments, resulting in a clear overview of capacities and gaps.

#### Judgement criterion:

- JC10.1: The Decision sufficiently defines the pillars to allow for a balance within and between activities

**Overall, Decision (EU) 1313/2013 sufficiently defines the three UCPM pillars to allow for a balance within and between activities.** Each chapter describes the main elements of each pillar considered – prevention (Chapter II), preparedness (Chapter III) and response (Chapter IV).

Activities do not always fall under one pillar but may straddle different phases of the disaster management cycle. For example, Union Disaster Resilience Goals are discussed under the prevention chapter, but support prevention *and* preparedness action. However, the Decision does not have a specific section or chapter on so-called horizontal activities, but, rather, discusses them

under one of the relevant pillars. Only a minority of stakeholders mentioned that the structure of the UCPM Decision could be improved (noting the need for clearer definitions of key concepts, e.g. indicating what is covered under prevention, compared to preparedness) or that the distinction between pillars is not appropriate due to the cross-cutting nature of UCPM activities<sup>823</sup>.

**Judgement criterion:**

- JC10.2: No significant gaps or overlaps between UCPM activities within and across pillars can be detected
- JC10.3: Synergies and complementarities within and between activities organised under the three pillars of the UCPM were identified and created, where possible
- JC10.4: Synergies and complementarities with UCPM cross-pillar/horizontal activities and activities across the three pillars of the UCPM were identified and created, where possible

The following subsections assess the extent to which the activities under each UCPM pillar were mutually reinforcing and coherent, exploring their complementarities and/or unexploited synergies. It then reports the level of coherence of activities across the three pillars.

#### 5.4.1.1 Prevention

Activities under the prevention pillar were found to be coherent with one another. There is, however, room for improvement in the harmonisation of DRM Summary Reports.

**Between 2017 and 2022, the UCPM took several steps to ensure the internal coherence of the prevention pillar, notably developing a more coherent framework for DRM Summary Reports.**

The 2019 revision of the UCPM Decision brought additional reporting obligations for Member and Participating States. The Commission then adopted reporting guidelines on disaster risk management for Member States submitting DRM Summary Reports (201 Article 6 reporting guidelines)<sup>824</sup> to ensure a consistent overview of risks at EU level.

**Although the 2019 Article 6 reporting guidelines ensured greater coherence across DRM Summary Reports, heterogeneity persists.** DRM Summary Reports often differ in the types of risks covered, methodologies adopted, use of quantitative data, and cooperation with other sectors, complicating any comprehensive assessment at EU level in the overview document of disaster risks in the EU<sup>825</sup> (see Section 5.1.1.1). The development of the **Risk Data Hub** in 2017 was an important initiative that aims to offer a common platform to access data and methodologies, facilitating a more harmonised approach to risk management<sup>826</sup>.

The main findings from the 2020 overview document of disaster risks in the EU informed and were coherent with other UCPM activities under the prevention pillar. For example, they supported the importance of considering **climate change as a key risk driver** and repeatedly underlined the need to gather high quality data to produce more comparable DRM Summary

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<sup>823</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (3). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (1/32).

<sup>824</sup> European Commission, *Commission Notice Reporting Guidelines on Disaster Risk Management, Art. 6(1)d of Decision No 1313/2013/EU*, 2019.

<sup>825</sup> Focus group: with national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023; on cost-effectiveness on 26 May 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); national authorities (4); EU stakeholders (3); international stakeholders (1). European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made disasters the European Union may face*, 2020.

<sup>826</sup> European Commission, *Risk Data Hub – web platform to facilitate management of disaster risks*, JRC, 2019.

Reports<sup>827</sup>. The disaster risks highlighted in the overview document of disaster risks in the EU were well covered within the projects within the PPP, albeit with some exceptions (industrial accidents; animal and plant diseases).

The **Union Disaster Resilience Goals** are expected to ensure better coherence under the prevention pillar, as they set an overall European resilience agenda, promoting a coherent set of goals and specific objectives for key civil protection prevention (and preparedness) action to 2030<sup>828</sup>. Finally, DG ECHO aligned the 2023 Disaster Resilience Grants with the Union Disaster Resilience Goals<sup>829</sup>.

#### 5.4.1.2 Preparedness

**Data collected for the interim evaluation shows high overall coherence among UCPM activities in the field of preparedness, as confirmed by** most DG ECHO Desk Officers consulted<sup>830</sup>.

However, more time is needed to evaluate the results and synergies among more recent activities.

**rescEU** and the **ECPP** are inherently complementary because rescEU was designed as last resort tool to be mobilised in worst-case disaster scenarios when emergency assistance from the ECPP cannot be mobilised or is insufficient. The ERCC verifies whether spontaneous offers and the ECPP capacities can be mobilised in the first instance. However, concerns were raised about the perceived prioritisation of rescEU capacities over the ECPP, with stakeholders suggesting that the ECPP has been given less attention and treated as a secondary option. Some national civil protection authorities stated that the ECPP should remain the core preparedness tool of the UCPM<sup>831</sup>, while recognising the added value of rescEU for in-kind assistance, CBRN and logistics.

Several activities carried out between 2017 and 2022 created synergies and complementarities between **EWS** by providing different types of information and analysis on various types of disasters and emergencies. For example, EFFIS and EFAS provide specific information on forest fires and floods, respectively, while the European Drought Observatory (EDO) and the European Seismic Hazard Information System (ESHIS) focus on drought and seismic hazards. DG ECHO and the JRC improved the integration and interoperability of the existing EWS and developed a more holistic approach to disaster risk reduction and emergency response<sup>832</sup>. By combining and integrating these systems, the UCPM enhanced its overall situational awareness and preparedness for a wide range of potential disasters and emergencies. For instance, one of the main objectives of these interoperability efforts was to better integrate the systems for floods, forest fires, and drought into GDACS in order to develop an enhanced GDACS+. Overall, the complexity and diversity of the hazards that need to be monitored, the wide range of data sources to be analysed, and the methods needed to do so make this process challenging<sup>833</sup>.

The **UCPM Training Programme** was expanded into a new **Training and Exercises Programme**. The inclusion of exercises followed a recommendation from the 2019 study of the UCPM Training Programme that the Programme could benefit from the creation of a unique training system that

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<sup>827</sup> European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face*, 2020.

<sup>828</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); EU stakeholders (4); national authorities (2); international stakeholder (1).

<sup>829</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>830</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (/31).

<sup>831</sup> Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities in 9 May 2023; DG ECHO on 10 May 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (5); national civil protection authorities (9); EU stakeholders (4).

<sup>832</sup> European Commission, *Early Warning System Expert Group. Meeting Minutes*, 2019, 2020, 2021. European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*; Interviews with: DG ECHO (3).

<sup>833</sup> European Commission, *Early Warning System Expert Group. Meeting Minutes*, 2019, 2020, 2021. European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

included both exercises and training courses<sup>834</sup>. A majority of stakeholders involved in the Training and Exercises Programme considered the courses and exercises coherent and complementary<sup>835</sup>. The new Training and Exercises Programme was recently redesigned and has been implemented since September 2023. The recent changes were perceived to have the potential to enhance coherence between the different activities offered<sup>836</sup>.

Areas for improvement were identified in CECIS<sup>837</sup>. The current version of CECIS allows for unstructured data entry, making it difficult to obtain comparable data on the types and causes of disasters. CECIS does not allow an overview of the available capacities per type (e.g. available aerial forest fight capacity), but only by level of commitment (e.g. number of each capacity type under rescEU or the ECPP). CECIS is being updated and redesigned as CECIS 2.0<sup>838</sup>.

Other recent developments implemented within the UCPM that are expected to improve coherence among preparedness activities include the Disaster Resilience Grants and the establishment of the Knowledge Network:

- **Disaster Resilience Grants:** The 2021 evaluation of the PPP found that the absence of a structured link between the Programme and other UCPM activities risked duplication of effort and limited general complementarity<sup>839</sup>. The PPP comprises two strands, (i) Technical Assistance for Disaster Risk Management, which includes grants for national civil protection and other disaster risk management authorities to develop strategic disaster risk management actions; and (ii) KAPP, which merges three previously separate calls, prevention and preparedness, Knowledge Network, and FSX. Evidence shows that the KAPP calls will likely have a significant positive impact on coherence among UCPM-funded activities (please see in Annex 7 the ICF Case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities for further details).<sup>840</sup>
- **Knowledge Network.** Although stakeholders recognised the potential of the Knowledge Network to ensure that the different UCPM preparedness activities are coherent and reinforce one another, the extent to which such a broad mandate can effectively achieve this objective remains to be seen<sup>841</sup>. The outputs of the Knowledge Network are still relatively unknown to authorities in Member and Participating States, and several stakeholders underlined that results cannot be evaluated because the Network is still 'under construction'<sup>842</sup>. DG ECHO staff implementing activities within the Knowledge Network do not feel they own the activities carried out under its umbrella<sup>843</sup>. However, this situation could be attributed to the early stage of the Knowledge Network's development.

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<sup>834</sup> European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programm*, 2019.

<sup>835</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (22/31).

<sup>836</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (23/30). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>837</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (6); national authorities (6). European Commission, *'Study on the Development of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre ERCC*, 2023.

<sup>838</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2).

<sup>839</sup> European Commission, *'Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014–2020)*, 2021.

<sup>840</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>841</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (6); DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (5); experts in civil protection (2); international stakeholders (3).

<sup>842</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (12); DG ECHO (4); EU stakeholders (4); experts in civil protection (2); professional organisations (2); international stakeholders (2). See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>843</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

#### 5.4.1.3 Response

The coherence of response activities within the UCPM was largely ensured by the **ERCC**, which coordinated, monitored and supported real-time responses to emergencies within and outside the EU. More specifically, the ERCC coordinated the matching of requests and offers of assistance, so that countries did not have to manage these issues on a bilateral basis. As some Participating States and all third countries do not have access to CECIS, the ERCC also coordinated RfA and offers by these States by uploading the necessary information on CECIS and coordinating with the requesting State by email. This process allowed response activities within and outside the EU to be handled in a similar way. DG ECHO desk officers expressed positive views on the coherence between response activities<sup>844</sup>.

Finally, evidence shows clear logic between different areas of the UCPM **logistics** portfolio<sup>845</sup>. Logistics activities are streamlined and internally coherent, with each activity having a complementary role. For instance, when Member and Participating States have their own transport or can secure transport themselves, the grants enable them to have the transport and the operations **co-financed**. In cases where the Member or Participating State is unable to secure transport due to difficulties in reaching the final location, they can apply to enlist the services of a **transport broker**. Both logistics types were often used alongside one another during a single emergency<sup>846</sup>.

The extent to which the UCPM effectively coordinated its response with national authorities, EU institutions and international organisations is discussed under Sections 5.4.2 and 5.4.3, respectively.

#### 5.4.1.4 Coherence across pillars

While there was a good level of coherence between activities across the UCPM pillars, evidence shows room for improvement. Figure 71 illustrates how the different pillars theoretically interlink.

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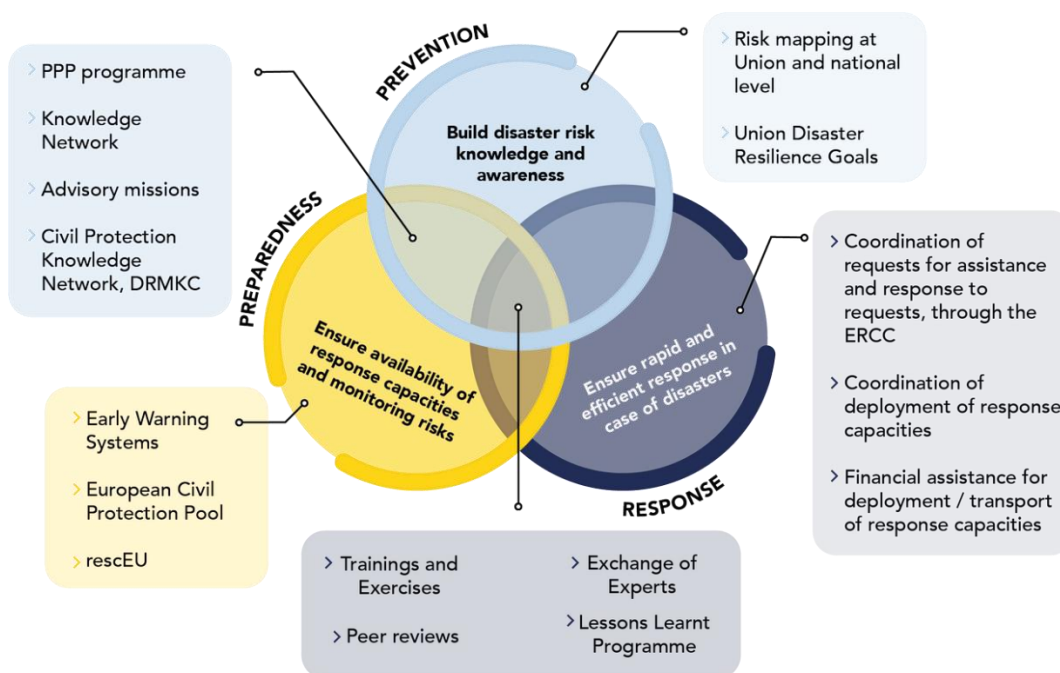
<sup>844</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (21/31).

<sup>845</sup> Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018–2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020–2022, 2023*.

<sup>846</sup> Ibid.



Figure 71. Interactions between UCPM pillars and activities



Source: ICF elaboration.

The Training and Exercises Programme and the Lessons Learnt Programme are illustrative of efforts to ensure coherence and complementarity across the three UCPM pillars. The **Training and Exercise Programme** prepared civil protection experts and emergency management personnel to acquire the knowledge *to prevent, prepare and respond* to disasters. It also contributed to improving the **interoperability** of modules, which was highlighted as a critical element to focus on during Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meetings following UCPM deployments<sup>847</sup>. DG ECHO organised a series of workshops on host nation support for AFF to improve interoperability between crews and facilitate exchanges between AFF actors<sup>848</sup>. According to stakeholders involved in the Training and Exercises Programme, training courses were coherent and complementary to other UCPM activities<sup>849</sup>, particularly response activities (coordination of deployment of response capacities, ERCC coordination of RfA and offers by Member and Participating States)<sup>850</sup>.

**The Lessons Learnt Programme** was seen as a good forum for exchanges, as it helped to identify lessons and good practices from UCPM deployments and horizontal activities<sup>851</sup>. In 2019, focal points were identified across units to ensure that relevant lessons and good practices were implemented across DG ECHO in a cross-sectoral manner through prevention, preparedness and response activities. This responded to the findings of the 2017 interim evaluation, which had highlighted shortcomings in this respect. Since 2020, the Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meetings have systematically included more in-depth discussions and exchanges of lessons and

<sup>847</sup> Interviews with: professional organisation (1); DG ECHO (2); national authority (1). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023. European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Forest Fire Season 2021, 2022*; European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons identified from 2022 Wildfire season*, 2023.

<sup>848</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from the Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/24 April 2023*.

<sup>849</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (19/27).

<sup>850</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (27/27).

<sup>851</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (4); national authorities (7).

good practices covering the whole disaster risk management cycle, including the (previously neglected) prevention pillar<sup>852</sup>.

**Clear synergies exist between the prevention and preparedness pillars** in establishing capacity goals under the ECPP. The Commission and Member States assess the suitability of capacity goals at least every two years and, if necessary, revise them on the basis of risks identified in National Risk Assessments or other international sources<sup>853</sup>. However, stakeholders noted that the process of developing capacities within both the ECPP and rescEU could be improved. They pointed to the potential to better ensure that capability development planning is informed from the bottom-up on the basis of scientific evidence and adequate preparedness needs assessments, resulting in a clear overview of available capacities and gaps (see Section 5.1.1.2)<sup>854</sup>.

On the **links between preparedness and response**, the evidence suggests that a low share experts who are trained are subsequently deployed<sup>855</sup> and many deployed experts did not undergo all of the required training<sup>856</sup>. The new Training and Exercises Programme will introduce a deployable training path for experts to be deployed, alongside a set of courses for civil protection and disaster risk management actors who hold a support function to the UCPM and who are not expected to be deployed. This curriculum change is expected to ensure increased coherence and better meet participants' expectations<sup>857</sup>.

Other horizontal activities that ensured synergies across UCPM pillars included:

- **Advisory missions and the PPP**, which focused on both prevention and/or preparedness;
- **Peer Review Programme**, which strengthened cooperation between Member and Participating States and contributed to an integrated approach to disaster risk management by linking risk prevention, preparedness, and response actions;
- **EoE Programme**, whose exchanges focused on the main disasters that led to UCPM activations<sup>858</sup>.

While a majority of DG ECHO Desk Officers considered UCPM activities across the three pillars to be coherent and complementary<sup>859</sup>, they observed that the **internal reorganisation of DG ECHO somewhat hindered coordination and coherence across UCPM activities**<sup>860</sup>. Stakeholders noted that the reorganisation of DG ECHO into Directorate A (emergency management and rescEU) and Directorate B (disaster preparedness and prevention) improved cooperation between civil

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<sup>852</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2). European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2020 UCPM activations*, 2021; European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>853</sup> Article 14 Commission Implementing Decision of 16 October 2014 laying down rules for the implementation of Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism and repealing Commission Decisions 2004/277/EC. Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services, *Evaluation study of definitions, gaps, and costs of response capacities for the Union Civil Protection Mechanism*, 2019.

<sup>854</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (2); national authorities (5). Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. European Committee of the Regions, *Preparing for and dealing with crises: strengthening the resilience of the Union, its regions and cities*, COM(2021) 576 final. See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>855</sup> European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019. Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); experts in civil protection (2); professional organisations (1); national authority (1). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>856</sup> European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019. Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); experts in civil protection (2); professional organisations (1); national authority (1). See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>857</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>858</sup> THW, *Exchange of Experts in Civil Protection Programme. Final Report*, Contract No. ECHO/SER/2016/738300, 2018. Interviews with: experts in civil protection (1); professional organisations (1); national authorities (1).

<sup>859</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (19/32).

<sup>860</sup> Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (10/24). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (3/38).

protection and humanitarian aid staff and gave increased focus to prevention activities<sup>861</sup>, but did not contribute positively to the overall internal coherence of UCPM activities across pillars<sup>862</sup>. The organisational structure of DG ECHO is currently being reviewed.

DG ECHO aligned the 2023 Disaster Resilience Grants with the Union Disaster Resilience Goals<sup>863</sup>, in the wake of the 2021 evaluation of the PPP, which found that the projects had little connection with other UCPM activities<sup>864</sup>.

The activities of the **Knowledge Network** remain relatively unknown to authorities in Member and Participating States, and several stakeholders underlined that results cannot be evaluated because the Network is still 'under construction'<sup>865</sup>

Finally, the development of the **Union Disaster Resilience Goals** has the potential to enhance coherence across UCPM activities<sup>866</sup>, covering goals spanning the main phases of the disaster management cycle (anticipate, prepare, alert, respond) and adding the secure goal, which aims to ensure that civil protection systems remain operational 24/7 during and after disasters.

5.4.2 EQ11: To what extent do UCPM activities complement national interventions in the field of civil protection and other policy fields?

#### Key findings

- Synergies and complementarities were created between UCPM prevention and preparedness activities and national activities in the field of civil protection;
- Clear complementarities were identified in the development of capacities at rescEU, ECPP and national level. Additionally, host nation support guidelines complemented national efforts by ensuring a thorough understanding of roles and responsibilities between national response systems and the UCPM. Progress was also made in the integration of EU and national EWS;
- Response activities within the UCPM were coherent and complementary with national interventions. Factors that contributed to ensuring an effective response during UCPM missions included the deployment of ERCC Liaison Officers and the involvement of EU delegations. The UCPM also effectively coordinated its response activities with the private sector, but a clearer framework is needed for such cooperation.

#### Judgement criterion:

- JC11.1: Synergies and complementarities were created between UCPM prevention and preparedness activities and national (MS, PS, TC) activities in the field of CP and other policy fields

**Most civil protection authorities indicated that prevention and preparedness activities within the UCPM were coherent and complementary with national interventions.** National authorities

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<sup>861</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3).

<sup>862</sup> Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (10). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (3/38).

<sup>863</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>864</sup> European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects 2014–2020*, 2021.

<sup>865</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (12); DG ECHO (4); EU stakeholders (4); experts in civil protection (2); professional organisations (2); international stakeholders (2). See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>866</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (4); international partners (1); national authorities (2).

underlined the complementarities between the ECPP, rescEU, and the development of capacities at national level<sup>867</sup>. Other UCPM activities that complemented national prevention and preparedness interventions included the Training and Exercises Programme<sup>868</sup>, EoE Programme<sup>869</sup>, Peer Review Programme<sup>870</sup> and the Union Disaster Resilience Goals<sup>871</sup>. National authorities also agreed that there were no avoidable overlaps between UCPM and national civil protection activities<sup>872</sup>.

During the evaluation period, progress was evident in the **integration of national and EU EWS**<sup>873</sup>. For instance, the Global Flood Awareness System (GloFAS) was upgraded with a new global flood monitoring component that exploits satellite monitoring capacity and provides near-real time information. While public warning is a national responsibility, DG ECHO supports the implementation of effective national public warning systems. Under the Galileo programme, the Galileo Emergency Warning System (GEWS) and Galileo infrastructure are offered to Member and Participating States as a complementary system to broadcast alert messages. GEWS is designed to complement existing national broadcasting systems when existing systems are insufficient, such as in case of destruction or saturation of traditional alert systems. The ERCC ensured that notifications of potential disasters from the EU EWS were shared with the relevant 24/7 civil protection contact points. However, a minority of stakeholders underlined that the integration of existing EWS could be improved<sup>874</sup>.

Evidence suggests that **host nation support guidelines** contributed to a thorough understanding of roles and responsibilities between national response systems and the UCPM, facilitating consistent collaboration<sup>875</sup>. However, stakeholders indicated that the guidelines could be updated or improved (e.g. including more recent best practices)<sup>876</sup>.

**On the coherence between UCPM prevention and preparedness activities and national activities in other policy fields**, national authorities highlighted the positive synergies with public health (particularly given the UCPM response to the COVID-19 pandemic). Indeed, stakeholders mostly commented on the synergies between the UCPM and other EU-level initiatives beyond the civil protection field (see Section 5.4.3). Evidence from desk research shows that the UCPM prevention and preparedness initiatives were coherent with other national policies and initiatives in other fields, such as:

- **Environment and climate.** Several projects financed through the PPP aimed to protect the environment in the event of disasters, involved national environmental research institutes, and successfully promoted sustainable disaster prevention in Member States<sup>877</sup>.

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<sup>867</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (17). Surveys of: national authorities (31/42).

<sup>868</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (9); professional organisations (2); DG ECHO (3); experts in civil protection (2). See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires. Surveys of: national authorities (33/40).

<sup>869</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); professional organisations (1). Surveys of: national authorities (29/38).

<sup>870</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (4); experts in civil protection (1). Surveys of: national authorities (20/35). Feedback from EU delegations (AL, TR, MK) to DG ECHO.

<sup>871</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (22/37).

<sup>872</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (35/44).

<sup>873</sup> European Commission, *Minutes of the Early Warning Systems Expert Working Group Meeting*, 2022; European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>874</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (2). See Annex 7 for case study on floods.

<sup>875</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2020 UCPM activations*, 2021; European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*. Interviews with: national authorities (18); DG ECHO (3); international partners (1).

<sup>876</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022. Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); national authorities (3).

<sup>877</sup> European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects 2014-2020*, 2021.

Sustainability was also recognised as a horizontal principle in the implementation of the Union Disaster Resilience Goals, with specific attention to be paid to minimising the environmental impact of civil protection operations<sup>878</sup>;

- **Education and awareness.** One of the UCPM's specific objectives is to increase public awareness of disasters, supporting Member States' actions. Among other UCPM-level initiatives, Action 4 of the Wildfire Prevention Action Plan aims to enhance citizen protection, preparedness and prevention of wildfire risk through the collection of good practices on raising wildfire awareness in Europe<sup>879</sup>. Union Disaster Resilience Goal No. 2 aims to significantly increase the level of disaster risk awareness among the population in each Member State;
- **Cultural heritage conservation.** Article 1 of the UCPM Decision provides that the protection to be ensured by the UCPM covers primarily people, but also the environment and property, including cultural heritage. Some of the projects financed through the PPP aimed to protect cultural heritage from the consequence of disasters and to develop tailored preparedness measures<sup>880</sup>;
- **International cooperation and diplomacy.** Although the UCPM is primarily intended to function as an instrument for European solidarity against disasters, national authorities also used it as a complementary foreign policy tool<sup>881</sup> when UCPM assistance is requested in third countries and during repatriation requests. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Member and Participating States with smaller diplomatic networks and fewer citizens overseas benefited from UCPM support enabling them to secure seats for their citizens on flights chartered by other Member and Participating States, avoiding the need to charter their own plane for a small number of individuals<sup>882</sup>.

#### Judgement criterion:

- **JC11.2:** The UCPM effectively coordinated its response with national actors (MS, PS, TC), with other activities in the field and with other actors / policy fields.

**Response activities within the UCPM were coherent and complementary with national civil protection interventions.** Countries can request assistance from the UCPM when their response capacity is insufficient to respond in the event of a large-scale disaster. National authorities expressed positive views on the ERCC's coordination of RfA, response to requests, and deployment of response capacity, which were considered highly coherent and complementary to national interventions<sup>883</sup>. They also agreed that the financial assistance for the deployment and transport of response capacities was complementary to national efforts<sup>884</sup>.

The **deployment of ERCC Liaison Officers** and the role of **EU delegations** during UCPM activations were considered best practice (see Figure 72).

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<sup>878</sup> European Commission, *Recommendation of 8 February 2023 on Union Disaster Resilience Goals* 2023/C 56/01, 2023.

<sup>879</sup> Knowledge Network, *Wildfire Prevention Action Plan call for practices*, 2022.

<sup>880</sup> See, for instance, the ProCultHer project, <https://www.proculther.eu/#:~:text=Protecting%20Cultural%20Heritage%20from%20the%20Consequences%20of%20Disasters,at%20risk%20of%20disaster%20at%20all%20territorial%20levels>.

<sup>881</sup> European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2023.

<sup>882</sup> Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022*, 2023. See Annex 7 for case study on Ukrainian response.

<sup>883</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (20); DG ECHO (9); experts in civil protection (5). Surveys of: national authorities (39).

<sup>884</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (35/42).



Figure 72. Lesson: ERCC Liaison Officers and EU delegations during UCPM activations



Lesson learnt

**ERCC Liaison Officers and EU delegations during UCPM activations**

On **ERCC Liaison Officers** played a crucial role in coordinating the exchange of information and cooperation between the ERCC and national authorities during emergencies. They coordinated the arrival of the UCPM assistance, conducted needs assessments and liaised with the national authorities requesting assistance, thereby facilitating response activities.

**EU delegations** also played a valuable role during deployments outside Europe by coordinating with local authorities to understand the needs and priorities of the affected country. EU Delegations offered logistical and administrative support to UCPM teams, as well as access to a wealth of knowledge about the country and about key national actors and stakeholders. This helped to generate synergies and complementarities between UCPM activities and those already in place at national level. For instance, the EU Delegation supported the EUCPT in ensuring that local authorities have a clear understanding about the scope of the mission, as well as what the UCPM could and could not provide. The situational awareness and understanding of the local context to which EU delegation staff could provide access to was deemed crucial to facilitate coordination between UCPM and national interventions, facilitating smoother activation of the Mechanism than would otherwise have been possible. For example, a recent instance where the Liaison Officer and the EU Delegation played a critical role in ensuring a coherent and smooth activation of the UCPM **occurred during the 2022 activation in response to the tropical cyclone Batsirai in Madagascar**.

Source: ICF elaboration, based on DG ECHO internal documents<sup>885</sup>.

To ensure coherence between the UCPM and national initiatives and to raise awareness of the UCPM among EU delegations, the Knowledge Network created an e-learning course on the UCPM, available on the EU Academy platform, targeting EU delegation staff (as well as Member States' embassies, and DG ECHO field office staff). DG ECHO also plans to organise information sessions for EU Heads of Delegations and their deputies (especially where DG ECHO has no staff presence), as well as to establish civil protection contact points in EU delegations and share relevant lessons learnt with them.

**Between 2017 and 2022, the UCPM coordinated its activities at national level with several different actors and policy fields beyond civil protection.** These included national authorities covering other policy sectors, such as Ministries of Health, flood management authorities, and Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Overall, while the UCPM managed to coordinate its activities with national authorities beyond civil protection, there is a need to increase familiarity with the UCPM among other national authorities (see Section 5.4.3)<sup>886</sup>. Stakeholders underlined the need for more cross-sectoral cooperation (at EU and national level) to better prevent, prepare and respond to disasters (see Section 5.3.2)<sup>887</sup>.

<sup>885</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*; European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2020 UCPM activations*, 2021; European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022; Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018–2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020–2022*, 2023. See Annex 7 for case study on COVID–19 repatriations/consular services; Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); national authorities (1). European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Preliminary Lessons from Russia's war on Ukraine*, 2022; European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*. European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2017 UCPM activations*, 2018; European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019; European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019. Feedback from EU delegations (AL, TR, MK) to DG ECHO on 9 December 2022. See Annex 7 for case studies on COVID–19 repatriations/consular services, on forest fires, and on Ukrainian response.

<sup>886</sup> European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID–19 wave in Europe*, 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (4); EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (2). See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>887</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (11); EU stakeholders (12); national authorities (6); international stakeholder (1). Focus group: on cost-effectiveness on 26 May 2023; with national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.



The UCPM coordinated its response with the **private sector** in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (see Box 4).

Box 4. EU-level private donation initiative within the UCPM

The purpose of the EU-level private donation initiative was to fill gaps in assistance, easing the burden on Member and Participating States by supplementing national offers of assistance with the involvement of private sector actors. It allowed **private donations to complement national offers** and reinforced EU solidarity in channelling assistance to Ukraine.

In collaboration with Belgian and Polish authorities, two hubs were established: i) a rescEU medical, shelter and CBRN hub in Belgium (managed by the Federal Public Service Health), and ii) a rescEU energy hub in Poland (managed by the Governmental Strategic Reserves Agency, RARS).

DG ECHO, supported by HERA in the initial phases of the initiative, was responsible for evaluating the offers received by the private sector and ensuring that the offers matched the needs identified by the Ukrainian authorities. The hubs oversaw the logistics, quality checks and transport, once the donation agreement was signed.

*Source: ICF elaboration, based on Minutes from Lessons Learnt Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023.*

Although the private donation initiative was considered to function effectively, DG ECHO indicated the need to establish a **permanent structure and/or framework for private donations within the UCPM Decision** to clarify procedures and mitigate liability risks<sup>888</sup>. However, some national authorities were less disposed towards increased involvement of the private sector, as they consider civil protection a national competence and believe that the private sector should only complement efforts with in-kind assistance to address temporary shortages or gaps in capacity (see Section 5.3.2)<sup>889</sup>.

Finally, evidence suggests that there were potential unexploited synergies in **civil-military coordination during emergencies**. For example, military assets and platforms could offer transport and logistical advantages to UCPM operations<sup>890</sup>. One instance in which the deployment of military assets proved valuable was the UCPM activation in response to the earthquake in Haiti, when a Dutch navy ship provided efficient and effective solutions for certain operational tasks (e.g. providing medical supplies via smaller crafts or reconnaissance via helicopter)<sup>891</sup>. DG ECHO encouraged Member and Participating States to increase the availability of transport capacities by exploring potential synergies with their own law enforcement and military forces<sup>892</sup>.

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<sup>888</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*. Interviews with: DG ECHO (2). See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>889</sup> Focus group with: national civil protection authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>890</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (5); international stakeholders (1). European Commission, *Lessons from the first Covid-19 wave in Europe*, 2023; European Commission, *Outcome document on Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting on 2017 UCPM activations*, 2018; European Commission, *Outcome document on Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting on 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019.

<sup>891</sup> European Commission, *Annual UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on 2021 UCPM activations*, 2022.

<sup>892</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019; European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020.

5.4.3 EQ12: To what extent are UCPM activities coherent and complementary to other EU and international interventions in the field of civil protection and other policy fields?

**Key findings**

- There were synergies and complementarities between UCPM activities and other EU and international interventions in civil protection and other policy fields;
- The UCPM fostered synergies with initiatives across several policy fields, including humanitarian aid, public health, home affairs and consular support. However, there is scope to foster greater coherence and integration with other EU and international interventions in other policy fields;
- The deployment of Liaison Officers from different Commission services (DG SANTE, HERA) to DG ECHO was a good practice to foster synergies and ensure improved cross-sectoral cooperation;
- Some stakeholders raised concerns about the delineation of roles between DG ECHO and HERA, although others felt it was clear;
- The COVID-19 pandemic showed the ability of the UCPM to respond to cross-sectoral crises, given the involvement of authorities beyond civil protection, such as Ministries of Health and Ministries of Foreign Affairs. However, the crisis showed the need to increase awareness of the UCPM among non-civil protection actors;
- The UCPM activities were coherent with the research and innovation agenda, as well as environment and climate change adaptation policies. However, further synergies could be established to improve the environmental sustainability of the UCPM and promote relevant research projects;
- At international level, the UCPM Decision is coherent with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. DG ECHO and the UNDRR took steps to avoid overlaps and duplication of effort. Despite the UCPM effectively coordinating its response with other international level actors (e.g. NATO, UN OCHA), there were unexploited synergies on knowledge sharing, as well as low awareness of the humanitarian aid cluster among the civil protection community.

**Judgement criterion:**

- JC12.1: There are synergies and complementarities between UCPM activities and other EU interventions related to civil protection (e.g. HERA) and other policy fields (e.g. Asylum and Migration Integration Fund (AMIF), Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN)), as well as relevant international frameworks and initiatives (e.g. the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, UN OCHA)

**There were synergies and complementarities between UCPM activities and other EU and international interventions in civil protection and other policy fields.**

The UCPM touches on elements that are relevant to several other policy areas. Assessing its external coherence thus means exploring the extent to which it established synergies with other EU and international initiatives, especially given the expansion of its activities throughout the evaluation period (see Figure 73).

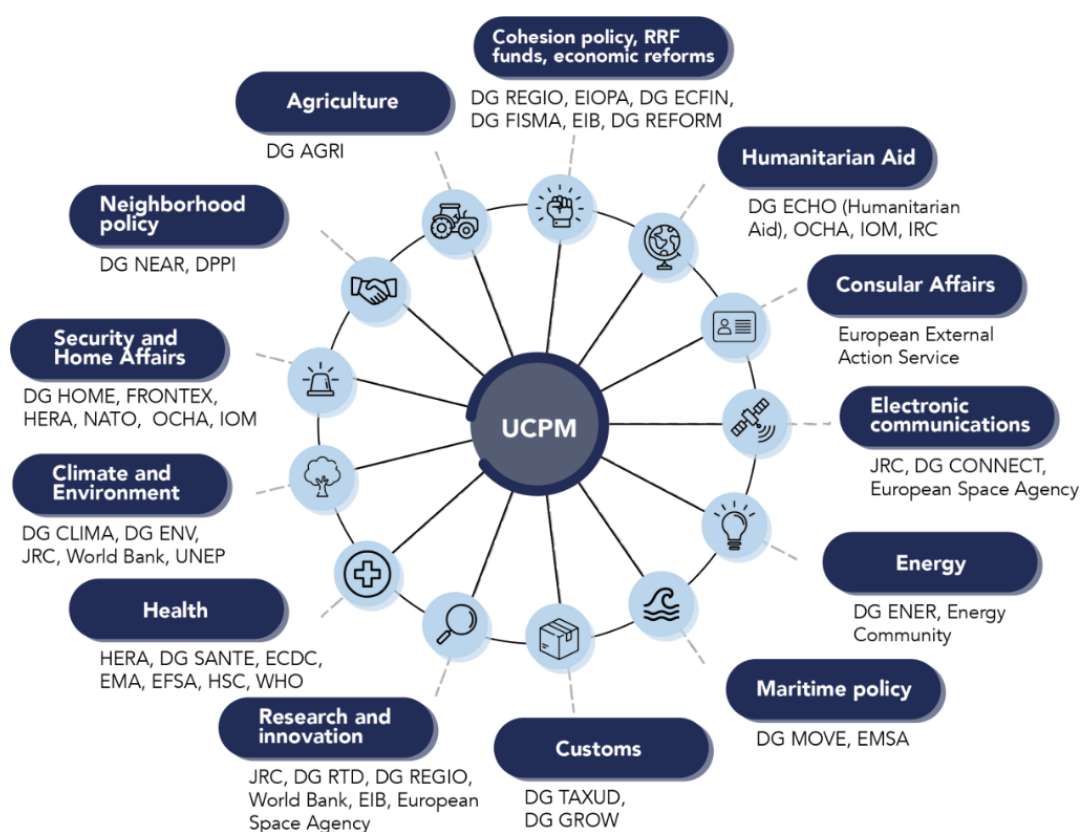
The following sub-sections assess the extent to which the UCPM linked to and complemented other EU-level policy areas, identifying synergies and potential overlaps and discussing the ways in

which the UCPM collaborated with relevant EU institutions, agencies and other international organisations in each focus area. The policy areas reviewed include:

- Humanitarian aid;
- Public health;
- Maritime policy;
- Climate change adaptation policy;
- Environmental policy;
- Migration and home affairs, including CBRN, critical infrastructure, asylum and migration;
- European Neighbourhood Policy;
- Research and innovation;
- Consular support;
- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Forest Strategy;
- Cohesion Policy, Recovery and Resilience Fund.

It then examines the coherence between the UCPM and other international frameworks (the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction) and other interventions to safeguard international peace and security.

Figure 73. EU and international policy areas and actors with which the UCPM interacts



Source: ICF elaboration.

Notes: This overview is not exhaustive.

#### 5.4.3.1 Humanitarian aid

Between 2017 and 2022, there was a good degree of coherence and complementarity between UCPM interventions and EU and international humanitarian aid initiatives.

The interlinkages between the UCPM and EU-level humanitarian aid activities are numerous. The UCPM Decision stresses the need to ensure complementarity in responses to humanitarian crises

in third countries, particularly with actions under Regulation (EC) No 1257/96<sup>893</sup> and those implemented in line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid<sup>894</sup>. Civil protection resources are an important contribution to humanitarian actions based on humanitarian need assessments and their possible advantages in terms of speed, specialisation, efficiency and effectiveness, especially in the early phase of relief response. However, in complex emergencies, recourse to civil protection assets should be the exception<sup>895</sup>. The 2019 revision of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid recognises the important role of the UCPM in crisis response and emphasises the need for closer coordination and collaboration between civil protection and humanitarian actors to ensure a more effective and integrated response to disasters and crises<sup>896</sup>. In 2021, DG ECHO developed the **European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC)**, which is designed to complement the UCPM and to rely on the operational readiness of ERCC<sup>897</sup>. In this framework, the ERCC is crucial in ensuring synergies and complementarities between the UCPM and humanitarian aid operations.

Overall, **DG ECHO Desk Officers agreed that the UCPM was effective in creating synergies and complementarities with the humanitarian aid field**<sup>898</sup>. Examples of UCPM activations that showed synergies and complementarities with humanitarian aid included the 2022 activations in Madagascar in response to the tropical cyclone Batsirai, and in Pakistan in response to floods<sup>899</sup>. In Pakistan, the cooperation with DG ECHO partners implementing humanitarian actions was beneficial, as they provided the network to distribute clean water to the affected population<sup>900</sup>. The deployment of DG ECHO humanitarian experts and ERCC Liaison Officers with humanitarian aid expertise was considered a best practice in strengthening synergies with civil protection<sup>901</sup>. The added value of the Humanitarian Aid Bridge and its potential for UCPM deployments to face logistical challenges was also highlighted<sup>902</sup>. Overall, the presence of DG ECHO in the field proved a valuable source of information for the ERCC during UCPM activations in third countries.

**However, evidence suggests that there is still a need to ensure a better understanding of humanitarian aid actors (such as UN OCHA, UNICEF, WFP) among deployed UCPM team members**<sup>903</sup>, and vice versa<sup>904</sup>. Stakeholders indicated the need for increased focus on humanitarian aid principles and actors in the UCPM training courses, as well as the added value of deploying humanitarian aid experts during UCPM mission<sup>905</sup>.

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<sup>893</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid.

<sup>894</sup> Article 26(2) and (3) Decision (EU) 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

<sup>895</sup> 'Complex emergencies might arise when there is a combination of factors such as armed conflict, displacement of people, and natural disasters, that leads to a serious humanitarian crisis' (Council of the EU, European Parliament, European Commission, *Joint statement. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid*, 2008).

<sup>896</sup> Council of the EU, European Parliament, European Commission, *Joint statement. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid*, 2008.

<sup>897</sup> European Commission, *Communication on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles*, 2021.

<sup>898</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (26/32). Interviews with: DG ECHO (9); national authorities (2); international stakeholders (4).

<sup>899</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>900</sup> Ibid.

<sup>901</sup> European Commission, *'Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations*, 2020; European Commission, *'Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt meeting on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique*, 2019.

<sup>902</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>903</sup> Ibid. Interviews with: experts in civil protection (4); international stakeholders (2); national authorities (3). European Commission, *'Outcome document on Lessons Learnt Annual Meeting on 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019.

<sup>904</sup> European Commission, *'Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2023.

<sup>905</sup> Interviews with: experts in civil protection (3); national authorities (3); international stakeholders (2). CN APELL-RO, *'Euromodex Lot 2 2017-2018 Final Consolidated Report*, 2018; European Commission, *'Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt meeting on the 2017 UCPM activations*, 2018; European Commission, *'Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations*, 2019; European Commission, *'Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2019 UCPM Deployment in Mozambique*, 2020; European Commission, *'Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019.

Stakeholders suggested that **cooperation between the UCPM and relevant international organisations** (e.g. IOM, WFP, UN OCHA) works well, and that cooperation with NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) improved after the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>906</sup>. **SOPs** were considered a useful tool for effective cooperation and reducing the uncertainty in logistics arrangements<sup>907</sup>. DG ECHO civil protection representatives participate in relevant global meetings with humanitarian aid partners, such as the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW), co-organised with UN OCHA, and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) regional meetings<sup>908</sup>.

On the UCPM activation in response to **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**, evidence shows that relations between DG ECHO civil protection and DG ECHO humanitarian aid were strengthened<sup>909</sup>. For instance, the presence of DG ECHO field officers in Ukraine filled information gaps, given that civil protection authorities could not access the Ukrainian territory<sup>910</sup>. Synergies were also created to address logistics challenges. However, **there is still a need to clarify the links between civil protection and humanitarian aid, and the role of the UCPM in man-made disasters more generally** (see Section 5.3.2). Coordination and cooperation in the field was limited, and the interaction between the two side of DG ECHO was mostly the result of individuals' proactiveness<sup>911</sup>.

#### 5.4.3.2 Public health

Overall, the UCPM framework was coherent with other EU and international level actions in the field of health. Although more synergies were established after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is room for improvement and further coherence.

Although other actors such as DG SANTE, the ECDC, European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and HERA play a major role in the prevention, preparedness and response planning for acute health emergencies, the UCPM also aims to ensure protection against acute health emergencies.

**Regulation (EU) 2022/2371 on serious cross-border threats to health** is the framework for EU action on health emergencies, coordinated by the Health Security Committee (HSC), while the ECDC identifies, assesses and communicates threats to health from communicable diseases<sup>912</sup>. Regulation 2022/2371 refers to the role of the UCPM in assisting Member States in the event of a serious cross-border health threat and establishes a framework covering prevention, preparedness and response planning, which is mainly the competence of the HSC. Importantly, in 2021, the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) was established: its mission is to, among others, prevent, detect, and rapidly respond to health emergencies.

Under **prevention**, the ECDC plays an important role in monitoring and assessing current and emerging threats from infectious diseases. Its research outputs, including its rapid risk assessments, fit into the overview document of disaster risks in the EU, developed on the basis of

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<sup>906</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (6); DG ECHO (7); experts in civil protection (2).

<sup>907</sup> European Commission, *'Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2018 UCPM activations'*, 2019; European Commission, *'Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the 2017 UCPM activations'*, 2018. Interviews with: DG ECHO (1); EU stakeholder (1); international stakeholders (2).

<sup>908</sup> European Commission, *'Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt meeting on the 2019 UCPM activations'*, 2020.

<sup>909</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>910</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>911</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.'

<sup>912</sup> Regulation (EU) 2022/2371 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on serious cross-border threats to health and repealing Decision No 1082/2013/EU.

Article 6 of the UCPM Decision<sup>913</sup>. The 2019 Article 6 reporting guidelines advise Member States to cooperate with other types of stakeholders, including health services<sup>914</sup>.

The 2021 revision of the UCPM Decision significantly strengthened the UCPM medical **preparedness** by including the rescEU reserve of medical items and medical evacuation capabilities. This was done in response to lessons identified during the COVID-19 pandemic, which thoroughly tested the UCPM's ability to respond to large-scale disasters. The UCPM Training and Exercise Programme also includes dedicated courses on assisting victims of mass casualty disasters, such as the Burn Assessment Team course, and the EMT Coordination Cell Courses, delivered in partnership with the WHO. DG ECHO cooperates with the WHO for the certification of the EMTs.

The UCPM also cooperates with the recently established **Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA)**. Created in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, HERA is responsible for ensuring the availability and access to critical medical countermeasures that are needed in times of crisis, such as epidemics, radiological disasters and nuclear disasters. Contrary to the (larger) scope of the UCPM, HERA focuses on **medical countermeasures**. The mandate of HERA includes, among other missions, promoting research and development of medical countermeasures and related technologies, addressing market challenges and boosting the EU's open strategic autonomy in medical countermeasures production, increasing stockpiling capacity of medical countermeasures, and strengthening knowledge and skills in preparedness and response related to medical countermeasures.<sup>915</sup> The only overlapping task between HERA and the UCPM is stockpiling, and for this task cooperation between HERA and the UCPM is in place. While the competencies of HERA are clearly defined in its mandate, some stakeholders expressed concerns about the perceived lack of clarity in the allocation of responsibilities between UCPM and HERA.<sup>916</sup> However, others indicated that the delineation of responsibilities is clear and that cooperation between UCPM and HERA enhances the overall preparedness of the EU.<sup>917</sup>

On **response**, evidence shows the importance of facilitating the mobilisation and deployment of medical experts in UCPM missions or within the ERCC, with ongoing discussions on how to best make use of this expertise in a structured way<sup>918</sup>. As a good practice, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ERCC was reinforced with an epidemiologist from the JRC. Similarly, in the context of the UCPM activation in Ukraine, HERA deployed a Liaison Officer to assess needs in the field of health. DG ECHO also cooperated with the DG SANTE and ECDC, with the latter sending epidemiological experts to DG ECHO.

Overall, coordination with health actors was crucial to ensuring an effective response at EU and national level. For example, the 2017 UCPM activation in Uganda to face the potentially serious Marburg Virus outbreak was seen as a positive example of UCPM coordination with health actors, such as the WHO, the Ugandan Minister of Health, and Médecins Sans Frontiers<sup>919</sup>. Although DG ECHO Desk Officers considered synergies and complementarities with the public health policy

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<sup>913</sup> European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face*, 2020.

<sup>914</sup> European Commission, *Reporting Guidelines on Disaster Risk Management*, Art. 6(1)d of Decision No 1313/2013/EU, 2019.

<sup>915</sup> Article 2 Decision of 16 September 2021 establishing the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority 2021/C 393 I/02.

<sup>916</sup> Focus group with: DG ECHO on 10 May 2023; national authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023. Interviews with: DG ECHO (8); EU stakeholders (2); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (8). See Annex 7 for case study on COVID-19.

<sup>917</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on COVID-19. Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2).

<sup>918</sup> European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2023. European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting on 24/25 April 2023*; Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2).

<sup>919</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2017 UCPM activations*, 2018.



field to have been established<sup>920</sup>, **the COVID-19 pandemic showed the need to increase knowledge and awareness of the UCPM among health authorities at national level**<sup>921</sup>.

Finally, the UCPM complemented and strengthened the support offered through the **Emergency Support Instrument (ESI)**, which was activated from April 2020 to January 2022<sup>922</sup>. Unlike the UCPM, the ESI was primarily a funding opportunity for Member States to mitigate the economic and social impacts of the pandemic. Recital 4 of Regulation (EU) 2020/521 provided that, given the nature and the consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak, the measures under the UCPM were limited in scale and did not allow a sufficient response or make it possible to effectively address the large-scale consequences of the COVID-19 crisis within the Union. In other words, the ESI was a complementary instrument in addition to efforts under the UCPM and rescEU, in particular<sup>923</sup>. DG ECHO actions under the ESI were grouped under the Mobility Package and included the transport of cargo, patients and medical teams in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 5.4.3.3 Maritime policy

The UCPM Decision and its activities were generally aligned with the maritime policy field, although evidence suggests that the UCPM lacks sufficient emphasis on marine pollution.

The UCPM cooperates with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) to respond to marine pollution cases. The allocation of responsibilities between the UCPM and EMSA on marine pollution is set out in their respective legislative frameworks. The EMSA Regulation provides that 'requests for mobilisation of anti-pollution actions shall be relayed through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism' and that EMSA 'may also provide assistance in case of pollution caused by ships as well as marine pollution caused by oil and gas installations affecting those third countries sharing a regional sea basin with the Union, in line with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism'<sup>924</sup>. Article 1(6) of the UCPM Decision specifies that it does not apply to actions carried out under the EMSA Regulation.

Coherence between the activities of EMSA and the UCPM and their overall coordination and integration is facilitated through several instruments and initiatives:

- **DG ECHO signed a renewed working arrangement with EMSA in February 2023.** This is intended to enhance cooperation in marine pollution, maritime SAR operations, security and safety incidents, enabling faster mobilisation of resources to support Member States or third countries<sup>925</sup>. The new working arrangement is deemed more practical than the previous version and has expanded the definition of maritime incidents to include acts of piracy<sup>926</sup>;
- **The ERCC has access to the SafeSeaNet platform**, a vessel traffic monitoring system managed by EMSA. In turn, **EMSA has access to CECIS Marine Pollution**, a system supporting the coordination of responses to maritime pollution incidents between national, EU and international authorities. EMSA's vessels, such as oil spill response vessels and pollution control ships, can be made available through the UCPM in the event

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<sup>920</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (27/31).

<sup>921</sup> European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2023; European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2020 UCPM activations*, 2021; European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*. See Annex 7 for case study on COVID-19.

<sup>922</sup> Council Regulation (EU) 2020/521 of 14 April 2020 activating the emergency support under Regulation (EU) 2016/369, and amending its provisions taking into account the COVID-19 outbreak.

<sup>923</sup> European Commission, *Questions and Answers on Emergency Support Instrument*, 2020.

<sup>924</sup> Article 2 Regulation (EC) No 1406/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2002 establishing a European Maritime Safety Agency.

<sup>925</sup> European Commission, *Renewed working arrangement between ECHO and EMSA officially signed*, 2023.

<sup>926</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2).

of a disaster that requires their specialised capabilities. In this way, EMSA's vessels can complement the UCPM's resources, enhancing the effectiveness of disaster response operation;

- **The Training and Exercises Programme provided a dedicated core course on maritime incidents, the Technical Expert Course for Maritime Incidents (TEC MI).** This training is no longer part of the new Training and Exercises Programme. Marine pollution was also a frequent disaster risk among the projects awarded within the PPP between 2017 and 2022.

Several stakeholders underlined that the UCPM lacks sufficient emphasis on marine pollution<sup>927</sup>.

**Cooperation between EMSA, DG MOVE and the ERCC was deemed to be functioning effectively in response activities**<sup>928</sup>. EMSA is often contacted to obtain satellite images, but DG MOVE and the EEAS should also be involved, although responses may be slower as requests might need to be evaluated for security concerns and/or political reasons.

Several stakeholders reported that the interface of the CECIS Marine Pollution Platform could be improved, and possible overlaps between CECIS Marine Pollution and SafeSeatNet could be reduced, especially double reporting by national authorities<sup>929</sup>. For example, in the event of a maritime pollution incident, both platforms may be used to exchange information on the type and extent of the pollution.

#### 5.4.3.4 Climate change adaptation policies

Several synergies were created between the UCPM and climate change adaptation policies. However, there remains room for improvement in the environmental sustainability of the UCPM.

UCPM Decision 1313/2013 refers to the likely impacts of climate change on disaster risks in several instances. In turn, the **2021 EU strategy on adaptation to climate change** refers to the role of the UCPM to respond to more severe and longer disasters, given the impact of climate change.

The **2019 Article 6 reporting guidelines** are largely coherent with EU-level climate change policy. They advise Member States to identify climate change impacts and climate change adaptation measures in their DRM Summary Reports. The 2019 version constitutes a step forward compared to the 2015 guidelines, as it refers to the impacts of climate change in a more systematic way and adds that the guidelines aim to 'encourage an exchange of good practices in preparing civil protection systems to cope with the impact of climate change'<sup>930</sup>. This may have been taken on board by Member and Participating States, as the latest overview document of disaster risks in the EU revealed that 25 of the 30 national reports mentioned climate change as a driver or risk, higher than in the previous reporting cycle<sup>931</sup>.

The non-exhaustive list of EU-level legislation on specific risks (included in the annex to the 2019 Article 6 reporting guidelines) does not reflect current EU-level policy landscape (which changed after the 2020 European Green Deal Package) on climate change adaptation, such as the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change, and the **European Climate Risk Assessment (EUCRA)**.

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<sup>927</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (4). Surveys of: national authorities (1/51). EESC, *Consolidating the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022.

<sup>928</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2).

<sup>929</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (1).

<sup>930</sup> European Commission, *Notice Reporting Guidelines on Disaster Risk Management*, Art. 6(1)d of Decision No 1313/2013/EU2019/C 428/07, 2019.

<sup>931</sup> The 2017 interim evaluation revealed that 'many EU Member States do not yet fully integrate climate change adaptation into their NRA' (European Commission, *Interim evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism*, 2017, p. 79).

EUCRA will assess current and future climate change impacts and risks relating to the environment, economy and wider society in Europe. The first EUCRA (expected in 2024) will be an expert-driven assessment primarily based on a review and synthesis of existing data and knowledge from various sources. The assessment will focus on complex climate risks, such as cross-border, cascading and compound risks. As EUCRA seeks to complement the existing knowledge base on the assessment of climate-related hazards and risks in Europe, it will be crucial to ensure that findings of these two overviews (EUCRA and the overview of risk developed under the UCPM Decision) will inform and complement one another<sup>932</sup>.

The recently introduced **Union Disaster Resilience Goals** integrate climate change considerations within the UCPM framework by underlining sustainability as a horizontal principle in the implementation of each and advising Member States to consider the impacts of climate change on disaster risks in their risk assessments, risk management planning, and detection and forecasting systems<sup>933</sup>.

Other newly introduced UCPM initiatives show good synergies with EU-level policies on climate change adaptation, such as the **Knowledge Network**, which provides a platform for sharing best practices, exchanging information and experiences, and developing common approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. DG ECHO strongly cooperates with the JRC under the **EWS** working group, and the impacts of climate change are frequently discussed, given the importance of integrating climate change considerations into forecasting systems<sup>934</sup>.

**Stakeholders agreed that the UCPM was effective in creating synergies with EU interventions in climate change adaptation**<sup>935</sup>. However, they also agreed that there is room for improvement. The UCPM could be further strengthened as regards fostering existing greening policies, practices, and examples of 'greening initiatives'. Specifically, a recent study on greening the UCPM found that<sup>936</sup>:

- **Environmental footprint data and indicators are not readily available for an accurate estimation and monitoring of: (i) carbon emissions and (ii) the broader environmental footprint.** Improved data availability on vehicle/equipment use and goods purchased would make it possible to estimate and monitor the carbon footprint of the UCPM, as well as the broader environmental footprint of civil protection activities. Rethinking transport and equipment use (by tracking their use in UCPM operations) would also help to establish distance travelled by different vehicles and equipment;
- **Although some civil protection authorities have begun to purchase greening vehicles, there are significant information gaps and challenges, such as cost and effectiveness, in some crisis contexts.** While Disaster Resilience Grants provide funding to Member and Participating States to improve disaster risk management capacities (by supporting studies, training, and development of risk assessments), funding for infrastructure or equipment in Member and Participating States is outside the scope of the Grants. DG

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<sup>932</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2). The EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change provides funding opportunities to support EU regions, cities and local authorities in their efforts to build resilience against the impacts of climate change. Initiatives supported in this framework might also be relevant to supporting climate risk assessments, raising awareness of disaster risks among citizens, and harmonising prevention efforts among regional, local, and national authorities (European Commission, EU Mission: Adaptation to Climate Change, [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/adaptation-climate-change\\_en#funding-opportunities](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/adaptation-climate-change_en#funding-opportunities))

<sup>933</sup> European Commission, *Recommendation on Union Disaster Resilience Goals*, 2023.

<sup>934</sup> European Commission, *Minutes of the Early Warning Systems (EWS) Expert Group meeting*, 2022.

<sup>935</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (22/30). Interviews with: DG ECHO (4); EU stakeholders (5); national authorities (2). EESC, *Consolidating the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022.

<sup>936</sup> COWI, *Study on greening the Union Civil Protection Mechanism*, 2023. The recommendations included in the study on greening the UCPM are more extensive and detailed than those listed here.

ECHO grant schemes could be adjusted or complemented to encourage greening by boosting their uptake and increasing their value for greening efforts. This would necessitate increased financial resources and knowledge of financing opportunities for the purchase of greener transport and equipment;

- **Many civil protection actors perceived a lack of reporting and acting on information from crisis that could reduce the impacts from future crises and provide information on the most effective greening efforts.** Suggestions included embedding greening lessons for UCPM deployments in the Lessons Learnt Programme or extending the role of environmental experts to include feedback on environmental issues.

The study on greening the UCPM gave an overview of the approaches taken by some Member and Participating States on incorporating environmental considerations into civil protection activities, showing growing awareness and commitment. These included the adoption of green public procurement measures, the development of tailored EWS, and the adoption of national greening strategies or action plans.

Overall, the study recommended that DG ECHO establish a forum of stakeholders through the Knowledge Network to discuss green initiatives and possibly constitute a mechanism for producing methodologies, tools and data on making the 'right green decisions'. Other recommendations included cataloguing funding options available to Member and Participating States to support the purchase of greener vehicles, developing a shareable list of low-packaging products and suppliers, creating an environmental section within the ERCC, and developing a standardised lessons reporting sheet to encourage green feedback loops by response teams.

The last **Civil Protection Forum** incorporated a thinking lab on possibilities to foster greener civil protection<sup>937</sup>. Participants were encouraged to share their knowledge and propose concrete actions to reduce the environmental impact of response activities on the ground. Suggestions included the use of sustainable and recyclable materials, as well as energy-saving measures. While a shift towards a more sustainable response is needed, participants underlined the challenges of such a shift for safety and efficiency and stressed that these aspects should not be limited by a more sustainable response.

#### 5.4.3.5 Environmental policy

The UCPM was generally coherent with several EU environmental policy instruments, such as the **Floods Directive**, the **Water Framework Directive**, and the **Seveso Directive**, although more can be done to ensure increased synergies.

The **Floods Directive** establishes a framework for the assessment and management of flood risks across the EU<sup>938</sup>. Member States are required to carry out an initial flood risk assessment and develop flood risk maps for their river basins and coastal areas. Based on these assessments, they must then develop flood risk management plans that identify measures to prevent or reduce flood risks. The **Water Framework Directive** requires Member States to monitor and address some quantitative aspects of water management, and it complements the Floods Directive by promoting sustainable water management and ecosystem protection, which helps to reduce flood risks<sup>939</sup>. The Union Disaster Resilience Goals refer to the Floods Directive, and the fourth goal includes specific objectives for the UCPM response against flood-related disasters<sup>940</sup>.

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<sup>937</sup> European Commission, *7<sup>th</sup> European Civil Protection Forum 2022. Final report*, 2022.

<sup>938</sup> Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks.

<sup>939</sup> Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy.

<sup>940</sup> European Commission, *Recommendation of 8 February 2023 on Union disaster resilience goals 2023/C 56/01*, 2022.

Synergies and complementarities are established between the UCPM and the Floods Directive and Water Framework Directive through the following instruments and initiatives:

- **2019 Article 6 reporting guidelines refer to both the Floods Directive and the Water Framework Directive**, advising Member States to include the findings from the obligations stemming from these Directives into their DRM Summary Reports. The 2020 overview document of disaster risks in the EU provided that ‘there is now more data on floods as the Floods Directive requires the collection of information on floods events’<sup>941</sup>;
- **EWS related to flood risks**, such as EFAS and Copernicus, managed by the JRC. This is in line with the Floods Directive, which provides that flood risk management plans ‘shall address all aspects of flood risk management focusing on prevention, protection, preparedness, including flood forecasts and Early Warning Systems’<sup>942</sup>;
- **In 2021, a UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting identified lessons from recent floods in Europe during UCPM activations** and beyond. This was also used as an occasion to present the Floods Directive requirements by DG ENV, and best practices at national level when it comes to the Directive's implementation. This initiative, as well as other workshops organised by DG ENV in which DG ECHO representatives are invited, contribute to strengthening synergies between the UCPM framework and the Floods Directive<sup>943</sup>. Nevertheless, evidence shows that the UCPM is perceived more relevant for response activities in case of floods as opposed to prevention<sup>944</sup>;
- **DG ECHO works with the Floods Working Group** to establish synergies and improve cooperation between civil protection and flood risk management authorities, by organising workshops and other relevant initiatives<sup>945</sup>;
- **The Training and Exercises Programme and EU MODEX were regarded as essential tools** for enhancing Member and Participating States’ preparedness for floods<sup>946</sup>.

On industrial accidents, the **Seveso-III Directive** requires stringent safety measures to be implemented to prevent major accidents from occurring and, in cases where they cannot be prevented, to effectively mitigate their consequences for human health and the environment<sup>947</sup>. Member States are obliged to report to the EU any accidents that fulfil certain criteria established in the Directive. Article 12 provides that, with regard to external emergency plans, Member States ‘shall take into account the need to facilitate enhanced cooperation in civil protection assistance in major emergencies’, although it does not refer to the UCPM. In turn, the annex to the 2019 Article 6 reporting guidelines refers to the Seveso Directive for industrial risks. The overview document of disaster risks in the EU confirms that many Member States reference and make use of the data gathered under the Seveso Directive when assessing the risk of industrial accidents, but it also reveals that data collection on industrial accidents faces particular challenges due to its decentralised nature, private ownership and varying obligations for different types of establishments. The overview document of disaster risks in the EU also uses data from the eMARS

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<sup>941</sup> ‘However, even for relatively well-accounted disasters such as floods, the EU lacks a defined and agreed methodology on how to record the adverse economic consequences resulting from those events’ (European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face*, 2020).

<sup>942</sup> Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks.

<sup>943</sup> European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting. Lessons Identified from recent floods in Europe*, 2022. Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1); DG ECHO (1).

<sup>944</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on floods.

<sup>945</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*.

<sup>946</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on floods.

<sup>947</sup> Directive 2012/18/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012 on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances, amending and subsequently repealing Council Directive 96/82/EC



portal, the major accident reporting system for submitting accident reports to the Commission, according to Seveso III Directive criteria.

However, beyond the use within the EU overview of risks, there were no findings on whether the UCPM uses or is involved with the initiatives carried out by DG ENV. According to the EESC, sectors such as industrial risks and disasters on electricity should be better addressed by the UCPM<sup>948</sup>. Links between the Seveso Expert Group and the UCPM could be strengthened by ensuring DG ECHO participation in the Expert Group's regular meetings that inform responsible national authorities (including civil protection authorities) of DG ENV initiatives on the Seveso Directive<sup>949</sup>.

#### 5.4.3.6 Migration and home affairs

The interim evaluation found that between 2017 and 2022, the UCPM established synergies and complementarities with the field of migration and home affairs<sup>950</sup>, notably by expanding its scope to (i) CBRN threats, and (ii) the protection of critical infrastructure.

#### 2. CBRN threats

Article 1(2) of the UCPM Decision specifies that in the case of acts of terrorism or radiological disasters, the UCPM only covers preparedness and response actions. **It can also be activated for man-made disasters**, including acts of terrorism, technological or radiological disasters.

The 2017 Action Plan to enhance preparedness against CBRN security risks has three main objectives: i) to reduce the accessibility of CBRN materials, ii) to ensure a most robust preparedness for and response to CBRN security incidents, and iii) to enhance knowledge of CBRN risks<sup>951</sup>. Under the second objective, the Commission intends to strengthen training and exercises for first responders from law enforcement, civil protection and health authorities through the existing financial instruments and operational tools, including the UCPM.

**Between 2017 and 2022, the UCPM framework strengthened its preparedness against CBRN threats.** This was achieved through several preparedness and response activities:

- **When designing the new rescEU reserve, CBRN capacities were given a high level of priority.** Three implementing decisions were adopted to develop: CBRN decontamination capacities<sup>952</sup>, CBRN stockpiling<sup>953</sup>, and mobile laboratory, CBRN detection, sampling, identification, and monitoring capacities<sup>954</sup>. During the evaluation period, five grants were awarded for CBRN stockpiling, and CBRN decontamination team capacities;
- **Exercises on potential CBRN events** were carried out within the Training and Exercises Programme, as well as exchanges on CBRN within the EoE Programme<sup>955</sup>;

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<sup>948</sup> EESC, *Consolidating the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022.

<sup>949</sup> For instance, DG ECHO participated in the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Commission Expert Group on the control of major accident hazards involving dangerous substances in 2019 but not in the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting in 2018 (European Commission, , 2019, [https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2019/TEIA/190509\\_SEG-07\\_FINAL\\_Agenda-CLN-forAres.pdf](https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2019/TEIA/190509_SEG-07_FINAL_Agenda-CLN-forAres.pdf); European Commission, *Minutes of the Meeting of the Seveso Expert Group*, 2018, [https://epsc.be/Activity/EU+Activity+Seveso/\\_/Seveso Expert Group minutes - March 7 2018.pdf](https://epsc.be/Activity/EU+Activity+Seveso/_/Seveso%20Expert%20Group%20minutes%20-%20March%207%202018.pdf)

<sup>950</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (20/31 ). Interviews with: DG ECHO (5); EU stakeholders (6); national authorities (3).

<sup>951</sup> European Commission, *Action Plan to enhance preparedness against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security risks*, 2017.

<sup>952</sup> Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1886 of 27 October 2021.

<sup>953</sup> Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1886 of 27 October 2021 amending Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/570.

<sup>954</sup> Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/465 of 21 March 2022 amending Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/570.

<sup>955</sup> EU–CHEM–REACT–2, *Full Scale Field Exercise (FSX) Final Conduct Report*, 2021; CN APEL– RO – IGSU, *Programme of Exchange of Civil Protection Experts*, Final Report, 2020.



- **The introduction of HERA**, responsible to develop a strategy on EU level stockpiling of medical countermeasures, including stockpiling of CBRN and medical countermeasures, also aimed to build increase CBRN resilience in the EU.
- During the UCPM activations in the context of **Russian's war of aggression against Ukraine**, rescEU CBRN reserves were mobilised and dispatched to Ukraine. The coordination of the ERCC with other relevant sectors enabled an effective response and showed the need for further synergies with actors in different sectors, such as transport, CBRN and security<sup>956</sup>.

**Stakeholders recognised that several steps were taken to foster synergies and complementarities within the CBRN portfolio**, for example through increased cooperation and involvement of DG HOME. However, they recognised that it is too early to assess the extent to which these measures have been successful, as they only began in 2021<sup>957</sup>. As CBRN is relevant to several Commission services (e.g. DG HOME, HERA), there is a risk of fragmentation and stovepiping<sup>958</sup> between existing initiatives in the field.

*ii) Critical infrastructure*

The 2019 revision of the UCPM first introduced the protection of critical infrastructure . Decision (EU) 2019/420 provided that 'actions to reduce the vulnerability of the population, economic activities, including critical infrastructure, [...], are of the utmost importance'. The overall increase in the terrorist threat in the EU also applies to critical infrastructure, which may be targeted by threat actors. Such attacks would generate cascading effects and affect the delivery of essential services, including the provision of energy, transport, water, food, communications, and health services<sup>959</sup>.

Recently, the EU adopted Directive 2022/2557/EU on the resilience of critical entities (CER Directive) and repealed Directive 2008/114/EU on the identification and designation of European Critical Infrastructures. The CER Directive states that 'when providing support to Member States and critical entities in the implementation of obligations under this Directive, the Commission should build on existing structures and tools, such as the UCPM'. Compared to the 2008 version, the Directive changed from an instrument that mainly identifies European critical infrastructure to a tool that also addresses resilience, protection and maintaining essential services.

Analysis of the synergies between the CER Directive and the UCPM reveal that:

- **In carrying out the risk assessments required by the CER Directive<sup>960</sup>, Member States must consider the general risk assessments carried out pursuant to Article 6(1) of the UCPM Decision 1313/2013/EU.** In turn, the 2019 Article 6 reporting guidelines advise Member States to report any measures in place to protect critical infrastructure and continue vital functions and refers to the 2008 Directive;
- **The two reporting obligations are thus designed as complementary and mutually informative.** However, in light of the update to the CER Directive, the 2019 Article 6 reporting guidelines might benefit from review. An update should consider the implications of the adoption of new definitions for key concepts included within the CER

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<sup>956</sup> European Commission, *UCPM Lesson Learnt Programme Meeting. Preliminary lessons from Russia's war on Ukraine*, 2022.

<sup>957</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (5); EU stakeholders (5); national authorities (3).

<sup>958</sup> In intelligence gathering, stove piping is the presentation of information without proper context.

<sup>959</sup> European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face*, 2020.

<sup>960</sup> Member States are required to draft risk assessments, which shall account for relevant natural and man-made risks, including those of a cross-sectoral or cross-border nature, accidents, natural disasters, public health emergencies and hybrid threats or other antagonistic threats, including terrorist offences.

Directive, such as ‘critical entity’ and ‘critical infrastructure’. This might ensure further coherence and avoid inconsistency or double reporting;

- The CER Directive provides that when a Member State identifies a critical entity of particular European significance, the Commission should be able to organise an **advisory mission** to assess the measures put in place by that entity. Specific expertise required for such advisory missions could be requested through the ERCC<sup>961</sup>.

Stakeholders underlined the importance of ensuring increased complementarity between the UCPM and the field of critical infrastructures protection, with positive views on the UCPM’s synergies with the work of DG HOME<sup>962</sup>. Given that an attack on critical infrastructure would have consequences for a variety of sectors and services (health, energy, transport), stakeholders agreed that a well-functioning cross-sectoral approach to effectively respond and mitigate its impacts is necessary (see Section 5.3.2)<sup>963</sup>.

### *iii) Asylum and migration*

The UCPM initiatives were coherent with the field of migration and asylum, as evidenced by the following activities:

- **In March 2021, DG ECHO expanded rescEU capacities to include a new capacity to provide emergency shelter to people affected by disasters and emergencies.** During the 2020 Annual Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting, participants highlighted the need to acquire a strategic number of temporary shelter assets under rescEU<sup>964</sup>. These were regarded as versatile in supporting the immediate aftermath of a disaster, as well as longer-term crises such as pandemics or increased migration flows;
- **In the context of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, the UCPM delivered shelter capacities under rescEU.** Moldova and Slovakia requested support from the UCPM to manage the migration flow from Ukraine. The request encompassed equipment, including shelter and non-food items, vehicles and communication devices<sup>965</sup>;
- **Stakeholders agreed that cooperation between relevant international organisations (IOM, the Red Cross, UN OCHA) and DG ECHO was effective** and that synergies were established with the migration and home affairs field<sup>966</sup>. For instance, the 2017 UCPM activation in Bangladesh for mass displacement was a good example of effective coordination between the IOM, UN OCHA and the ERCC, which allowed for swift mobilisation of assets<sup>967</sup>. Room for improvement was identified in DG ECHO-IOM cooperation on logistics<sup>968</sup>;
- **Beyond administrative agreements and SOPs,** informal communication channels smooth cooperation between relevant international organisations and DG ECHO<sup>969</sup>;
- **The UCPM complemented the ESI funding tool,** providing a framework for the coordination of response to emergencies (including large influxes of migrants).

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<sup>961</sup> Recital 36 Directive (EU) 2022/2557 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on the resilience of critical entities and repealing Council Directive 2008/114/EC.

<sup>962</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (4); EU stakeholders (6); international stakeholders (1).

<sup>963</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (11); EU stakeholders (12); national authorities (6).

<sup>964</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learned Meeting on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism in 2020, 2021*.

<sup>965</sup> European Commission, *Daily Map: Ukraine: Assistance offered through the UCPM*, 2022.

<sup>966</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (7); International organisations (4); experts in civil protection (2). Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (20/31) reported that the UCPM has been effective in creating synergies with EU interventions in the field of migration and home affairs.

<sup>967</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learned Meeting on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism in 2017, 2018*.

<sup>968</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (1).

<sup>969</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); International organisations (2).

#### 5.4.3.7 European Neighbourhood Policy

Article 28(3) of the UCPM Decision provides that ‘international or regional organisations, or countries that are part of the European Neighbourhood Policy may cooperate in activities under the Union Mechanism [...]’. The European Neighbourhood Policy governs the EU’s relations with 16 of the EU’s closest Eastern and Southern neighbours. In addition, the IPA is the means by which the EU supports reform in the enlargement region with financial and technical assistance. The IPA can also support the development of civil protection capacity in beneficiary countries.

Within this framework, key initiatives that are relevant for the UCPM include the **PPRD South II, PPRD East II and III, and the IPA**. These all aim to increase partner countries’ resilience to natural and man-made disasters.

**Overall, the evidence shows that partner countries had the opportunity to learn more about the UCPM, its framework and activities, and to align more closely with UCPM methodologies and tools<sup>970</sup>.** This was achieved through a number of actions, including training on the UCPM and its tools<sup>971</sup> and other types of training, similar to courses provided within the UCPM and delivered by experts with experience of teaching under the UCPM<sup>972</sup>. Other activities included organisation of regional workshops on the UCPM and international cooperation during major emergencies, including host nation support.

**Some stakeholders raised concerns about potential overlaps between the PPRD East Programmes and other UCPM activities**, given that more neighbouring countries have joined (e.g. Ukraine) or are interested in joining (e.g. Moldova, Georgia) the UCPM as Participating States<sup>973</sup>. The case study on the integration of UCPM preparedness activities found room for improvement in the alignment of the UCPM and PPRD training<sup>974</sup>.

A 2019 study on the UCPM Training Programme found that participation of third-country experts in UCPM training courses is not well planned<sup>975</sup>. They are also eligible to take part in other civil protection training within the EU framework, namely under the IPA and PPRD. As part of PPRD East 2 and PPRD South 3, there are several civil protection training courses similar to the UCPM Training Programme. These courses also explore the UCPM Training Programme and try to adapt to it, and the study suggested that the PPRD could be used to boost participation of experts from third countries in the UCPM Training Programme.

While all EU Member States have access to CECIS, other Participating States do not (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Türkiye, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Albania). In the case of Albania, Ukraine, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, it reflects their recent joining of the UCPM and the longer connection process.

**Finally, feedback from EU delegations in three IPA countries revealed that coordination with the ERCC worked well when responding to emergencies<sup>976</sup>.** However, they noted room for improvement in national level issues and the lack of access to the CECIS platform by some IPA countries<sup>977</sup>.

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<sup>970</sup> Expertise France, *Prevention, Preparedness and Response to natural – man-made Disasters, region South. Phase III (PPRD South III)*, Final Report, 2021.

<sup>971</sup> Ibid.

<sup>972</sup> Stantec, *PPRD EAST II: Prevention, Preparedness and Response to natural and man-made disasters in the EaP countries*, Final Report, 2019; European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019.

<sup>973</sup> Focus group with: national authorities and experts in civil protection participating in UCPM activities on 9 May 2023.

<sup>974</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on integration of UCPM preparedness activities.

<sup>975</sup> European Commission, *Study on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's Training Programme*, 2019.

<sup>976</sup> Feedback from EU delegations (AL, TR, MK) to DG ECHO on 9 December 2022.

<sup>977</sup> Ibid.

#### 5.4.3.8 Research and innovation

The UCPM ensured synergies with EU-level research and innovation initiatives.

**Working relationships between DG ECHO and the JRC are well established on the development, improvement and use of EWS**, including the production of daily maps and flash overviews that are used on the ERCC portal<sup>978</sup>. These systems ensure complementarities and strengthen not only the prevention and preparedness pillar, but also response, leading to better tools to face emergencies and better knowledge of risks among the civil protection community and beyond. The ERCC analytical cell ensures that data from the EU EWS are verified by experts from the European Scientific Partnership and translated into actionable information, specifically for the ERCC's early action.

Recent complex emergencies (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) have shown the importance of embedding specialised scientific expertise during crises, and the need to improve **operational links with the scientific community for response activities** (e.g. involvement of technical experts)<sup>979</sup>. In addition to the work with the JRC, stakeholders reported that **DG ECHO could work more closely with other DGs** (such as DG RTD or DG CLIMA) to promote relevant research, mobilise the academic sector, and fund specific or joint projects<sup>980</sup>.

Evidence shows the need to **increase the dissemination of research products and knowledge** (e.g. from the PPP)<sup>981</sup>. DG ECHO is working on an **online hub** that will map the different funding opportunities and thereby increase coordination with other EU programmes supporting prevention and preparedness projects in the Member States<sup>982</sup>. It will also facilitate access for civil protection stakeholders to a number of EU funding programmes, such as the Technical Support Instrument (DG REFORM's main funding instrument), Horizon Europe, LIFE Programme, and INTERREG (DG REGIO-funded instrument supporting cross-border interregional cooperation).

Finally, the **science pillar of the Knowledge Network** aims to bring together academics, practitioners and decision makers for multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation to apply scientific knowledge to disaster risk management. It will base its work on the achievements and activities of the DRMKC (managed by the JRC), as well as Aristotle. However, during the stakeholder consultation, the Knowledge Network was referred to as being still 'under construction' albeit with good potential to establish further synergies<sup>983</sup>.

#### 5.4.3.9 Consular support

Despite the fact that UCPM evacuation and repatriation efforts were largely effective, there is scope to streamline procedures and to enhance awareness of the UCPM among relevant actors in the consular support field.

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<sup>978</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (16/29). Interviews with: EU stakeholders (5); DG ECHO (3); national authorities (1); international stakeholders (1).

<sup>979</sup> European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2023. Interviews with: national authorities (20); DG ECHO (9); EU stakeholders (6); experts in civil protection (6).

<sup>980</sup> Focus group: on cost-effectiveness on 26 May 2023. Interviews with: national authorities (1); DG ECHO (1); experts in civil protection (1); EU stakeholders (2). European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2023; EESC, *Consolidating the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022.

<sup>981</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting on the 2018 Forest Fire Season*, 2019; European Commission, *Evaluation of the European Commission's Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Projects (2014–2020)*, 2021.

<sup>982</sup> European Commission, *Note to DG ECHO Management. Prevention and Preparedness Programme: findings of recent evaluations and future outlook for the programme*, 2022.

<sup>983</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (5); experts in civil protection (2); international stakeholders (3); national authorities (6). EESC, *Consolidating the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in order to improve the EU's capacity to react in the face of extreme events, including those occurring outside its territory*, Opinion, 2022.

Article 16(7) of Decision 1313/2013/EU provides that the **UCPM may be used to provide civil protection support to consular assistance to EU citizens** in disasters in third countries, if requested by the consular authorities of the Member States concerned. The EU confers EU citizens with the fundamental and citizen's right to consular protection when they travel or reside outside the EU<sup>984</sup>. Council Directive (EU) 2015/637 regulates the coordination and cooperation measures to facilitate consular protection for unrepresented EU citizens in third countries. Directive (EU) 2015/637 provides that Member States may seek support from instruments such as the UCPM or the crisis management structures of the EEAS<sup>985</sup>.

Between 2017 and 2022, the UCPM received around 46 RfA for consular support. A large majority related to the **repatriation of EU citizens due to the COVID-19 pandemic**. The ERCC, in coordination with EU delegations and the EEAS central administration (particularly the Consular Affairs Division and the dedicated Consular Taskforce) supported Member States in repatriating more than 600,000 citizens, 90,000 of them benefiting from UCPM-sponsored flights<sup>986</sup>.

Overall, evidence on these operations found that:

- **There was a good level of cooperation between relevant authorities** (EEAS including EU delegations and ERCC), offering support and complementing each other's mandates<sup>987</sup>. In addition to national civil protection authorities, the ERCC interacted with national Ministries of Health and Foreign Affairs.
- **The deployment of an ERCC Liaison Officer** alongside the UCPM response was considered a good practice<sup>988</sup>;
- Although repatriation efforts were largely effective, they showed **the need to increase the knowledge and awareness of the UCPM among these key players, particularly in third countries**<sup>989</sup>. This points to the importance of continuing the training for civil protection focal points in EU delegations, as well as the need to maintain long-term knowledge on the UCPM among their staff. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UCPM was rarely used for consular support<sup>990</sup>. However, the 2017 UCPM activations for consular support had already highlighted the need for enhanced cooperation between consular and civil protection authorities<sup>991</sup>;

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<sup>984</sup> Articles 20(2)(c) and 23 TFEU provide that every EU citizen is entitled, in the territory of a third country in which the Member State of which they are a national is not represented, to protection by the diplomatic and consular authorities of any Member State, under the same conditions as nationals of that Member State.

<sup>985</sup> Article 13(4) Council Directive (EU) 2015/637 of 20 April 2015 on the coordination and cooperation measures to facilitate consular protection for unrepresented citizens of the Union in third countries and repealing Decision 95/553/EC.

<sup>986</sup> European Commission, *Situational awareness sector. Overview of COVID-19 related UCPM Requests for Assistance in 2020, 2021*, [https://erccportal.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ercmaps/20210113\\_UCPM\\_World\\_COVID\\_2020.pdf](https://erccportal.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ercmaps/20210113_UCPM_World_COVID_2020.pdf)

<sup>987</sup> European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2023.

<sup>988</sup> Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018–2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020–2022*, 2023. See Annex 7 for case study on COVID-19 repatriations/consular services.

<sup>989</sup> European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2023; Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018–2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020–2022*, 2023. See Annex 7 for case study on COVID-19 repatriations/consular services.

<sup>990</sup> European Commission, *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation and application of Council Directive (EU) 2015/637*, 2022.

<sup>991</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the Lessons Learnt Meeting on the UCPM operations in 2017, 2018*.

- **Areas for improvement during consular support operations included the bureaucratic nature of the application process, unclear procedures,** or several cases where resources were not fully used (e.g. half-empty planes)<sup>992</sup>.

#### 5.4.3.10 CAP and EU Forest Strategy

During the evaluation period, synergies were established between the UCPM and the CAP on the integration of disaster risk management in CAP Strategic Plans 2021-2027 and the EU Forest Strategy. The recent Wildfire Prevention Action Plan is expected to promote further mainstreaming of disaster risk management in agricultural and forestry policy and programmes and to ensure better coherence.

The EU does not have a common forestry policy, as this remains primarily a national competence. However, many EU measures have an impact on forests in EU and non-EU countries<sup>993</sup>:

- **CAP, which is the main source of EU funds for protecting forests.** DG ECHO worked closely with DG AGRI to review the draft National Strategic Plans 2021-2027 to ensure integration of relevant disaster risk management measures. CAP provides financial support to rural areas: Member States can choose to fund forestry measures through their national Rural Development Programmes. In the forestry sector, these measures can support prevention of forest damage caused by fires, natural disasters and catastrophic events, as well as restoring damaged forests<sup>994</sup>. CAP funding often supports drought and flood risk management measures;
- In 2021, the European Commission adopted the **EU Forest Strategy for 2030**, one of the flagship initiatives of the European Green Deal, which builds on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

**Evidence suggests room for further synergies between UCPM activities and EU policy on areas with an impact of forest fires, particularly the CAP.** Views on the degree of alignment between the UCPM and the CAP varied among DG ECHO stakeholders<sup>995</sup>, but some of those interviewed agreed that further synergies should be established and that a ‘siloed’ culture should be avoided<sup>996</sup>. While evidence shows that UCPM response activities were particularly relevant here, prevention initiatives could be further aligned with other EU level initiatives<sup>997</sup>. In practice, this proves challenging, given that competences on landscape planning and forest management are usually scattered among different organisations at national level<sup>998</sup>.

Looking ahead, DG ECHO proposed a **Wildfire Prevention Action Plan**, comprising 10 actions aimed at improving capacity, knowledge, and financing opportunities for wildfire prevention actions<sup>999</sup>. It intends to ‘make full use’ of the tools under the UCPM, including the Union Disaster

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<sup>992</sup> European Commission, *Lessons from the first COVID-19 wave in Europe*, 2023; Kantar, *Evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022 and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022*, 2023. See Annex 7 for case study on COVID-19 repatriations/consular services.

<sup>993</sup> European Parliament, *The European Union and Forests*, n.d.

<sup>994</sup> European Commission, *Agriculture and rural development: EU forestry explained*, n.d.

<sup>995</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers: a minority of respondents agreed that the UCPM has been effective in creating synergies with EU interventions in the agricultural field (7/28), another minority disagreed with the statement (7/28), while the remainder neither agreed nor disagreed (14/28).

<sup>996</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); EU stakeholders (2); DG ECHO (3). See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>997</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>998</sup> European Commission, *Land-based wildfire prevention*, 2021.

<sup>999</sup> European Commission, *Overview of the Wildfire Prevention Action Plan*, 2022.



Resilience Goals (which provide specific objectives for wildfire response)<sup>1000</sup>. Although newly adopted, the Wildfire Prevention Action Plan demonstrates a commitment to enhancing coherence between the UCPM and relevant EU policies, including the EU Forest and Biodiversity Strategies.

See Annex 7 for the case study on forest fires, which details the UCPM activities to prevent, prepare, and respond to forest fires.

#### 5.4.3.11 Cohesion Policy, Recovery and Resilience Funds

**The EU has mobilised significant financial resources to support investment in disaster resilience**<sup>1001</sup>. Disaster risk management considerations are integrated into EU-level financial instruments. Most of the EU funds supporting disaster prevention and management activities are programmed through the **European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds**. These include specific funds contributing to prevention and preparedness efforts, including the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the Cohesion Fund, and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). For the 2021-2027 programming period, preconditions for the attribution of European Regional Development Funding are in place to ensure effective and efficient spending: national risk assessments must be adopted for investments in risk prevention, including climate change adaptation and management<sup>1002</sup>.

**In addition to investing in better prevention and preparedness, the EU provides financial support to national emergency and recovery operations in the aftermath of major disasters**, particularly through the **EU Solidarity Fund**. Additionally, **NextGenerationEU** was adopted to repair the immediate economic and social damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The centrepiece of NextGenerationEU is the Recovery and Resilience Facility, an instrument for providing grants and loans to support investments in Member States.

Article 26(2) of the UCPM Decision provides that synergies, complementarity and increased coordination must be developed with other EU instruments, such as those supporting cohesion and rural development, as well as the EU Solidarity Fund.

**During 2017-2022, several UCPM activities and legislative amendments to the UCPM Decision were aligned and complemented efforts at EU level through financial instruments.** Examples included:

- DG ECHO funded research on the economic case for strengthening financial resilience, investing in risk reduction, and improving institutional preparedness<sup>1003</sup>;
- Union Disaster Resilience Goals' objective number 1 (Anticipate) provides that Member States should seize the support available under the UCPM and other EU funds to promote smart investments in disaster prevention, such as the Resilience and Recovery Facility, Cohesion Policy, EAFRD, ERFD, LIFE Programme, TSI, and the EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change<sup>1004</sup>;
- The new Wildfire Prevention Action Plan has a dedicated theme on 'increased financing for wildfire prevention actions', including two actions: i) encouraging use of UCPM prevention and preparedness funding instruments for national, cross-border or pan-

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<sup>1000</sup> European Commission, *Recommendation of 8 February 2023 on Union Disaster Resilience Goals*, 2023.

<sup>1001</sup> European Commission, *Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face*, 2020.

<sup>1002</sup> European Commission, *Strengthening EU Disaster Management: rescEU Solidarity with Responsibility Solidarity with Responsibility*, COM/2017/0773 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1511770718312&uri=COM:2017:773:FIN>

<sup>1003</sup> World Bank, *Economics for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness in Europe*, 2021, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/06/04/economics-for-disaster-prevention-and-preparedness-in-europe>

<sup>1004</sup> European Commission, *Recommendation on Union Disaster Resilience Goals*, 2023.

European projects to support wildfire prevention; and ii) encouraging further use of EU funds for investing in wildfire prevention and analysing the current uptake of EU funds for disaster risk management<sup>1005</sup>.

DG ECHO Desk Officers held conflicting views on the effectiveness of the UCPM in creating synergies with economic, social and territorial cohesion, public and sustainable finance<sup>1006</sup>. Some commented on the synergies between the UCPM and Cohesion Policy and Recovery and Resilience Funds, with positive views on their coherence and level of cooperation between DG ECHO, DG REGIO, DG ECFIN, and the European Investment Bank (EIB)<sup>1007</sup>. DG ECHO also engages with DG FISMA and European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA) on financing instruments other than subsidies and funding (EU Taxonomy, the cornerstone of the EU's sustainable finance framework)<sup>1008</sup>. Finally, DG ECHO cooperates with DG TAXUD to ensure no double funding among programmes (e.g. the Customs Control Equipment Instrument, which may also be of interest to civil protection authorities)<sup>1009</sup>.

#### 5.4.3.12 External coherence with international frameworks

This subsection assesses the extent to which the UCPM was coherent with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted by the UN, and other interventions to guarantee international peace and security (e.g. the EADRCC within NATO, which coordinates RfA and offers of assistance for a wide range of natural and man-made disasters).

Overall, stakeholders believed that there were synergies between UCPM prevention, preparedness, cross-pillar activities, and international interventions related to civil protection<sup>1010</sup>. They also agreed that the UCPM was effective in coordinating its response with other international actors<sup>1011</sup>.

#### **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction guides governments, communities and other stakeholders in reducing disaster risks and building resilience through a comprehensive and inclusive approach. The main priorities for action include: i) understanding disaster risk, ii) strengthening disaster risk governance, iii) investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, and iv) enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to 'build back better' in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. It recognises that disaster risk reduction is a cross-cutting issue that requires collaboration and cooperation across sectors and levels of government, as well as with other stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society and academia.

Stakeholders agreed that **UCPM activities were aligned and complemented the UNDRR work on the Sendai Framework**, although there could be **scope for further synergies**<sup>1012</sup>:

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<sup>1005</sup> European Commission, *Overview of the Wildfire Prevention Action Plan*, 2022, [https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/Wildfire Prevention Action Plan.pdf](https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/Wildfire%20Prevention%20Action%20Plan.pdf)

<sup>1006</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO - economic, social and territorial cohesion, 48% (14/29) neither agreed nor disagreed, 23% (7/29) agreed, and 28% (8/29) disagreed; public and sustainable finance - 61% (17/28) neither agreed nor disagreed, 18% (5/28) agreed, 22% (6/28) disagreed.

<sup>1007</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (2).

<sup>1008</sup> Input was provided by DG ECHO; DG FISMA, DG REGIO and EIOPA did not take part in consultation activities for this evaluation (see Annex 5 for overview of stakeholders consulted).

<sup>1009</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1). European Commission, *Customs Control Equipment Instrument*, n.d., [https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/eu-funding-customs-and-tax/customs-control-equipment-instrument\\_en](https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/eu-funding-customs-and-tax/customs-control-equipment-instrument_en)

<sup>1010</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (20/28); national authorities (32/42).

<sup>1011</sup> Surveys of: DG ECHO Desk Officers (22/27); national authorities (33/43). Interviews with: DG ECHO (7); experts in civil protection (2); international stakeholders (6); national authorities (4).

<sup>1012</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (2); EU stakeholders (2); international stakeholders (1); national authorities (1).

- **Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction** for 2015-2030 describes how the UCPM contributes to the implementation of the Sendai Framework's four priorities through its different activities<sup>1013</sup>. The UCPM assists Member States in developing their risk management capabilities, provides cross-sectoral overview of risks at EU level, and enhances disaster preparedness through the development of the capacities committed under the ECPP;
- The Sendai Framework advises promoting mutual learning and exchange of good practices and information through voluntary and self-initiated peer reviews. The **Peer Review Programme** within the UCPM is a good example of synergies with the Sendai Framework. The PRAF provides that 'for the purpose of UCPM, the disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies developed under the Sendai Framework can be assessed by using the same methodology'<sup>1014</sup>. In addition, where the disaster risk reduction strategy has been previously assessed by UNDRR, UCPM reviewers have access to the main evaluation report and recommendations, so that the analysis of the peer reviews can complement and integrate the review made under the UN umbrella, providing updates or additional in-depth information<sup>1015</sup>.

Unlike the Sendai Framework, the UCPM Decision does not refer to the **build back better** concept for the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, but the newly introduced Union Disaster Resilience Goals strengthen the coherence of the UCPM with the Sendai Framework by emphasising the importance of recovery as part of the full disaster management cycle.

Potential overlaps were also identified with respect to monitoring implementation of the Union Disaster Resilience Goals and the Sendai Framework. DG ECHO and UNDRR recently discussed how to avoid such overlaps, including using globally agreed indicators to avoid duplication of effort<sup>1016</sup>.

### ***International peace and security***

Despite the UCPM effectively coordinating its activities with NATO and UN OCHA, evidence suggests some unexploited synergies.

During the evaluation period, the UCPM coordinated its response with the **EADRCC** within the framework of **NATO**. The EADRCC works as a system for coordinating requests for, and offers of, assistance in case of natural and man-made-disasters. In January 2023, the NATO Secretary-General and the EU signed a renewed joint declaration, stressing that NATO and the EU play complementary, coherent and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security<sup>1017</sup>. The UCPM also cooperates with relevant UN entities, such as **UN OCHA**, which also contributes to international peace and security by coordinating humanitarian responses in crisis around the world, including conflict situations, natural disasters and other emergencies.

Overall, the UCPM effectively coordinated its response activities with international organisations:

- The **EADRCC complements the UCPM** through its ability to provide **military capability** in situations where the UCPM cannot provide further assistance, such as for medical evacuation purposes<sup>1018</sup>;

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<sup>1013</sup> European Commission, *Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2020. A disaster informed approach for all EU policies*, Staff Working Document, 2016.

<sup>1014</sup> European Commission, *Peer Review Assessment Framework*, 2022.

<sup>1015</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1016</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (1).

<sup>1017</sup> NATO, *Joint Declaration on EU–NATO Cooperation*, 2023.

<sup>1018</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (1).

- Stakeholders indicated that **cooperation between the UCPM and NATO improved dramatically after the COVID-19 pandemic**, but that more should be done to ensure further synergies and alignment<sup>1019</sup>. For instance, the ERCC is involved in NATO exercises, but there is no link between UCPM training and exercises and NATO exercises. Increased sharing of knowledge on prevention and preparedness activities (e.g. EWS) was also highlighted as an element for improvement, as well as better alignment with the respective initiatives on resilience<sup>1020</sup>;
- In 2020, updated **SOPs between DG ECHO and UN OCHA** were drafted and a new administrative agreement was signed in 2022<sup>1021</sup>. These aim to reduce the uncertainty in logistics arrangements and ensure better cooperation and coordination both in the preparedness and response phases;
- Evidence shows that **cooperation between UCPM and OCHA functioned effectively** and was facilitated by informal exchanges among staff<sup>1022</sup>. However, during UCPM missions, there is a need to enhance humanitarian actors' understanding of civil protection actors<sup>1023</sup>.

### 5.5 EU added value

This section assesses the EU added value of the UCPM in preventing, preparing for and responding to crises and natural and man-made disasters that occur within and outside the EU. The underlying question is whether Member States and Participating States and third countries would be able to achieve the same objectives satisfactorily had they acted alone rather than delegating competence at Union level.

5.5.1 EQ13: To what extent did the UCPM add value compared to what could have been achieved by Member States, Participating States and third countries acting at national or regional level?

#### Key findings

- The UCPM contributed to results that could not have been achieved solely at national, regional or local level. Examples included the UCPM response to forest fires and floods, as well as Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine;
- The elements of the UCPM that brought particular added value to national/regional civil protection activities included coordination of response through the ERCC, pooling of resources through rescEU, knowledge sharing through the establishment of the Knowledge Network, capacity development through the UCPM Training and Exercise Programme, raising awareness and disaster risk prevention (including risk assessment and mapping);
- Evidence suggests that national, regional and local interventions would be fragmented, less efficient and less effective should the UCPM cease to exist or be withdrawn;

<sup>1019</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (3); EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (7); International stakeholders (1).

<sup>1020</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (1); national authorities (2); DG ECHO (1). European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2020 UCPM activations*, 2021.

<sup>1021</sup> European Commission, *Outcomes of the lessons learnt meeting on the 2020 UCPM activations*, 2021; UN OCHA and European Commission, *Administrative agreement to enhance the cooperation and coordination between DG ECHO and UN OCHA Response Support Branch in the field of disaster preparedness and response*, 2022.

<sup>1022</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (6); EU stakeholders (1); national authorities (3).

<sup>1023</sup> European Commission, *Minutes from Lessons Learnt Programme Annual Meeting 24/25 April 2023*. Interviews with: national authorities (3); experts in civil protection (3); international partners (2).

- Evidence suggests that no other instruments or networks would be able to fully replace the UCPM and/or more suitable to improve cooperation on civil protection matters both within and outside the EU;
- There is limited evidence on ways in which the UCPM external dimension brings significant added value to Member and Participating States, e.g. through extended networks or more lessons in the field of civil protection.

#### Judgement criteria:

- JC13.1: The UCPM contributed to results that could not have been achieved solely at national level
- JC13.2: Elements of the UCPM that brought particular added value to national/regional CP activities (MS/PS/TC) were identified
- Judgement criteria JC13.1 and JC13.2 will be answered together due to the nature of the data collected

Throughout the evaluation period, the UCPM was instrumental in achieving results that could not have been achieved solely at national, regional or local level. Examples included the UCPM response to forest fires and floods between 2017 and 2022, and, most recently, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The UCPM offered a single point of contact for countries requesting and offering assistance, mobilised considerable resources and capacities within brief timeframes, and fostered collaboration, mutual learning and exchange of information between multiple stakeholder groups (including national authorities, international partners and civil protection experts).

The large majority of stakeholders believed that results achieved through UCPM activities could not have been attained by Member or Participating States on their own. Most national authorities<sup>1024</sup> and civil protection experts<sup>1025</sup> agreed that the results achieved through the UCPM activities could not have been attained by their country acting alone, nor through bilateral cooperation between Member and Participating States<sup>1026</sup>, nor multilateral cooperation through other networks or instruments<sup>1027</sup>. For example, in the case of response to forest fires, national and regional stakeholders perceived the EU as 'the most efficient, effective and quick in response institution' to deal with major fire outbreaks<sup>1028</sup>. Conversely, they believed that national instruments or bilateral agreements between neighbouring countries were suitable options to deal with forest fires at national level or in border areas, respectively. In the case of floods and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the UCPM achieved results no single member or Participating State could, by providing a single contact point to channel resources and coordinate multiple stakeholders, relieving national stakeholders of significant administrative burden<sup>1029</sup>.

**Most stakeholders agreed that the UCPM has a tangible and clear added value for Member States, Participating States, and third countries. The main elements of the UCPM that brought**

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<sup>1024</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (36/49).

<sup>1025</sup> Surveys of: experts in civil protection (12/16).

<sup>1026</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (35/49); experts in civil protection (11/16).

<sup>1027</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (30/48); experts in civil protection (9/15).

<sup>1028</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>1029</sup> See Annex 7 for case studies on floods and on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

**particular added value to civil protection activities at national and regional level included enhanced coordination, pooling of resources and cost savings, sharing of knowledge and expertise, risk assessment and awareness, as well as solidarity and international influence.** These elements are discussed in greater detail below.

- **Enhanced coordination**

The majority of national and EU stakeholders agreed that a significant element of added value of the UCPM is its effective and efficient cooperation across disaster management phases<sup>1030</sup>. The majority of national authorities generally regard the UCPM as a more effective and efficient coordination system to channel the resources of the different Member and Participating States, compared to individual action and/or bilateral or regional agreements<sup>1031</sup>. Several noted the importance of maintaining a tiered approach to civil protection, including forms of bilateral and regional cooperation based on shared risk assessments that could be activated to provide faster responses under specific circumstances<sup>1032</sup>. However, several agreed that the UCPM, particularly through the ERCC, provided effective coordination in the response phase and remains the most suitable option to address large-scale, complex cross-border emergencies<sup>1033</sup>. It also allowed Member and Participating States to streamline resources and minimise the risk of duplicating efforts<sup>1034</sup>. Collective action channelled through the UCPM (especially the ERCC) in response to forest fires, floods, COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine brought added value in the context of those emergencies compared to other forms of supranational interventions and/or individual action on the part of Member States, Participating States and third countries.

- **Pooling resources and cost savings**

The majority of stakeholders perceived the UCPM as a cost-effective solution: pooling resources helped to achieve cost savings and provided EU added value to civil protection activities at national and regional level<sup>1035</sup>. For example, when national resources are insufficient to manage a crisis, Member and Participating States can benefit from access to a wider EU pool of capacities by requesting assistance from other Member and Participating States, the ECPP and rescEU. This is especially valuable for small countries with limited capacities, which are granted access to a wider pool of resources regardless of their individual contributions to the UCPM<sup>1036</sup>. Access to resources and provision of support seem to be rooted in a principle of solidarity that transcends the boundaries of the EU. For example, Member States provided access to UCPM resources to third countries on several occasions, including response to floods in Pakistan, to earthquakes in Türkiye and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Several Member States' national authorities viewed the cost savings offered by the UCPM (e.g. grants to cover transport costs) as one of the greatest benefits of being part of the Mechanism<sup>1037</sup>. This was illustrated with the availability of adaptation grants for Member and

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<sup>1030</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (12); EU stakeholders (5); DG ECHO (1).

<sup>1031</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (12); EU stakeholders (5); DG ECHO (1).

<sup>1032</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1); international partners (1); experts in civil protection (1).

<sup>1033</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (5); EU stakeholders (4); international partners (1); DG ECHO (1).

<sup>1034</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>1035</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (9); EU stakeholders (3); international partners (2); professional organisations (2); experts in civil protection (1). European Commission, *Combined Evaluation of DG ECHO's humanitarian response to epidemics, and DG ECHO's partnership with the World Health Organisation, 2017-2021, 2022*.

<sup>1036</sup> Interviews with: international partners (2); national authorities (2).

<sup>1037</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (5).



Participating States to repair and update grade capacities, as well as the possibility for national authorities to attend training and exercises. Several stakeholders agreed that the establishment of rescEU was a significant positive development in identifying and filling capacity gaps (especially for smaller countries), as well as an incentive for Member and Participating States to increase their involvement in the UCPM (see Section 5.1.1)<sup>1038</sup>. Despite its relatively recent establishment, rescEU proved instrumental in providing life-saving assistance<sup>1039</sup>.

- **Sharing of knowledge and expertise**

Civil protection national authorities and experts generally acknowledged that the UCPM offered a good platform for learning, sharing knowledge, networking and pooling expertise, without which Member and Participating States would be less effective, less coordinated and slower in responding to disasters<sup>1040</sup>. The exchange of information and best practices was considered a critical enabler, benefitting Member and Participating States by maintaining a common degree of situational awareness and understanding of new and emerging threats, especially challenges and threats stemming from climate change<sup>1041</sup>.

The added value of the **Knowledge Network** was underlined, as a space for practitioners, policy makers and researchers to connect<sup>1042</sup>. It will allow Member and Participating States to learn good practices and lessons, while drawing on the experiences of a larger number of stakeholders than would be possible through bilateral agreements. Stakeholders noted a lack of visibility of the Network and a general lack of clarity about its functions and use (see Section 5.1)<sup>1043</sup>.

The **Training and Exercises Programme** provided opportunities to share knowledge and expertise at a level that could not be coordinated by Member and Participating States alone. Most stakeholders agreed that:

- The Programme was a necessary supplement to national training (i.e. expert training and required basic training for international deployments) provided to experts by their home country or organisation<sup>1044</sup>;
- The Programme is a unique source for developing knowledge and capabilities in the field of civil protection at transnational level<sup>1045</sup>;
- The value of the Programme is evident in the impacts on other policy areas, such as health, security, migration, social policy and environmental policy<sup>1046</sup>.

Several stakeholders mentioned the **standardisation of operating procedures** and **common classification of competences** as an area of particular EU added value for Member and Participating States<sup>1047</sup>.

- **Risk assessment and awareness**

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<sup>1038</sup> Interviews with: international partners (2); national authorities (3); EU stakeholders (3); DG ECHO (3).

<sup>1039</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1) illustrated the added value of rescEU through a concrete example: the 32 rescEU teams deployed in Turkey within 48 hours saved around 200 lives, which would not have been possible in the absence of the UCPM.

<sup>1040</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (5); experts in civil protection (6).

<sup>1041</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (3); DG ECHO (1).

<sup>1042</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3); professional organisations (2); experts in civil protection (1). See Annex 7 for case studies on forest fires and on floods.

<sup>1043</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1). See Annex 7 for case studies on integration of UCPM preparedness activities, on forest fires and on floods.

<sup>1044</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (26/29).

<sup>1045</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (30/30).

<sup>1046</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (19/27).

<sup>1047</sup> Interviews with: professional organisations (3); international partners (1).

The assessment of risks through the collection and aggregation of DRM Summary Reports brings added value for national and EU stakeholders. The representatives of three national authorities (including one of the Member States most involved in civil protection activities) agreed that the overview document of disaster risks in the EU is a particularly important output<sup>1048</sup> as an instrument that can foster a pan-European approach and thinking about risks and preparedness. These views were echoed by several EU stakeholders, who saw particular added value in the UCPM's activities promoting risk assessment and awareness, including the DRM Summary Reports<sup>1049</sup>. Nevertheless, the heterogeneity of DRM Summary Reports submitted to DG ECHO continues to hamper their comparability, limiting their potential to feed effectively and efficiently into the overview document of disaster risks in the EUEU (see Section 5.1.1).

- **EU international influence and cross-EU solidarity**

Several stakeholders believed that strengthening solidarity and cooperation between Member and Participating States was one of the most notable results of the UCPM, bringing EU added value<sup>1050</sup>. Two representatives of the EU institutions remarked that the unbiased and request-driven nature of the UCPM enables transparent functioning and greater satisfaction of Member and Participating States, while allowing them to expand cooperation and influence beyond EU borders<sup>1051</sup>.

The analysis of the UCPM response to forest fires between 2017 and 2022 showed that UCPM operations are a highly visible and valuable EU diplomatic tool<sup>1052</sup>. 'EU delegations and pre-existing relationships between the competent authorities of third countries and those of Member States can facilitate knowledge of and interest in the UCPM'<sup>1053</sup>. One stakeholder even saw added value in including the UCPM in the external policy 'toolbox' of the EU<sup>1054</sup>.

#### Judgement criterion:

- JC13.3: Without the UCPM, national, regional, and cross-border interventions would be fragmented and less efficient and effective

**The absence or discontinuation of the UCPM would have detrimental consequences for Member States, Participating States and third countries, as well as the civil protection community at large. It could result in weakened cooperation among Member States, reduced capacity for disaster response, loss of shared knowledge and expertise, increased vulnerability to disasters, and loss of solidarity and international influence.**

- **Weakened cooperation among Member States**

Stakeholders agreed that the absence or discontinuation of the UCPM could result in weakened cooperation. Several civil protection national authorities mentioned that the absence or discontinuation of the UCPM would reduce the ability of Member States to effectively respond to domestic and international disasters in a coordinated, coherent, and harmonised way<sup>1055</sup>. Two representatives of EU institutions explained that Member States would have to invest more

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<sup>1048</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3).

<sup>1049</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); DG ECHO (2).

<sup>1050</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (2); EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>1051</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2).

<sup>1052</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>1053</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1054</sup> Interviews with: DG ECHO (1).

<sup>1055</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (7).

resources nationally to coordinate with other countries<sup>1056</sup>, while another underlined that without the ERCC, it would be impossible to respond promptly to disasters and crises<sup>1057</sup>. A lack of the coordination provided by the ERCC could present a challenge in the event of cross-border disasters, but also in single country disasters where the receiving country would have to coordinate the assistance provided by other Member States while tackling an emergency within its own borders.

- **Reduced capacity for disaster response**

Without the UCPM, the capacity to respond to disasters in Europe and internationally would be reduced<sup>1058</sup>. For small countries whose civil protection is highly reliant on the UCPM, its withdrawal could fundamentally undermine the ability to deploy civil protection capacities domestically<sup>1059</sup>.

Stakeholders noted that a lack access to UCPM's pooling of financial resources would have an impact on the field of preparedness<sup>1060</sup>. According to one EU stakeholder, Member States (particularly those subject to greater financial constraints) might not be able to invest in developing and maintaining CBRN capacities without the support of the UCPM, given the prohibitive cost of CBRN equipment and capabilities<sup>1061</sup>. Essentially, in the event of a UCPM discontinuation, Member and Participating States would be required to make greater investments to retain a degraded level of capacity.

- **Loss of shared knowledge and expertise**

Another point of concern among stakeholders about a hypothetical discontinuation of the UCPM was the lost opportunities to share knowledge and learning (including through training) with other Member and Participating States<sup>1062</sup>. They would no longer have access to the UCPM's platform for sharing information, best practices and lessons, potentially hindering their ability to learn from one another and adapt their approaches based on others' real-life experiences. This, in turn, could affect the collective ability of the EU and its Member States to respond to disasters in an effective and coordinated way.

Several stakeholders expressed particular concerns about the hypothetical discontinuation of the **Training and Exercises Programme**. Most believed that in its absence, national training activities would be more fragmented<sup>1063</sup>, duplicated in different countries<sup>1064</sup>, or even cease to exist<sup>1065</sup>. Most disagreed that civil protection training activities across the Union would continue at the same scale with national funding<sup>1066</sup> or with regional funding<sup>1067</sup> in the event that the UCPM was discontinued.

- **Increased vulnerability to disasters**

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<sup>1056</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2).

<sup>1057</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>1058</sup> See Annex 7 for case studies on forest fires, on floods and on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>1059</sup> Interviews with: international stakeholders (2); national authorities (2).

<sup>1060</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (3); EU stakeholder (1).

<sup>1061</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>1062</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (5).

<sup>1063</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (29/31).

<sup>1064</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (23/29).

<sup>1065</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (17/29).

<sup>1066</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (17/29).

<sup>1067</sup> Surveys of: Training and Exercises Programme stakeholders (15/28).

Several national and EU stakeholders agreed that the absence or discontinuation of the UCPM would reduce (or cease) Member and Participating States' risk assessment and preparation of DRM Summary Reports<sup>1068</sup>. Member States would lose the support to prepare DRM Summary Reports and develop strategies for disaster risk reduction and management<sup>1069</sup>. This would result in an overall reduction of the preparedness of Member and Participating States for emerging needs in the field of civil protection (including climate change and health threats).

- **Decreased EU international influence and cross-EU solidarity**

Several stakeholders pointed out that the EU's capacity to respond to disasters and support other nations is somewhat tied to its ability to exert influence within and beyond its borders. One national authority mentioned that if the UCPM ceased to exist and/or was discontinued, the public would lose trust in their country's capacity to help other countries in times of need<sup>1070</sup>. Another mentioned that its national legislative framework only allows the funding of international missions outside the EU in the context of humanitarian aid, limiting its ability to contribute to disaster response activities inside the EU in the absence of the UCPM<sup>1071</sup>.

**Judgement criterion:**

- JC13.4: There are no other instruments/networks that would be more suitable to improve cooperation on civil protection matters

**No other instruments or networks would be able to fully replace the UCPM and/or would be more suitable to improve cooperation on civil protection matters within and outside the EU.**

Most stakeholders agreed that a **hypothetical absence or discontinuation of the UCPM would have detrimental consequences** for Member States, Participating States and third countries, as well as the civil protection community at large<sup>1072</sup>. Although several agreed that civil protection activities would not stop entirely, negative consequences could be only partially offset by bilateral or regional agreements and/or multilateral cooperation<sup>1073</sup>. This situation would have a particularly negative impact on small countries that have limited prevention, preparedness and response capacities<sup>1074</sup>.

**UCPM support complements bilateral support by Member and Participating States.** Bilateral, regional agreements and multilateral networks co-exist with the UCPM to form a multi-tiered system of civil protection. Stakeholders agreed that the results achieved through UCPM activities could not have been attained through bilateral cooperation between Member and Participating States<sup>1075</sup> or through multilateral cooperation, other networks or instruments<sup>1076</sup>. The limited data

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<sup>1068</sup>Interviews with: national authorities (2); EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>1069</sup> Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, Art. 6 – Risk Management.

<sup>1070</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).

<sup>1071</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).

<sup>1072</sup> All interviews (excluding those with DG ECHO) included a scenario question requiring stakeholders to elaborate on the consequences of a hypothetical discontinuation of the UCPM and the possible alternatives to compensate its absence. Several interviewees among national authorities (21), EU stakeholders (15), professional organisations (3), and experts in civil protection (4) regarded a hypothetical discontinuation of the UCPM as negative (with different levels of intensity). Only one international partner felt very strongly about the possible negative consequences for the civil protection system in the absence of the UCPM.

<sup>1073</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (4); international partners (2).

<sup>1074</sup> Interviews with: international partners (2); national authorities (2).

<sup>1075</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (35); civil protection experts (11).

<sup>1076</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (30); civil protection experts (9).

available shows mixed opinions on whether other networks/mechanisms would be better placed to improve cooperation on civil protection matters: most experts expressed no opinion<sup>1077</sup>, while national authorities were almost equally split between those who agreed and disagreed<sup>1078</sup>. None of the respondents who agreed specified another instrument and/or network that would be more suitable to improve cooperation on civil protection matters.

- **Bilateral/regional agreements:** Member States typically have bilateral/multilateral agreements in place with neighbouring/nearby countries suffering from similar disasters<sup>1079</sup>. For instance, Mediterranean Member States have intense bilateral cooperation with Southern Neighbourhood countries, while trilateral agreements between Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands ensure such cooperation. However, these instruments are unable to fully replace the UCPM in a systematic manner, instead complementing UCPM interventions<sup>1080</sup>. There are also cases where countries activate both the UCPM and bilateral agreements. For example, in 2021, Türkiye submitted its first RfA for forest fires, receiving assistance from Croatia, Spain and Poland, alongside bilateral assistance from several non-UCPM countries (Azerbaijan, Kuwait, Iran, Russia, Qatar, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Israel, Turkmenistan). The interim evaluation found that only in the first instances of the COVID-19 response did Member and Participating States turn to bilateral/multilateral agreements (sometimes specifically established for that purpose) because of the UCPM's delay in responding<sup>1081</sup>;
- **Multilateral instruments or networks:** Member States, Participating States and third countries use multilateral instruments or networks to request/offer civil protection assistance. These include UNDAC and NATO's EADRCC. UNDAC and the EADRCC collaborate closely and are tasked with coordinating international emergency responses within the UN system and NATO region. Several stakeholders stated that in the absence of the UCPM it would be challenging for other international or regional organisations to cover the entire scope and cost of civil protection related activities<sup>1082</sup>. For example, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would not be able to replace the assistance channelled through the UCPM to Ukraine, given specific limitations to its mandate<sup>1083</sup>, and NATO would not be able to mobilise financial resources to the volume and scope of the UCPM, as co-financing instruments (e.g. to cover transport costs) are not foreseen under the EADRCC. Finally, the UN system would not be able to stretch its capacities and activities to compensate for the UCPM's absence<sup>1084</sup>.

**Member and Participating States engage in bilateral or regional agreements prior/during to activating the UCPM for different reasons.** Reasons why Member and Participating States rely on bilateral and regional agreements include complementarity of action, greater speed in response for that particular disaster type, strong historical ties or common geopolitical interests between countries, and previous instances of successful bilateral cooperation in the face of cross-border disasters<sup>1085</sup>. In the case of forest fires, bilateral and regional agreements are triggered during

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<sup>1077</sup> Surveys of: experts in civil protection (5/6 neither agreed nor disagreed).

<sup>1078</sup> Surveys of: national authorities (7/18 somewhat or strongly disagreed, 7/18 somewhat or strongly agreed).

<sup>1079</sup> European Commission, *UCPM Lessons Learnt Programme Meeting Forest Fire Season 2021*, 2022. Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (1). See Annex 7 for case studies on floods, on forest fires, on COVID-19 and on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>1080</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (2); national authorities (1).

<sup>1081</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on COVID-19.

<sup>1082</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (5); international partners (1); EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>1083</sup> Interviews with: EU stakeholders (1).

<sup>1084</sup> Interviews with: international partners (1); national authorities (4).

<sup>1085</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (4); EU stakeholders (1). See Annex 7 for case studies on floods, on forest fires, on COVID-19, and on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

smaller disasters, or those between two bordering countries with a well-established bilateral agreement<sup>1086</sup>.

**Judgement criterion:**

- JC13.5: The UCPM's external dimension brings significant added value to Member States and Participating States, such as in the form of extended networks and more lessons in the field of civil protection

**The UCPM's external dimension brings added value to Member and Participating States through extended networks and more lessons in the field of civil protection.** The external dimension of the UCPM refers to its involvement in civil protection activities beyond its borders. While the primary focus of the UCPM is to enhance cooperation among Member States in responding to disasters within the EU, the Mechanism increasingly extended its support and cooperation to countries outside the EU during the evaluation period.

**The UCPM increasingly facilitated closer cooperation between EU Member States and third countries, giving countries the platform to build closer ties.** The evaluation period saw a steep increase in activations, approximately two-thirds of which were from third countries (see Figure 8). In 2022 alone, the UCPM was activated 332 times, mostly outside the EU (72%). Notably, most external activations (132 out of 166) were RfA from Ukraine. Over the same period, the response rate to UCPM activations (within and outside the EU) fluctuated between 84% and 96% (see Figure 35; Section 5.1.1.3). This means that the UCPM did not deliver a response in only 10 of the 232 RfA in 2022. Benefits might have materialised for those third countries that received assistance through the UCPM, as well as for the Member and Participating States on the giving/receiving ends of civil protection assistance. However, there were insufficient data on whether/how UCPM external activations generated a return on investment for those Member and Participating States that solely delivered civil protection assistance.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the UCPM generally adds value to Member States, Participating States and third countries through activities such as capacity-building, knowledge sharing, pooling of experts, and coordinated disaster and emergency response. On its external dimension, it is possible to infer that the main benefits and opportunities for all stakeholders involved could derive from the following circumstances:

- The UCPM provides a single interface for third countries, simplifying and streamlining ways to request assistance and access resources. This was particularly evident in the UCPM response to floods in 2017-2022 and to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine<sup>1087</sup>;
- The UCPM provides a consolidated and consistent framework for Member and Participating States to receive RfA and coordinate response, reducing the burden on national authorities, with the ERCC and rescEU repeatedly praised by stakeholders<sup>1088</sup>;
- The UCPM external dimension provides an opportunity for Member and Participating States to contribute to developing new practices, advancing technology, and gaining experiential learning on disasters and crises that do not necessarily occur within their

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<sup>1086</sup> See Annex 7 for case study on forest fires.

<sup>1087</sup> See Annex 7 for case studies on floods and on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>1088</sup> ERCC - interviews with: national authorities (6); EU stakeholders (8); international partners (1). rescEU - interviews with: national authorities (3); EU stakeholders (7). ERCC and rescEU: see Annex 7 for case studies on forest fires and floods.



national borders (e.g. in the UCPM response to floods in 2017-2022, which included an external activation in Pakistan, and to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine)<sup>1089</sup>.

One representative of a Member State (among those most involved in UCPM activities) underlined that involvement in the UCPM is directly proportional to return on investment for Member States<sup>1090</sup>. For example, a Member State requesting assistance for forest fires might be able to develop specific expertise and, consequently, commit larger response capacities in the future. They believe that the UCPM provides opportunities for mutual learning and investing in each other's capacities (e.g. through financial support, training and involvement in response activities), including for those Member States that are more self-reliant in the field of civil protection.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the conclusions of the interim evaluation on the basis of the findings presented in previous sections.

### 6.1 Effectiveness

**Overall, the UCPM has progressed towards its general objectives of fostering cooperation and solidarity between the Union and Member and Participating States and, where applicable, third countries (Article 3(1) of the Decision).** Projects and activities funded by the UCPM were effectively implemented and contributed to preventing and preparing for disasters, thus reducing their (potential or actual) effects, promoting a culture of prevention, and enhancing preparedness. The UCPM also contributed to supporting Member and Participating States, as well as third countries (where applicable), to respond rapidly and efficiently to disasters, mitigate their immediate consequences (e.g. removing bureaucratic obstacles) and raise awareness of disasters.

**The UCPM prevention activities that contributed most to the achievement of specific objectives were (in order of impact):**

1. **The UCPM's risk mapping**, achieved through **the overview document of disaster risks in the EU**, national risk assessment processes, and the collection and consolidation of **Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Summary Reports** from Member and Participating States, contributed significantly to fostering a culture of disaster prevention. DG ECHO made strides in improving the quality and harmonisation of DRM Summary Reports by introducing new reporting guidelines and amending Article 6 to emphasise cross-boundary considerations. Nevertheless, heterogeneous methodologies and the range of sectors consulted in DRM Summary Reports could be improved to ensure more effective risk mapping at UCPM level.
2. **Prevention projects** funded under the Prevention and Preparedness Programme (PPP) were an effective tool to enhance prevention activities in Member and Participating States and (to a lesser extent) eligible third countries. Implementing additional follow-up mechanisms to track and evaluate their results would be beneficial. The inclusion of all UCPM-funded project outputs in the Knowledge Network online platform is expected to have a significant influence in ensuring more lasting impacts.
3. Increasing awareness on disaster prevention through the **dissemination of scientific knowledge through the DRMKC**. Although a useful prevention initiative, it was not used to its full potential, due to a lack of data and limited applicability and accessibility of findings to the civil protection community.

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<sup>1089</sup> See Annex 7 for case studies on floods and on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

<sup>1090</sup> Interviews with: national authorities (1).

4. **Advisory missions** in the field of prevention were effective to raise prevention awareness (mostly in third countries). Limited data show a lack of awareness and knowledge on the impact of advisory missions among key stakeholders.

Looking ahead, the **Union Disaster Resilience Goals** (adopted in February 2023) and the **Wildfire Prevention Action Plan** (adopted end-2022) are seen as tools with the potential to foster a higher level of prevention.

**The UCPM's preparedness activities contributed most to enhancing preparedness by complementing and supporting the development of national capacity through rescEU and the ECPP:**

- **rescEU and the ECPP were instrumental in supporting the development of national capacity.** rescEU was an important innovation that contributed to enhancing Member and Participating State preparedness. The redefinition of the ECPP (e.g. changes to adaptation grants' financing rates, extension to operational costs for deployments outside the Union) and (to a lesser extent) of the European Medical Corps (EMC) within positively enhanced preparedness. However, the EMC is underutilised and could be more visible;
- **There is room to improve the ECPP and rescEU.** The development of capacities in the ECPP and rescEU could be better linked with needs assessment (e.g. risk mapping, scenario building). Stakeholders noted that greater efforts should be made to ensure that rescEU remains a last resort tool when ECPP capacities are insufficient. Currently, following an RfA, the ERCC checks for spontaneous offers and ECPP capacity before turning to rescEU, with the only overlap between AFF capacities;
- **The ECPP saw a moderate expansion of capacity compared to the previous evaluation period and applied appropriate mitigation measures.** Despite the difficulties of COVID-19, DG ECHO applied suitable mitigation measures to ensure that more capacities were certified in 2021, such as introducing the possibility to conduct some certification steps online and the possibility to certify 'twin capacities' (when Member States develop and commit ECPP response capacities of the same type and with identical features, procedures, equipment and management). Nevertheless, the majority of ECPP capacities registered did not meet the capacity goals;
- **Under the ECPP, adaptation grants were a useful resource to help national authorities to upgrade and repair their response capacities.** The UCPM awarded 46 adaptation grants to 16 Member States, totalling EUR 24 million. A minority of Member State authorities claimed that the process to apply for/claim the grants was unclear or overly burdensome.

**UCPM activities also contributed to enhancing preparedness by contributing to increased sharing, availability and use of (scientific) knowledge and best practices on disaster response through the following activities (in order of impact):**

1. The **Training and Exercises Programme** enhanced preparedness by increasing the knowledge base and preparedness of key stakeholders participating in civil protection activities at both EU and national level. UCPM training and exercises had an impact on the development of resources and dissemination of knowledge and best practices at national level, as well as improving effectiveness of EU Civil Protection Team (EUCPT) deployments (their level of familiarity eased communication and cooperation). Training and exercises were successfully carried out, well-attended, at a high-quality level, with appropriate mitigation measures (e.g. online training during COVID-19). Nevertheless, while the number of experts trained is sufficient, the UCPM continued to train experts who are not subsequently deployed and to deploy experts who have not received all of the required training.
2. **EWS** effectively complemented national systems to enhance preparedness, mostly in Member and Participating States. They made continuous efforts to improve the accuracy

of data and information, including incorporating more scientific expertise, building closer synergies between systems, and improving functionalities. In order to ensure that information is less fragmented across EU and domestic EWS, they could cover more hazards, quality control measures and innovative data sources.

3. **Preparedness projects** funded under the PPP were an effective tool to share (scientific) knowledge and best practice on disasters and to raise preparedness for Member and Participating States (and to a lesser extent third countries). There is room for improvement in their applicability and follow up.
4. **Guidelines on host nation support** were an increasingly useful tool for national authorities, with many using them to develop their own national guidelines for response efforts under UCPM activations and/or bilateral schemes. The guidelines could be improved through updates (planned in 2023) and more widely disseminated.
5. **Advisory missions** in the field of preparedness were effective (mostly in third countries), but limited data show a lack of awareness.

The following **UCPM activities adopted towards the end or beyond the evaluation period** are expected to have an impact: 1) introduction of a deployable training path and a new framework contract on ad hoc training in the new Training and Exercises Programme (from September 2023); 2) Knowledge Network, by bringing science further into the fabric of UCPM preparedness activities; 3) scenario building, 4) Union Disaster Resilience Goals, 5) ERCC 2.0 initiative.

**The UCPM progressed towards supporting Member and Participating States and, where applicable, third countries to respond rapidly and efficiently to disasters and to mitigate their immediate consequences (e.g. removing bureaucratic obstacles).** It made significant contributions in the field of response, which stands out as its primary strength and the most visible aspect of its work, notwithstanding the changing nature of disasters (frequency, quantity and size). DG ECHO introduced mitigation measures and innovations to the response pillar, such as the use of logistical hubs in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

**The activities that contributed most to achieving this specific objective were (in order of impact):**

1. The **Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)** continued to make a crucial contribution to achieving a rapid and efficient response to disasters. ERCC Liaison Officers were crucial contact points facilitating communication between the ERCC and relevant stakeholders. Room for improvement for the ERCC includes: 1) considering the sustainability of its role in an evolving disaster risk landscape, 2) the accessibility of the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS) platform.
2. The UCPM adapted to changing pressures and demands and consistently **delivered assistance**, maintaining a high response rate to RfA within and outside the Union. The significant increase in activations for more complex and large-scale emergencies had an impact on the speed of response, especially outside the Union. The vast gap between the response time and the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) shows a need to adapt the targets on speed of response to the evolving disaster risk landscape.
3. The **financial support** provided by the UCPM for **transport and logistics** was increasingly significant, particularly from 2021 onwards and outside the Union. The UCPM's ability to provide standard logistics operations and to adapt to new logistical demands during complex, large-scale crises (e.g. repatriation of EU citizens worldwide during COVID-19) was a notable achievement.

On the **cross-pillar/horizontal dimension**, the UCPM progressed towards its specific objectives by raising awareness and preparedness for disasters, both within the civil protection community and with non-conventional stakeholders. The establishment of rescEU and UCPM involvement in high-profile disasters (e.g. COVID-19) contributed to increasing its visibility. The UCPM could help

Member States to raise awareness of the Mechanism and disasters among the public and, to a lesser extent, other non-civil protection sectors. The Union Disaster Resilience Goals and Knowledge Network have the potential to be instrumental in increasing public risk awareness and developing cross-sector cooperation and awareness-raising. Although the adaptability and flexibility of the UCPM proved a key facilitating factors for its effectiveness, stakeholders experienced ‘change fatigue’ when keeping up with the changes to the UCPM and the rapidly evolving threat and EU crisis management landscape.

**The cross-pillar/horizontal activities that contributed most to raising awareness and preparedness for disasters (in order of impact):**

1. **UCPM training and exercises** were considered invaluable resource in disseminating high-level expertise to key stakeholders. Involving more non-civil protection stakeholders in these sessions could raise awareness across sectors.
2. The **EoE Programme** fostered fruitful discussions, producing multilingual, accessible outputs. It implemented the necessary mitigation measures, such as introducing digital sessions during COVID-19.
3. **Workshops and events organised by the UCPM** were effective in raising awareness. Workshops with the EU Presidency and Lessons Learnt Workshops introduced thematic sessions that were valued. The Civil Protection Forum adapted, increasing in size and taking a hybrid approach. Looking ahead, the framework contract for ad hoc training will allow for more thematic sessions beyond the traditional elements, which could raise awareness.
4. The **PPP** raised awareness of an increasing breadth of hazards across a growing number of sectors.
5. The **Peer Review Programme** raised awareness of good practices and preparedness, and will do so increasingly through the new Peer Review Assessment Framework (PRAF) – which will standardise the process.
6. **Advisory missions** raised awareness of the functioning of the Mechanism and systems of civil protection, especially in third countries.

**The UCPM progressed towards its general objective of contributing to strengthened cooperation and coordination between the Union and the Member States for civil protection in the areas of prevention, preparedness for and response to natural and man-made disasters (Article 3(1) of the Decision).**

The UCPM facilitated **cross-border cooperation** and solidarity between Member States, Participating States, and (to a lesser extent) third countries. This improved during the evaluation period by applying the lessons from major disasters (COVID-19, Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine). Efforts were made to streamline coordination within DG ECHO, with room to create better synergies between Directorates A and B and to ensure adequate cross-border cooperation arrangements between Member States, covering all phases of the disaster risk management cycle and relevant disaster risks in border areas. Cooperation with third countries has predominantly been operational, responding to immediate needs as they arise, rather than diplomatic, which involves long-term, strategic, and formalised cooperation. However, there is a planned increase in more strategic, diplomatic engagement with third countries in the coming years.

The UCPM facilitated **cross-sectoral cooperation**, primarily due to the nature of the large-scale and complex disasters. These efforts increased over time, with room to improve the depth and structure of links. This particularly applies to the area of prevention and preparedness, with scope to increase cross-sectoral cooperation on risk mapping, DRM Summary Reports and EWS. The UCPM particularly increased cross-sectoral cooperation with non-civil protection national actors (e.g. health, energy), the private sector, CSOs, EU delegations, and other European Commission DGs. Increased cooperation with the private sector, especially in the context of Russia’s war of

aggression against Ukraine, was considered particularly successful, with potential to be better structured.

**The UCPM activities that contributed most to fostering cooperation (in order of impact):**

- In the field of **response**, the ERCC and EUCPT were crucial to fostering coordination with an increasing variety of stakeholders involved in emergencies. The UCPM exhibited smooth cooperation with between relevant national, EU and international actors involved in response efforts. It facilitated coordination by establishing a centralised EU system for transport and logistics;
- **Cross-pillar/horizontal activities**, such as UCPM training, exercises, the Knowledge Network and workshops brought together stakeholders from different fields and countries to identify good practices, lessons and ways forward. In UCPM training and exercises, participants learned to work together, while the Knowledge Network integrated scientific expertise more closely into the UCPM;
- **In the field of prevention and preparedness**, the PPP reinforced cooperation by financing diverse international, national and local consortia to work together. The ECPP and rescEU played a crucial role in promoting cooperation by facilitating the pooling of assets and identifying capacity gaps in Member and Participating States.

The UCPM's **effectiveness was facilitated by internal factors** such as increased responsiveness and adaptability in tailoring the legislative framework and organisational structure of DG ECHO. DG ECHO also demonstrated adaptability in introducing innovations to enhance the UCPM. The effectiveness of the UCPM was supported by **external factors**, including enhanced cross-sectoral cooperation (including the private sector), trust and mutual understanding between DG ECHO and national counterparts (as well as within and between countries). Familiarity with the UCPM among Member and Participating States also played a role in its effectiveness.

The effectiveness of the UCPM was **hindered by external factors**, primarily the changing threat and risk landscape, and limitations to the scientific evidence base for disaster risk management. The complexity of national civil protection administrative procedures and governance, in addition to their resource constraints, played a significant role. Finally, a misalignment between the expectations of some stakeholders and UCPM capacity hindered its effectiveness. **Internal factors hindering effectiveness** including a lack of human and financial resources, complexity of administrative procedures, and focus on response, sometimes at the detriment of preparedness and prevention initiatives.

The **UCPM produced positive unintended effects**, including heightened awareness of civil protection issues and challenges at policy and operational levels, increased application of scientific tools and research in the field, and inspiring civil protection cooperation networks beyond the Union. The interim evaluation did not identify negative unintended effects of the UCPM.

## 6.2 Efficiency

**During the evaluation period, the UCPM budget experienced a considerable increase driven by evolving needs and gap assessments. While in 2017 the MFF UCPM budget was about EUR 52 million and there were some absorption problems, at the end of the evaluation period, the MFF budget was significantly higher, reaching EUR 354 million (and the total budget, which included NextGenerationEU funds, EUR 1,061 million).**

The UCPM underwent several modifications aimed to address concerns about the need for flexibility, while ensuring predictable support to Member and Participating States in preventing, preparing for, and responding to unforeseen events and evolving needs. The timeframe for

revising the UCPM and implementing amendments varied, depending on the identification of these needs.

**Overall, the UCPM's budgeting system demonstrated a good level of flexibility to assist Member and Participating States in addressing evolving needs on the ground and unforeseen events.**

While this flexibility was occasionally and temporarily achieved by reshuffling budget from prevention, it was mainly the result of budget reinforcements, frontloads and amendments made possible by the changes introduced by the revisions to the regulation and a budgetary authority that was reactive and supportive to the UCPM's requests reinforcements to respond to crises (approvals took place in a time range of three weeks to two months).

Nevertheless, in some instances, some elements limited the flexibility of the budgetary system during the evaluation period, for example the restricted applicability of NextGenerationEU fund to addressing health-related needs, DG ECHO's reliance on sometimes overwhelmed Member States for capacity development, rather than directly procuring certain capacities, and the presence of complex procedures and rules. . Going forward, the lack of certainty on whether and how quickly additional funds may arrive to deal with emerging needs was a concern of some DG ECHO staff, with a few mentioning that a less discretionary approach to budget adjustments in face of emerging needs would be of added value.

**The anticipated benefits of UCPM activities were (to some extent) realised efficiently.** However, stakeholders recognised the need for increased clarity on the costs associated with various UCPM activities. Opportunities for improvement include reducing administrative burden, addressing overlaps and unexplored synergies, addressing data and supporting systems that are not fit for purpose, and augmenting human resources.

Although it was **difficult to determine at macro-level whether the UCPM was the most cost—effective solution overall, the evaluation identified many examples where cost-effectiveness was taken into account** during the planning, implementation, monitoring, and/or revision/expansion stages of UCPM components/elements. Most stakeholders stated that results were achieved in the most cost-effective way. Overall, the benefits of the UCPM outweighed the costs across the UCPM's activities in all pillars. However, DG ECHO staff had limited awareness and scrutiny of the cost-effectiveness of UCPM activities, with a notable exception being contract awarding. While some DG ECHO staff indicated that this is an area that should be improved, others considered it of limited relevance, given the nature of UCPM activities and resource constraints.

**Recognising the potential cost-effectiveness of prevention and preparedness, the UCPM bolstered these pillars by revising the Decision.** The limitations of the UCPM highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis prompted various changes, including the expansion of the scope of rescEU capacities, the introduction of indirect management of some operations, and the possibility of direct procurement. It also led to an increase in the budget for UCPM, including for rescEU capacities, through the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2021/836. An impact assessment of the adopted changes was not carried out due to the urgency in addressing the existing gaps in critical capacities at the time. However, concerns arose due to the lack of available information to assess whether the proposed budget was adequate to achieve the objectives in the long term due to the need to maintain the developed capacities.

Several **factors hindered, to some extent and varied degrees, the efficiency of the UCPM**, including:

- Instances of suboptimal coordination, overlaps, and unexplored synergies between the UCPM and DG ECHO humanitarian aid (in-kind assistance, specific crisis response), with other EU entities (e.g. epidemic response and consular support activities), and with national authorities on stocks, warehousing, and pre-positioning of essential items.



- Stakeholders' lack of sufficient awareness of the possibilities of the UCPM (e.g. how to request/access assistance.).
- Administrative burden associated with calls and financing of transport grants, as well as overlaps between procurement timelines and procedures for different calls.
- While contracts were awarded based on concrete criteria and their fulfilment was assessed accordingly by DG ECHO, at macro-level (i.e., between activities) there was a lack of data and cost-effectiveness analysis to support decision-making.
- Inadequate human resources and high staff turnover within DG ECHO resulting in a loss of institutional knowledge and memory.

**The UCPM made progress in monitoring and evaluation by introducing two key strategic performance indicators (KPIs) and various result and output indicators. However, the existing indicators and processes were insufficient to assess and monitor its overall efficiency and cost-effectiveness during the evaluation period, as they did not cover quality, use of resources/costs and outcome/impact considerations.** As a result, the influence of cost-effectiveness and efficiency considerations was limited in two aspects: 1) the allocation of funds per pillar and activity, and 2) the selection of alternative options such as the capacities to be develop and transport solutions (however, once the option was selected, cost-effectiveness and efficiency were selection criteria for contract awarding).).

**The UCPM data collection and management systems and tools were not appropriate to support sound collection and analysis of the data, with the tracking of assistance particularly limited.**

During the evaluation period, there were monitoring and controlling actions at various levels, including missions, collection of feedback by participants on activities, monitoring exercises, monitoring of contracts/grants, and audits (by the Internal Audit Service, European Court of Auditors, etc.). Furthermore, However, results were not consistently recorded or fully explored.

### 6.3 *Relevance*

**UCPM activities in the prevention, preparedness and response pillars were appropriate to address EU and national needs, thus the UCPM's objectives were relevant to address EU and national needs.**

- In the field of **prevention**, various activities demonstrated the UCPM's successful identification of EU and national needs in the civil protection domain. These include DG ECHO's funding of research projects on understanding the needs of civil protection authorities, the compilation of the overview document of disaster risks in the EU, as well as recent changes to the PPP. Although stakeholders agreed that there is a need for additional investment in prevention initiatives, given the overall relatively limited resources of the UCPM, further efforts could be dedicated to coordinating and mainstreaming disaster risk management in other relevant EU funding instruments;
- As regards **preparedness activities**, the development of capacities within rescEU was highly relevant to ensure increased preparedness to respond to disasters at both national and EU level. Although rescEU is intended to be a safety net when ECPP capacities cannot be deployed, some stakeholders raised concerns about the perceived prioritisation of rescEU over the ECPP. The Training and Exercises Programme, peer reviews, host nation support guidelines, advisory missions and EWS met the needs of national authorities. The new Training and Exercises Programme is anticipated to be even more closely aligned with participants expectations. Areas for improvement include the 75% co-financing rate of the transport and operations of ECPP modules, the absence of administrative costs covered by rescEU grants, the ratio between experts deployed and trained, the security set-up of missions in high-risk countries, CECIS, and the procedures to nominate civil protection experts;

- **Response** activities within the UCPM were relevant to address national and EU needs.

**UCPM activities were relevant to the European Commission's priorities** for 2023-2024, including the European Green Deal, the proposed Single Market Emergency Instrument, and the EU's enlargement priorities. However, the environmental sustainability of the UCPM should be strengthened.

**The UCPM was flexible to adapt to the evolving needs on the ground (including unanticipated events).** Its cooperation with the private sector, activations in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and to the COVID-19 pandemic proved its flexibility.

**The UCPM effectively integrated emerging needs and developments (e.g. scientific and technological research and development).** ERCC 2.0 initiative provided the ERCC with the tools and impetus to better anticipate events and act as a cross-sectoral hub. Its anticipatory and foresight capabilities increased situational awareness and helped to identify emerging gaps.

**Beyond the evaluation period, the UCPM's flexibility might not be sufficient to adequately address new and emerging needs and developments,** such as the consequences of climate change impact, or a surge in man-made disasters, given the increased complexity and frequency of disasters. Concerns were raised about the future sustainability of the UCPM's (and, more specifically, the ERCC's) ability to cope with future emergencies, given its increased workload. Concerns were also raised about the UCPM's increased role in third countries.

**DG ECHO's organisational set-up was somewhat appropriate to support Member and Participating States and address new needs.** However, given the expansion of UCPM activities during the evaluation period, the internal reorganisation of DG ECHO somewhat hindered coordination and coherence across UCPM activities.

**DG ECHO made significant efforts to address recommendations and lessons identified from external evaluations.** Nevertheless, there is scope for better communication of the justifications for UCPM modifications in light of these external evaluations. The UCPM made most progress in addressing recommendations on cross-pillar activities, namely the PPP and the Training and Exercises Programme, which underwent separate evaluations. The UCPM also made progress in the field of response (delivery of assistance, CECIS), preparedness (ECPD) and prevention (risk assessment and mapping), but its overall progress towards strategic recommendations could improve.

**The UCPM was able to capitalise and implement some of the lessons identified from the Lessons Learnt Programme and (to a lesser extent) Workshops with the EU Presidency.** DG ECHO made considerable effort to identify and address lessons, including the establishment of focal points within units for lesson implementation and improved categorisation of lessons based on stakeholder types. There is still room for improvement in terms of systematically implementing lessons, enhancing the identification of lessons on preparedness and prevention, and providing more tailored quantity and attribution of lessons. The Knowledge Network may improve the uptake of lessons identified through the Lessons Learnt Programme.

#### 6.4 Coherence

The UCPM Decision sufficiently defines the prevention, preparedness and response pillars, thereby fostering synergies and complementarities. The expansion of the UCPM activities between 2017 and 2022 did not affect its internal coherence.

- On **prevention**, although the 2019 Article 6 reporting guidelines aimed to enhance coherence of DRM Summary Reports, variability persists in the methodologies employed, risks addressed, and sectors involved;

- On **preparedness**, concerns were raised about the prioritisation of rescEU over the ECPP. More time is needed to evaluate the synergies between more recent activities, such as changes to the PPP and the Training and Exercises Programme.
- The coherence of **response** activities within the UCPM was largely ensured by the ERCC, which coordinated, monitored and supported real-time responses to emergencies within and outside the EU. The logistical portfolio of the UCPM was also found to be internally coherent, with each activity having a complementary role.

**There was a good level of coherence among UCPM activities across its three pillars, but there is still potential for improvement.** The Lessons Learnt Programme provided a good forum to exchange lessons and good practices on prevention, preparedness and response activities. However, the internal reorganisation of DG ECHO somewhat hindered coordination and coherence across UCPM activities. More specifically, the division between Directorate A (emergency management and rescEU) and Directorate B (disaster preparedness and prevention) was not perceived as conducive to coherence between response activities or prevention and preparedness. The process of developing capacities at UCPM level should be better informed by scientific evidence and adequate needs assessments that would allow a clear overview of capacities and gaps.

**UCPM prevention and preparedness activities successfully established synergies and complementarities with national civil protection activities.** Examples included the mutual reinforcement between the ECPP and rescEU, as well as the alignment between the Training and Exercises Programme and national training efforts. Additionally, EU EWS served as a valuable complement to existing national systems.

**The UCPM effectively coordinated its response with national actors in the field of civil protection, as well as others, such as private sector actors.** However, there is a need for a clearer framework regulating UCPM cooperation with the private sector. Important tools and practices that facilitated preparedness and response activities included the host nation support guidelines and the deployment of ERCC Liaison Officers during operations. EU delegations played a valuable role during deployments outside Europe, and raising awareness among EU delegation staff was considered best practice. However, national authorities beyond the civil protection field were not always aware of the UCPM and its supports. Unexploited synergies with the military remain, given the transport and logistical advantages it can offer to UCPM operations.

**There were synergies and complementarities between UCPM activities and other EU and international interventions in civil protection and other policy fields, with room for improvement in several areas.**

**Within DG ECHO**, several steps were taken to improve synergies between humanitarian aid and civil protection, with a need to ensure increased awareness of humanitarian actors among the UCPM team members deployed. There is also a need to better clarify the links between civil protection and humanitarian aid interventions.

The UCPM was coherent with **other EU-level policy fields**, such as the environmental policy (Floods Directive), migration and home affairs (especially in developing the CBRN rescEU reserve). Similarly, 2021 revision of the UCPM Decision significantly strengthened the UCPM's medical preparedness by including the rescEU reserve of medical items and medical evacuation capabilities. Deployment of liaison officers from different services to DG ECHO was a good way to foster cross-sectoral cooperation and ensure that available medical expertise was used during the COVID-19 crisis. Nevertheless, some stakeholders expressed a perceived lack of clarity in the allocation of responsibilities between UCPM and HERA. Cooperation with Ministries of Foreign Affairs in recent crises revealed the need to ensure better awareness of the UCPM in order to carry out repatriation requests effectively.

**At international level, the UCPM was coherent with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**, with DG ECHO and the UNDRR taking steps to avoid overlaps and duplication of efforts. Despite the UCPM effectively coordinating its response with other international actors (e.g. NATO, UN OCHA), **unexploited synergies remain**, such as the potential further involvement of these actors with UCPM preparedness and prevention initiatives, or better awareness among UCPM team members of UN OCHA operations during UCPM missions.

#### 6.5 EU added value

**The UCPM brought EU added value to Member States, Participating States and third countries.** The UCPM was instrumental in achieving results that could not have been achieved solely at national, regional or local level. Benefits were tangible and clear for all countries involved in civil protection activities, on both the receiving and giving end. This was particularly true for small countries with limited prevention, preparedness and response capacities, which are granted access to a wider pool of resources regardless of their individual contributions to the Mechanism.

The **main elements of the UCPM that added particular value to national and regional civil protection activities** were enhanced coordination (e.g. through the ERCC), pooling of resources (through rescEU and ECPP), cost savings, sharing of knowledge and expertise, capacity development (e.g. through the Training and Exercises Programme), risk assessment and awareness, solidarity and international influence.

The recently established **Knowledge Network** and the periodic compilation of **DRM Summary Reports** into an **overview document of disaster risks in the EU** had an intrinsic EU added value for Member and Participating States, notwithstanding some shortcomings and potential to improve. For example, stakeholders noted that the Knowledge Network suffered from a lack of visibility and understanding of its scope and use, while DRM Summary Reports lacked sufficient buy-in and support from national authorities other than civil protection, as well as standard methodologies for data collection.

**The absence or discontinuation of the UCPM would have negative consequences for Member States, Participating States and third countries, as well as for the civil protection community at large.** National, regional and local interventions would likely continue, albeit in a fragmented, less efficient and less effective way. The absence of the UCPM could open a critical gap in the multi-tiered system of civil protection assistance currently in place. In addition, the absence of the UCPM would be difficult to fill through national-level interventions or through initiatives established via bilateral/regional agreements or multilateral cooperation.

While it is possible to infer that benefits materialised for all countries involved in civil protection activities (on both the receiving or giving end), the concrete ways in which the UCPM's external dimension brought EU added value to Member and Participating States remains unclear. The limited evidence available suggests that **the UCPM offered opportunities for Member and Participating States to learn from one another and invest in each other's capacities**, including through the provision of support and cooperation to third countries.

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented here outline measures that could facilitate, harmonise and improve the effectiveness, relevance, coherence and EU added value of the UCPM.

Table 12. Strategic and operational recommendations

### 1. The European Commission should strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation to prevent, prepare for and respond to disasters

The landscape of disaster risk is continuously evolving, characterised by an increasing number of complex and simultaneous natural and man-made disasters that encompass multiple sectors. This has led to a growing diversity of crisis management actors within the scope of the UCPM's area of action. The UCPM has needed and will continue to need to cooperate with an increasing variety and complex composition of EU, international and national actors. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine significantly expanded the breadth of stakeholders with which the UCPM interacted (e.g. health, agriculture, energy, private sector). While the UCPM has increased cooperation across borders and sectors, this expanding stakeholder and disaster risk landscape has strained its resources. During the evaluation period, the UCPM faced significant challenges, including complex national administrative procedures and governance structures, the additional workload to cooperate with a variety of actors, limited awareness of the UCPM among non-conventional civil protection authorities, and the lack of rules/procedures on cooperation with the private sector.

**Operational recommendations:**

- **Strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation (through the ERCC) with EU and international stakeholders:**
  - DG ECHO should continue to adopt relevant administrative agreements and SOPs with existing and new national, EU and international stakeholders;
  - DG ECHO should consider setting a regular timeline to check administrative agreements and SOPs for update/revision (e.g. every five years and/or after any relevant major emergency);
  - DG ECHO should consider developing SOPs for the establishment and implementation of logistical hubs, which are viewed as an innovative solution with the potential to be used effectively for other disasters.
  - The European Commission should consider introducing thematic Commission inter-service meetings, where relevant DGs (e.g. DG ECHO, DG SANTE, HERA) can deepen their understanding of other services' work close to their own area of action, and streamline their efforts. Sessions could cover topics spanning prevention, preparedness and response. For example, a session could be held on risk mapping, with the aim of enhancing links between risk mapping conducted across the Commission;
  - DG ECHO should further developing the ERCC 2.0 initiative to enable the ERCC to become the Commission's cross-sectoral crisis hub for joint situational awareness, early warning, anticipation, information exchange and operational coordination, including between civilian and military stakeholders. This should be done, to the extent possible, in close cooperation with other EU-level crisis management instruments, including those under development (such as the Single Market Emergency Instrument).
  - DG ECHO should encourage the regular deployment of liaison officers from other Commission DGs within DG ECHO. This could be scheduled in advance (irrespective of crises scenarios) and/or through a regular deployment scheme when specific disasters occur (e.g. deployment of ECDC experts during health emergencies).
- **Sustain efforts to raise awareness of the UCPM among national authorities beyond civil protection.**

DG ECHO should:

  - Compile (with the help of national civil protection contact points) a list of contact points by relevant sector for each Member and Participating State. While the CPC would remain the main contact point, DG ECHO could reach out to the sector-specific contact points (looping in the CPC) for relevant UCPM activities. The CPC would be responsible for facilitating that contact.
  - Develop documents delineating all the steps and actors involved (with their respective responsibilities) in different UCPM activities and encourage Member States to share it at national level. A document could be created per UCPM pillar, potentially with QR codes where interested individuals can explore the topic further (e.g. Knowledge Network online platform).



- Support civil protection authorities to develop internal protocols/SOPs explaining the steps involved in a UCPM activation. This could be shared with other stakeholders and institutions that may be involved in UCPM response efforts. The protocols would define the roles and responsibilities of different actors when the UCPM is activated, depending on the disaster type.
  - Establish robust frameworks to enable the initiation of regular joint calls with relevant national stakeholders (e.g. civil protection authorities, health authorities, Ministries of Foreign Affairs), as well as EU and international stakeholders, when specific response efforts commence. This could entail maintaining lists of stakeholder contacts, by disaster type, to invite for joint calls through a recurring virtual/in-person meeting placeholder as soon as that disaster type is activated.
  - Organise ad hoc sessions to describe changes to the Mechanism when they are introduced. These sessions could include a wider breadth of national authorities across sectors, which would not only increase familiarity with the Mechanism and its changes, but also help national and EU stakeholders to build stronger connections. The European Commission could encourage CPC contact points to hold these sessions (ideally in their native language) in their national context.
  - Consider organising annual thematic Lessons Learnt Programme Meetings (similar to forest fire seasons). DG ECHO should continue to organise thematic Lessons Learnt Meetings after major events (e.g. COVID-19, forest fire seasons), and also consider annual thematic meetings for disaster types that frequently benefit from UCPM support (e.g. floods). During protracted crises, DG ECHO should consider establishing biannual Lessons Learnt Meetings, bringing together DG ECHO Desk Officers, other relevant Commission services, the EEAS including EU delegations and national authorities (including civil protection authorities). Where possible, these should be organised in different Member States to facilitate the participation of other national actors.
  - Consider developing a Communication Strategy on raising awareness of the UCPM with national authorities outside civil protection, including the activities above, their implementation, and distribution of responsibilities.
- **Establish and increase structural cooperation with the private sector to complement and alleviate national activities.**  
DG ECHO should:
    - Organise a dedicated workshop with Member and Participating States on how to frame the cooperation with the private sector. This could be done at CPC level or through a tailored consultation (such as for the Knowledge Network and new Training and Exercises Programme), but with a more limited timeframe (e.g. maximum three months). This workshop should have a strategic forward-looking angle, framing how different private sector actors can contribute to UCPM activities across the disaster management cycle (see recommendation 4 for more on DG ECHO increasing a role in driving innovation with key industry actors).
    - Consider setting up and continuously update SOPs on UCPM cooperation with the private sector across pillars, on the basis of consultation with Member and Participating States, that:
      - a) **Clearly define the circumstances/conditions** in which the private sector can be involved in UCPM operations and activities (e.g. type of disasters);
      - b) **Specify the areas in which the private sector can enhance national capacities**, such as transport capabilities, logistics support, and/or provision of in-kind assistance;
      - c) **Define parameters for the donation process**, outlining the roles and responsibilities of donors, DG ECHO, and other national authorities, if applicable. Such parameters are already established for existing rescEU donations, which is a good practice that should continue. DG ECHO-wide parameters and templates would help to standardise cooperation with the private sector. In addition, a focal point of these discussions could be the possibility of DG ECHO handling the procurement of private sector services or exploring alternative approaches to the Belgian logistical hub model, which exhibited some inefficiencies and could benefit from increased climate considerations;



- d) **Develop measures regulating potential reputational and liability** risks associated with donations (e.g. quality checks, authorisation for distribution and transports), including roles and responsibilities of DG ECHO and potential hubs involved.

**Main benefits:** Introducing channels to streamline and formalise cross-sectoral cooperation could ensure a more effective and efficient response to complex crises, which often require the involvement of a variety of actors. This could enable closer links between civil protection and other EU crisis management activities and decrease the risk of fragmentation and duplication of emergency and crisis management structures. Adopting and updating SOPs between DG ECHO and other EU and international level stakeholders would increase operational efficiency. Sustaining efforts to raise awareness among non-conventional civil protection would also contribute to a better understanding of the UCPM's role and capabilities, and, accordingly, a more efficient response. More structured involvement of the private sector in donations could alleviate the administrative burden on national authorities, ensure transparent and accountable processes, fill capacity gaps for particular disasters, and enhance operational coordination as more donations can be channelled through a single centre.

## 2. DG ECHO should simplify procedures and administrative requirements to enhance flexibility and reduce administrative burden

The current transport financing procedures for UCPM support are particularly lengthy and cumbersome, somewhat limiting the Mechanism's efficiency and effectiveness. Stakeholders perceived the 75% co-financing rate for the transport and operations of ECPP to be insufficient. Similarly, the 100% financing rate for rescEU was deemed inadequate in reflecting the actual costs involved, as it did not cover expenses such as administrative costs and back-office costs. Civil protection authorities raised concerns about the prioritisation of rescEU over the ECPP, linked to the financial attractiveness of rescEU. In the case of the UCPM's response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, speeding up the administrative procedures for more urgent requests was considered a useful lesson learnt.

### Operational recommendations:

- **Simplify the procedures and administrative requirements for UCPM activations, particularly those related to transport and logistics in ECPP deployments.**  
DG ECHO should:
  - Introduce automated forms (e.g. using a single-entry point, Microsoft Forms) to handle transport requests and lessen the administrative burden on Member States, Participating States, and the ERCC.
  - Consider introducing the possibility to trigger an 'accelerated procedure' for large-scale, complex, transboundary emergencies. The accelerated procedure would allow DG ECHO to carry out certain administrative steps in parallel (instead of sequentially) in order to provide a more rapid response. The following parameters for an accelerated procedure could be determined with Member and Participating States: 1) clear and restricted criteria for triggering an accelerated procedure, and 2) the parameters for administrative steps that can be bypassed in the case of an accelerated procedure. The accelerated procedure can be triggered by the requesting State, with ERCC approval. Discussions with Member and Participating States on the parameters for this procedure should also consider whether and how it might apply to both ECPP and rescEU capacities (e.g. Article 12 of the Decision).
  - Consider adding a 'transport module' into CECIS 2.0 that will allow tracking and follow-up of the co-financing of transport and operations.
- **Consider increasing the co-financing rate to 100% for ECPP deployments.**

DG ECHO should:

- Initiate discussions with Member States and Participating States within the CPC on the possibility to increase the co-financing rate to 100% for ECPP deployments.
- Conduct a feasibility study on the potential (financial) impact on DG ECHO and (to a lesser extent) national authorities of increasing the co-financing rate to 100% for ECPP deployments. This study should also explore the feasibility of including back office costs in the 100% rescEU financing. The study should include a tailored consultation with Member and Participating States and consider whether the increase of the co-financing rate would apply for certain disasters or for all activations.

**Main benefits:** Streamlining/simplifying the procedures related to transport and logistics within the ECPP could reduce complexity and alleviate administrative burden on DG ECHO and national authorities. This would result in improved operational efficiency and facilitate faster and more effective responses to emergencies. By increasing the co-financing rate of the ECPP to 100%, the financial attractiveness of the ECPP could be improved, encouraging greater participation and support. By conducting administrative steps in parallel (rather than sequentially) through an 'accelerated procedure', the UCPM could improve its speed of response to urgent requests. The main benefit of conducting a feasibility study and tailored consultations is to ensure that any decision to increase the co-financing rate is justified and takes into account the perspectives and needs of all relevant stakeholders.

### 3. The European Commission should enhance monitoring systems and tools to track/evaluate the UCPM's performance across prevention, preparedness and response activities

The **current monitoring systems** to track and assess the UCPM's performance is limited, with KPIs primarily in the field of response. Despite the positive developments in monitoring and reporting progress (e.g. introduction of additional KPI for civil protection, more result indicators), the existing indicators and processes were not adequate to assess and monitor efficiency, cost-effectiveness and effectiveness in the evaluation period, as they focus on results without incorporating quality, use of resources/cost and outcomes/impact considerations. KPIs and result indicators do not have clear links to the UCPM's specific and general objectives. Nor do the current KPIs on response reflect how the evolution of different disasters requires different response times/rate. The KPI on the adequacy of response is not entirely fit for purpose because potential '**partial**' offers to larger requests for assistance are still counted as UCPM activations. Finally, the high number of lessons within the Lessons Learnt Programme, with no indication of priority level, makes follow-up less systematic.

DG ECHO plans to develop performance measurement frameworks for specific UCPM activities (e.g. the Knowledge Network adopted its own KPIs; the Training and Exercises Programme lots each have their own monitoring and evaluation framework; the PPP has published plans to develop its own).

Additionally, **DG ECHO continues to rely on standard office tools** for its daily operations. For instance, the tracking and monitoring of available capacities/modules, as well as lessons from Lessons Learnt Programme Meetings, are managed and tracked in Excel spreadsheets. This causes internal inefficiencies, complex handovers, and increased workload. Although CECIS 2.0 is expected to include additional and improved functionalities, this tool is only a part of the solution to advance data and information management at UCPM level.

#### **Operational recommendations:**

- **Develop an UCPM-wide monitoring and evaluation policy** to establish a multiannual framework to measure performance and achievements that covers all UCPM activities. DG ECHO should introduce an monitoring and evaluation policy that establishes monitoring tools/systems to consistently and precisely

measure the effectiveness and efficiency of UCPM activities. It should also consider designating resources to manage the monitoring function of the UCPM. Developing such a monitoring and evaluation policy should include:

- An **intervention logic**, illustrating the logical relationship between the resources, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the Mechanism. This would assess the causal relationship between the Mechanism's specific outputs and impacts to be expected. The theory of change developed by this interim evaluation could be used as a starting point, to be reviewed and updated on a yearly basis (when reporting).
  - An **indicator framework across all pillars**, outlining indicators at UCPM level and at pillar/activity level: 1) the UCPM-level indicators would constitute the higher level in the performance measurement framework, through which the planned outputs and impacts can be measured after the multiannual period. In parallel, indicators should be developed by all UCPM pillars/activity, in line with existing activity-level frameworks (Knowledge Network/PPP). The measurement of the latter indicators should happen annually (with monitoring milestones throughout the year) and inform the UCPM-level indicators over the multiannual period. When developing the indicator framework, DG ECHO should consider revising existing KPIs (e.g. in 2024 when revising DG ECHO's strategy) to reflect the different characteristics and requirements of different disasters. When revising the indicators, DG ECHO should pay particular attention to the specific difficulties in measuring impact and progress in the field of prevention, which is complicated by its cross-sectoral nature and long-term effects. Existing literature and expertise on measuring the impact of prevention should be reviewed. A new indicator framework should allow for a comparison between results, outcomes, impacts and costs, and then monitor the cost-effectiveness of the Mechanism's activities. The indicators should also consider the quality of the intervention and use of resources/costs (see Annex 8 for an example indicator framework structure).
  - A **monitoring and evaluation plan**, including guidelines and common principles, for all different UCPM activities to ensure that they all feed into a UCPM-level monitoring and evaluation process. This plan would define an approach to **reporting** on past and current performance of the Mechanism in DG ECHO's annual reports. This would provide clear guidance on how to collect, monitor and report data on each of the KPIs, how to assess the progress of the UCPM annually, and where room for improvement is identified.
  - To enhance understanding of the sustainability and impact of UCPM funding, DG ECHO could implement **monitoring practices for a duration of one to two years after the completion of funding for UCPM-funded projects**. DG ECHO should establish KPIs for each UCPM funding stream (see Annex 8).
  - The establishment of a **monitoring and evaluation framework** will be particularly useful for the future interim evaluations of the UCPM, as it would automatically provide a large dataset which would: 1) facilitate the work of external evaluators, who would rely on progressive measurements of KPIs to formulate an assessment on the performance of the Mechanism towards achieving its objectives in a given timeframe; 2) reduce stakeholder fatigue, particularly among DG ECHO Desk Officers, as data on performance at all levels (e.g. UCPM/pillar/activity) could be automatically extracted and delivered to external evaluators.
- Improve reporting on budget per activity and per pillar to support decision-making and funding allocation, both Commission-wide and within DG ECHO specifically. While there is ongoing monitoring, there is a lack of awareness within DG ECHO and Member States of the allocation of budget per activity. Consistent reporting of the allocation of budget per activity (and pillar) could help to awareness and support discussions on sustainable distribution of funds across all three pillars (see recommendation 4).
  - Where applicable, replace standard MS Office tools with more innovative and tailored IT and information management systems to collect and monitor data on UCPM activities. One DG ECHO staff

member would be responsible for inputting information, by activity (e.g. on a monthly basis/ad hoc when new data are available), and for monitoring progress. Such a common database could be tailored to the set KPIs. This system should ensure:

- **Common monitoring of ECPP and rescEU capacities** accessible to all relevant DGs. Shifting the monitoring process to a more innovative IT system could enhance user-friendly tracking of changes to capacity;
- **Common tracking of the delivery of in-kind assistance**, also accessible to all relevant DGs and other Commission services (e.g. EU delegations). This tracking could cover the following elements [per type of in-kind assistance emergency]: 1) time to deliver assistance, 2) start/end point, 3) use of in-kind assistance, 4) action points/responsibilities once the in-kind assistance has been used (if applicable);
- **Tracking the implementation of lessons learnt and recommendations identified internally and externally**. These should be mapped into a single database with a priority order. That priority order could also be reflected in the Lessons Learnt Programme outputs. For those outputs and for recommendations, a DG ECHO focal point would be assigned to follow implementation and tasked with updating progress on a yearly basis;
- **Common database for experts**, accessible by DG ECHO staff working in relevant units. Currently, databases of experts trained and deployed are split between Directorate A and Directorate B. One single database accessible to all DG ECHO staff should be maintained (e.g. with a row per expert explaining the training experts have attended, their deployments). This database should be updated regularly (after each deployment/training/exercise).

**Main benefits:** Ensure a more accurate and comprehensive assessment of UCPM performance across its pillars (both in internal annual reports and external evaluations), as well as increased efficiency within DG ECHO, reducing complexities in handovers and stakeholder fatigue. UCPM activities are interconnected, thus data collected to monitor their progress should be in one single platform, accessible to all DG ECHO staff, with data and monitoring activities clearly attributed to a specific role (rather than person, due to staff turnover). Assigning a level of priority to lessons and recommendations could facilitate a more structured and organised approach to addressing and implementing those lessons. Assessing the sustainability of UCPM funding could help to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of funding streams and detect room to improve.

#### 4. The European Commission should streamline and strengthen the UCPM's funding instruments to ensure a common European approach to crisis management

While the UCPM managed to respond effectively to the demands of the increasing quantity and complexity of disasters, its effectiveness was hampered by limited human and financial resources, especially for the ERCC's, which received a significant increase in RfA. This often resulted in funds being redirected from prevention and non-operational preparedness activities. The demands of the evolving disaster risk landscape were increasingly cross-sectoral, resulting in an increase in crisis management actors (see recommendation 1).

Disaster management activities have always involved multiple Commission and Member State sectors. In the case of prevention activities, while there was significant progress, its inherently cross-sectoral nature somewhat limited the UCPM's ability to stimulate further activities. The interim evaluation found that when Member States compile DRM Summary Reports, divergent risk assessment methodologies and the requirement to consult numerous sectors created a substantial administrative burden for some authorities, restricting their capacity to change the process significantly. The temporary nature of NextGenerationEU

funding raised concerns about the feasibility of sustaining the rescEU capacities developing with the budget from the MFF alone.

**Operational recommendations:**

- **Strengthen links between EU budget instruments to introduce a more streamlined approach and alleviate resources strain.**  
The European Commission should:
  - Map relevant EU budget instruments that could contribute to achieving the UCPM's objectives across the disaster management cycle, followed by sessions with counterparts to explore potential overlaps in funding (e.g. between PPP and Cohesion Fund projects) and scope for further synergies. This would not only enable the UCPM to build stronger links across relevant sectors, but strengthen a common European approach to crisis management and alleviate the resource strain of the increased workload for the UCPM.
  - These discussions should also focus on the European Commission budget lines that finance the development of different national risk assessments or strategies (e.g. DG CLIMA). They could explore the potential to improve harmonisation of data and reporting requirements across sectors and facilitate data collection and sharing (e.g. a single national risk assessment form from which all relevant national and Commission services could derive the relevant information). While Member States would remain responsible for cross-sector risk assessment, all pertinent sectors responsible for assessing national risks would then be more actively engaged in the process. This would be a departure from the current practice in some Member States, where civil protection authorities – often having less influence than other authorities – may struggle to consult all relevant sectors involved in risk assessment. By consolidating various services and budgetary instruments, this approach could elevate the importance of the task, reinforcing a preventive perspective throughout the European Commission. It would ensure that risk assessments and recommended preventive actions receive due consideration across different Commission services.
- **Establish a mechanism to ensure safeguards across all phases of the disaster risk management cycle in the case of emergencies of an unprecedented scale/ multitude.**  
the European Commission should:
  - Consider establishing a mechanism to come into play when the allocated funding for emergency response falls short, either due to emergencies of an unprecedented scale, or when multiple large-scale emergencies take place at once. This would ensure that the practice of occasionally shifting funds from other areas (as has happened in the past with prevention and preparedness) becomes a last-resort measure. This mechanism could span across European Commission DGs, considering strategies to ensure that all phases of disaster risk management have sufficient funding to provide an appropriate response.
- **Hold discussions on the general funding of the UCPM in face of the evolving disaster risk landscape.**  
The European Commission should:
  - Discuss the adequacy of the UCPM's current funding in the face of the evolving disaster risk landscape and extent of the UCPM's involvement. While the UCPM continued to maintain a high and rapid response rate in the face of the significant increase in activations of the Mechanism, it did so under significant resource strain. In particular, key stakeholders noted concerns about the sustainability of the ERCC to continue to operate with its current financing. DG ECHO needs to consider (influenced by the findings of the research suggested in recommendation 6) whether the UCPM will continue its current pace of work or draw tighter parameters. If the current trend of increasingly frequent activations continues, the existing human and financial resources will not be sufficient;

- These discussions should consider the financial implications of ringfencing prevention and preparedness budgets to ensure that budget is not taken from prevention and preparedness in crises where response funding runs out. The assessment of the potential financial impact could be conducted within the research suggested in recommendation 6.
- **Establish sustainable funding for the further development and maintenance of rescEU capacities.**  
The European Commission should:
  - Establish sustainable funding for the maintenance and potential further development of rescEU capacities. Currently, rescEU is financed under the NextGenerationEU, which is set to finish in 2026, one year before the current MFF. Accordingly, MFF discussions should consider how and in what capacity to integrate rescEU as a permanent fixture of the UCPM.

**Main benefits:** This recommendation aims to enhance the flexibility and sustainability of the UCPM's funding, enabling it to operate more efficiently and effectively in an increasingly complex crisis landscape. Leveraging various available budget sources to strengthen the UCPM and other crisis management efforts can help to foster a unified European approach to disaster management. This approach not only opens opportunities to secure funding for critical cross-sectoral UCPM activities, such as risk mapping and DRM Summary Reports, but establishes a mechanism that safeguards monies for prevention and preparedness activities. Exploring options for providing rescEU with more stable funding and assessing the need for an expansion of the UCPM's general budget are central considerations, as decisions will significantly impact the sustainability of the UCPM's ongoing operations.

#### 5. The European Commission should promote the further integration of evidence-based knowledge (e.g. scientific findings) and technological innovation in civil protection activities

The UCPM should strive to increase access to and use of scientific knowledge and results, as well as enhancing EWS. EWSs could be improved to ensure that information is less fragmented across EU and domestic EWS, to cover more hazards, quality control measures and innovative data sources. Although DG ECHO's partnership with the JRC is well-established, there is a need to improve the operationalisation of scientific evidence in UCPM activities. For instance, the process of developing capacities at UCPM level should be better informed by scientific evidence, preparedness needs assessment and scenario building. While the quick development of capacities during the evaluation period showed the flexibility of the UCPM and its ability to adapt to emerging needs, the process was heavily influenced by existing crises rather than systematic gap analyses/need assessments. Other UCPM activities on scenario building and foresight might be better aligned to ensure that their outputs inform one another and result in a better overview of research needs and capacity gaps.

#### Operational recommendations:

- **Introduce structural links between UCPM strategic anticipation and foresight activities and the development of capacity through rescEU and ECPP.**  
DG ECHO should:
  - Compile a document every three years assessing how the outcomes from all UCPM strategic anticipation and foresight activities should influence national capacities developed in the ECPP and rescEU. It would consider findings from scenario building and horizon scanning exercises (e.g. those carried out within the ERCC 2.0 initiative), integrated in or triangulated with outcomes from the overview document of disaster risks in the EU;
  - This outcome document could be discussed at CPC meetings to establish a priority order for capacities to be developed in the ECPP and rescEU. The main findings could also be presented at



the Civil Protection Forum. CPC members could be encouraged to present the status quo in their respective Member/Participating State, highlighting new capacities developed/resources not typically managed by civil protection authorities.

- **Ensure that scientific expertise (generated through UCPM activities and beyond) influences the implementation of UCPM activities.**

DG ECHO should:

- Use the Knowledge Network (science pillar) as a forum of expertise. For instance, DG ECHO should bring together stakeholders within the science and capacity development pillars of the Knowledge Network in regular meetings to discuss the development of capacity (including the adequacy of capacity goals);
- This forum could be an opportunity for scientific experts to discuss potential areas to improve the quality and methodologies used by national authorities to compile (and DG ECHO to aggregate) DRM Summary Reports. It could also be used to discuss methods of scenario building and horizon scanning;
- Enhancing the implementation of ERCC 2 initiative including continuing to develop its anticipatory capacity. This includes creating the necessary tools to anticipate events and develop foresight capabilities for increased situational awareness, as well as tools to identify emerging capacity gaps (e.g. rescEU CBRN, shelter, energy).

- **Support the enhancement of EWS to ensure that information is less fragmented across EU and domestic EWS.**

DG ECHO should:

- Consider supporting the enhancement of existing EU-level EWS by covering more hazards and including additional quality control measures and innovative data sources.

- **Foster initiatives to support increased quality and harmonised methodologies in DRM Summary Reports, resulting in enhanced comparability for the purpose of the overview document of disaster risks in the EU.**

DG ECHO should:

- Consider a regular revision of the 2019 reporting guidelines to ensure that they continue to stimulate harmonised methods in compiling DRM Summary Reports. This regular revision should consider the most recent trends (climate change) and be up-to date on the EU-level policy and legislative landscape on relevant sectors (European Green Deal, critical infrastructure);
- Use the work strand 'Technical Assistance for Disaster Risk Management' under the Disaster Resilience Grants (ex-Track I) to fund initiatives at national level to improve the quality of National Risk Assessments;
- Make use of other EU-wide assessments and scientific outputs (e.g. future EUCRA, ECDC risk assessments) to inform the overview document of disaster risks in the EU.

- **Enable the identification of emerging technological innovation and foster cooperation with industry.**  
The European Commission should:

- Systematically gather intelligence on emerging technological developments and their potential implications for the civil protection community through scenario building and horizon scanning initiatives. These findings could be included in the document influencing capacity development, highlighting areas where DG ECHO could drive innovation in collaboration with private entities;
- Explore ways to sustain engagement with companies developing innovative technologies applicable in the field of civil protection. Consider inviting private actors with expertise, products or

innovative ideas that could contribute to civil protection activities (technology companies, manufacturers of disaster response equipment) to present hold a stall at the Civil Protection Forum and/or targeted Lessons Learnt Meetings.

- **Introduce innovative methodologies/tools within the Training and Exercises Programme.**
  - Introduce more practical methodologies (less reliance on PowerPoint) and encourage training on the use of civil protection tools (e.g. integrating guidance on how to use information from EWS) and outputs (results of PPP projects);
  - Encourage the use of virtual reality simulations in exercises (similar to the March 2023 discussion-based exercise on marine pollution);
  - Encourage the use of other platforms for online and in-person participant interaction (e.g. introducing social gamified learning through different online training software). Together with Training and Exercises Programme contractors, consider ways to stimulate informal online networking opportunities;
  - Standardise the communication tools (e.g. MS Teams) used between the EUCPT and ERCC and then communicate those tools during training to ensure that all parties are familiar with their use.

**Main benefits:** Fostering more informed and evidence-based capacity development through the involvement of technical experts and scientific evidence. Given the increasing quantity, size and frequency of disasters, regularly increasing the evidence base for capacity development could foster more flexible preparedness. Streamlining and aggregating scientific outputs from different risk assessments could improve coordination and provide a more comprehensive overview of potential disasters. In addition, the consistent monitoring of innovative technologies and their potential use within the UCPM will help DG ECHO to expand and potentially deepen its impact, remaining a leader in the area of disaster management.

## 6. The European Commission should ensure clarity of the UCPM's role in third countries and disasters not conventionally in the field of civil protection

Between 2017 and 2022, the UCPM experienced an unprecedented surge in activations (from 32 in 2017 to 232 in 2022). Due to the escalating impacts of climate change, which exacerbate the unpredictability of the disaster risk landscape, as well as the magnitude and intricacy of natural disasters and the occurrence of unforeseen disasters outside the typical remit of civil protection, the UCPM is expected to face a growing number of requests from within and outside the EU. Originally designed to address intra-EU solidarity in responding to natural disasters, the UCPM has now become a crucial player in handling disasters not conventionally within the remit of civil protection (e.g. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine), as well as disasters occurring in third countries (two-thirds of UCPM activations came from third countries during the evaluation period).

This evolving landscape of disaster risks raises concerns about the sustainability of the UCPM (and especially the ERCC) in its current role. The UCPM's expanding involvement in various areas is compounded by limited (human and financial) resources. This urgently requires a redrawing of the scope of the UCPM's intervention across types of disasters and geographically, in conjunction with the growing number of crisis management actors and mechanisms in the field. While changes are necessary to ensure that the UCPM maintains its relevance and effectiveness in crises, this process must have the buy-in of Member and Participating States.

### Operational recommendations:

- Develop SOPs for situations where the UCPM is confronted with simultaneous RfA, so that third countries are aware of the functioning of the Mechanism and capacities available.
- Evaluate the feasibility, potential impact and benefits of revising the UCPM Decision:

- An impact assessment should explore whether the UCPM mandate and resources can or should be expanded, and the potential implications for its governance, particularly the role of the ERCC. In particular, it should examine how the ERCC can maintain a sustainable role as a cross-sector hub, despite its limited human and financial resources. This challenge becomes even more significant given the rising number and complexity of disasters, which involve an increasing number of sectors. Expanding the UCPM mandate and/or substantially revising its governance structure (including the ERCC) would require consultation with national authorities and appropriate subsidiarity and proportionality checks;
- This study should consider the interactions between the UCPM and other EU-level crisis management instruments in place (e.g. ARGUS, IPCR) and in development (Single Market Emergency Instrument) to understand how the UCPM's role complements the existing architecture of EU and international crisis management structures;
- This study should consider the UCPM's external dimension, establishing a clear role for the UCPM as an international actor and setting clear parameters on its involvement outside the EU. Similarly, when defining the future role of the UCPM, clear parameters for areas of intervention should be defined (e.g. disaster types). These parameters should be considered while still maintaining flexibility for the Mechanism within its legislative framework.

**Main benefits:** Conducting an impact assessment to evaluate the feasibility, potential impact and benefits of revising the UCPM Decision would allow for a thorough analysis of the potential to reconsider its governance structure and mandate, given stakeholders' concerns about its sustainability in relation to complex emergencies. Evaluating the UCPM's governance structure, particularly the role of the ERCC, could improve coordination, decision-making and overall effectiveness. This assessment could identify areas where governance mechanisms can be streamlined, enhanced or adapted to better address complex emergencies and facilitate cooperation among Member and Participating States.

## 7. DG ECHO should strengthen coherence and leverage untapped synergies between the UCPM and humanitarian aid efforts

The 2017 interim evaluation of the UCPM found some concerns about the blurred links between civil protection and humanitarian aid interventions and identified a need to better define what civil protection interventions entailed. Although this interim evaluation found that the UCPM effectively coordinated its activities with its humanitarian aid counterparts, there are opportunities for closer, more effective and efficient cooperation. Challenges include the limited awareness of the humanitarian aid cluster among civil protection actors in the field and the perception of civil protection operations in extra-EU settings as less neutral than humanitarian aid relief efforts.

### Operational recommendations:

- **Increase knowledge and understanding of the role, missions and responsibilities of humanitarian aid actors among the civil protection community within UCPM preparedness activities.**  
DG ECHO should:
  - Develop additional training modules within the new Training and Exercises Programme on humanitarian aid actors/clusters. These should cover the role played by international organisations (e.g. UN OCHA, WFP) during protracted crises, with practical examples from real humanitarian aid interventions;
  - Increase the number of joint training and exercises between civil protection and relevant international organisations (UN OCHA, IOM) to enhance understanding of respective roles, modus operandi and coordination processes;

- Organise tailored/dedicated workshops and bring together civil protection and humanitarian aid professionals to discuss common challenges and lessons following response operations;
- Introduce 'humanitarian aid-civil protection collaboration' as a topic of exchange within the EoE Programme. This could be a forum to gather specific lessons that would complement the knowledge gained through training (including joint trainings) and exercises.

**Main benefits:** By increasing awareness and understanding of humanitarian aid actors and clusters within the civil protection community, and promoting joint training, exercises and workshops, the UCPM would facilitate better coordination and cooperation between the two fields. This will lead to improved synergies, increased efficiency, and better emergency response outcomes overall.

## 8. The European Commission should raise awareness of the UCPM and disasters with relevant stakeholders and with the public

Due to the numerous changes implemented in the UCPM since 2017, some national authorities experienced difficulties in keeping track and staying informed about all UCPM initiatives, leading to a sense of 'change fatigue'. Concerns were raised about awareness and ownership of the Knowledge Network: while it is expected that awareness and ownership of the Network will grow naturally over time, more systematic efforts to raise awareness could facilitate this process. Other UCPM activities, such as advisory missions in the field of prevention and preparedness and host nation support guidelines, would benefit from increased awareness-raising endeavours. Presently, information on various UCPM activities is scattered across different websites, including the ERCC portal, DG ECHO website, and the Knowledge Network online platform.

### Operational recommendations:

- **Encourage systematic awareness raising on the Knowledge Network and other less well-known UCPM activities during UCPM events** (e.g. training, exercises, DRMKC conferences).
  - To enhance awareness and understanding of the Knowledge Network, it would be beneficial to incorporate explanations of its role during relevant occasions (e.g., Civil Protection Forum, Lessons Learnt Programme Meetings);
  - Awareness efforts could involve increased dissemination of Knowledge Network factsheets<sup>1091</sup>, encouraging national authorities to disseminate them with non-conventional civil protection actors at national level. Similar factsheets could be created for other lesser-known UCPM activities (not necessarily under the umbrella of the Network), such as advisory missions and host nation support guidelines. Information pamphlets could be included in the Knowledge Network newsletter and distributed at events.
- **Improve communication on changes and initiatives within the UCPM to Member and Participating States.**

DG ECHO could enhance the role of the Knowledge Network as a central hub for cooperation on UCPM initiatives:

  - Leverage the Knowledge Network's newsletter and/or its online platform to send regular updates to Member/Participating States on UCPM changes and initiatives, and raise awareness of advisory missions, PPP project outputs and the DRMKC;
  - In its reorganisation, DG ECHO could consider how to place the Knowledge Network unit so that it reflects its governance of the different activities and elements (or at least creates more structural links/communication channels between units);

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<sup>1091</sup> European Commission, UCPKN Factsheets, 2023, <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/ucpkn-factsheets>

- At the Civil Protection Forum, DG ECHO could consider introducing different stalls for different UCPM activities. These stalls could have designated staff members explaining the activities.
- **Step up activities to raise public awareness of the UCPM's activities and civil protection matters.**
  - In alignment with Union Disaster Resilience Goal #2 and insights into public awareness regarding risks and the UCPM, the European Commission could intensify its endeavours to increase public awareness of disasters. This could be achieved, for instance, through the formulation of a comprehensive Commission Strategy, including DG ECHO public information campaigns on enhancing risk awareness and preparedness, along with the development of resources to assist Member and Participating States in implementing comparable campaigns. These campaigns could educate the general public on disaster preparedness in specific circumstances and provide guidance on where to access trustworthy national-level disaster information;
  - DG ECHO could consider making better use of its social media accounts to share accessible information on its activities. A 2020 social media audit revealed that Facebook is DG ECHO's best-performing social media page (based on engagement rate, number of followers). Its accounts on Twitter (now X) and Instagram have good quality content but rate below other (EU and international) institutions' average engagement rate. DG ECHO's posting frequency on Twitter (now X) could be higher. Overall, DG ECHO shares high quality photos and stories but could use more video content across its social channels and include stronger quotes on its photos. To raise awareness of the UCPM, DG ECHO should consider producing and disseminating additional short videos (which typically gain most engagement) on UCPM activities and results. Following the example of the Council of the EU's YouTube account<sup>1092</sup>, it could produce short 'explainer' videos presenting the different components of the UCPM.
- **Consolidate information on the UCPM for key stakeholders under one main point of access, e.g. Knowledge Network online platform.**
  - DG ECHO should continue to work towards making the Knowledge Network online platform a single point of entry to access information on the UCPM. For example, it already cross-references a selection of articles and maps from the DG ECHO website, which could be expanded to reference a broader range of information, from pages explaining different UCPM activities for people new to the Mechanism (e.g. DG ECHO pages on different UCPM activities, such as rescEU) to pages from the ERCC portal.

**Main benefits:** By consistently using communication channels and platforms, Member and Participating States (within and beyond the field of civil protection) could be better informed about UCPM changes and initiatives. This would ensure that they stay up to date with the latest developments, fostering better collaboration and coordination. By leveraging the Knowledge Network as a central hub and organising ad hoc meetings, DG ECHO could increase stakeholder engagement and strengthen understanding of the Network's structure, mandate and activities. This would promote an increased sense of ownership and commitment among stakeholders, leading to more effective collaboration and utilisation of the Network's resources.

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<sup>1092</sup> Council of the EU, Youtube channel, n.d., <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLu62aebfdNtPDCET-qfQcqvXXqSkUea>

## The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - ECHO

### ECHO Mission

The primary role of the Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) of the European Commission is to manage and coordinate the European Union's emergency response to conflicts, natural and man-made disasters. It does so both through the delivery of humanitarian aid and through the coordination and facilitation of in-kind assistance, specialist capacities, expertise and intervention teams using the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)

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