



REPORT

Disaster management How can Turkey and the EU work together?

Rapporteur: **Diana Indjova** (Group III – Diversity Europe, Bulgaria)
in cooperation with **Panagiotis Gkofas** (Group III – Diversity Europe, Greece)

1. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- 1.1 The [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) (hereafter "the Mechanism", or UCPM)¹², provides a framework for cooperation and assistance in the event of major emergencies inside and outside the EU. The Mechanism aims to strengthen cooperation between the European Union Member States and six Participating States (Iceland, Norway, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey) and facilitates coordination in the field of civil protection to improve prevention, preparedness and response to disasters.
- 1.2 While the primary responsibility for preventing, preparing for and responding to natural and man-made disasters lies with the Member States, the Mechanism, and in particular rescEU, promotes solidarity between Member States in accordance with Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union.
- 1.3 The Mechanism does so by strengthening the Union's collective response to natural and man-made disasters through the establishment of a reserve of capacities that complement the existing capacities of Member States, for cases where capacities available at national level are not sufficient, thereby enabling more effective preparedness and response, and also by enhancing disaster prevention and preparedness.
- 1.4 The Mechanism pools response capacities from all EU Member States and the six Participating States and can be deployed inside the EU and around the world. Any country in the world, and also the United Nations and its agencies, as well as relevant international organisations, can call on the EU Civil Protection Mechanism for help.
- 1.5 The EU supports and complements the prevention and preparedness efforts of its Member States and Participating States by focusing on areas where a joint European approach is more effective than separate national actions. Member States and Participating States should make use of this to perform risk assessments and carry out research to promote disaster resilience and develop early warning tools.
- 1.6 The new UCPM Knowledge Network (KN) will encourage knowledge exchange, partnership creation and innovation in civil protection and disaster management to strengthen the cross-sectoral prevention and preparedness dimension of disaster risk management.
- 1.7 Regional scale partnerships such as the Union for the Mediterranean platform (UFM) may contribute to regional integration and cohesion among Euro-Mediterranean countries, including Turkey, promoting resilience to disasters.

¹ EESC opinion on the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism ([OJ C 62, 15.2.2019, p. 231](#)).

² https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/mechanism_en, factsheet, last updated 26/08/2021.

- 1.8 As part of the Mechanism, Turkey has access to major cooperation opportunities, including joint civil protection training and exercises, participation in prevention and preparedness projects, assistance in emergency situations and more.
- 1.9 As solidarity strategies are reinforced, EU – Turkey cooperation will benefit strongly from joint training initiatives, sharing own resources and exchanging good practices.
- 1.10 The coordinated sharing of information and human resources at disaster management events, provided by the Mechanism through the KN and the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), will increase the effectiveness and capacity building of the EU – Turkey partnership.
- 1.11 The EESC notes the lack of a rapid response flexible financial instrument for providing direct funding to affected populations when it is requested. The EESC supports the establishment of such a mechanism for immediate and direct funding for individuals (as well as SMEs) that are affected.

Recommendations

- 1.12 The EESC considers it essential that there be closer cooperation between the EU and Turkey in disaster management for both parties.
- 1.13 The EESC supports the idea of the future development of a joint mechanism for joint disaster management first response transnational teams with own resources, joint training and standardisation of resources and equipment.
- 1.14 The EESC would encourage the development of educational programmes for the general population and institutions on prevention and the dissemination of good practices.
- 1.15 The EESC supports measures for mobilising civil society, NGOs and volunteers in line with emergency road maps for disaster management.
- 1.16 Artificial intelligence modules should be incorporated into disaster management at every level for the different stages of prevention, monitoring and action plans.
- 1.17 The EESC considers that all joint efforts will contribute to better solidarity and cooperation between the EU and Turkey, introduce cooperation into sensitive areas and strengthen transnational and regional cooperation through bilateral agreements.
- 1.18 The EESC believes that a series of best practices should be disseminated to the EU Member States and Turkey in the areas of prevention, recovery and protection from fire, flooding, earthquake damage and all other natural disasters.
- 1.19 The EESC recommends developing standards for volunteering programmes with provisions that guarantee volunteers human and labour rights, such as insurance, an entitlement to social security and legal leave for participating in civil protection operations on the ground.

- 1.20 The EESC proposes as a good practice the creation of common certification system between the EU and Turkey for voluntary civil protection teams with relevant training at local, national and transnational levels.
- 1.21 Optimal investment is possible, providing multiple opportunities for renting or purchasing technical devices and equipment used for cross-border natural disasters, fires, flooding and more.
- 1.22 The EESC supports the establishment of an independent and effective financial instrument to provide compensation for affected populations and property damage.
- 1.23 The EESC would support a proposal for a legislative amendment to authorise immediate response under the Mechanism in the event of emergencies, without requiring a prior request from the Member State concerned, the Member State retaining the right to refuse such assistance.

2. Analysis of disaster management

- 2.1 Disaster management covers the organisation, planning and application of measures on preparations for, responses to and recovery from disasters. Poor planning, inefficient plan implementation and inadequate resources result in mechanisms and communities being unable to cope with disasters and this increases the vulnerability of populations, property, the environment and other assets. In this context, we would highlight the following points:
 - 2.1.1 A timely response combined with adequate resources (human, technical, administrative, etc.) are key factors in saving lives and property and in mitigating the impact of disasters on communities and infrastructure.
 - 2.1.2 Appropriate training for human resources in disaster management planning is also crucial for effective response and recovery processes during and immediately after an event. Moreover, training geared to the flexible execution of emergency plans makes response mechanisms more adaptable.
 - 2.1.3 Limited availability of resources when a catastrophic event occurs, often combined with inconsistencies in the technical specifications of the resources and equipment available from different providers (states, regions, agencies, etc.), reduce the capacity of disaster management systems and aggravate the impact of the event concerned.
 - 2.1.4 Disaster risk management should include risk communication to increase resilience. Risk communication improves the public's risk perception and awareness (regarding civil protection plans) and potentially contributes to a change in attitude and behaviour in relation to risk.
 - 2.1.5 The introduction of disaster risk knowledge systems increases the availability of data, good practice and other information necessary for disaster management planning and supports disaster risk communication strategies.

- 2.1.6 People who are aware of disaster risks and informed about civil protection planning at local and regional level can contribute positively to the successful implementation of response and short-term rehabilitation planning.
- 2.1.7 Enhancing public knowledge and awareness through education and training systems is therefore a key element for the successful implementation of civil protection plans.
- 2.1.8 Furthermore, public involvement in disaster risk management planning procedures at local level introduces a sustainability dimension into civil protection plans.
- 2.1.9 Effective disaster management aims to minimise the impact of disastrous events through immediate support for populations, ensuring the safety or immediate recovery of vital infrastructures and services like electricity and water supply networks, as well as health services, providing temporary housing for affected populations, etc.

3. [The EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) - General comments

- 3.1 Under Council Decision 2001/792/EC, Euratom, a Community mechanism was established to facilitate reinforced cooperation in civil protection assistance interventions. The original Decision was amended by Council Decision 2007/779/EC, Euratom, establishing a Community Civil Protection Mechanism and Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism. In 2019, the EU reinforced and strengthened components of its disaster risk management by upgrading the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) through 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.
- 3.2 The upgraded EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) also streamlines and simplifies administrative procedures in the long run in order to reduce the time needed to reach people in need of assistance.
- 3.3 The latest element - rescEU³ - introduced with the objective of enhancing both the protection of citizens from disasters and the management of emerging risks, establishes a new European reserve of resources (the 'rescEU reserve') which includes a fleet of firefighting planes and helicopters, medical evacuation planes and a stockpile of medical equipment and field hospitals that can respond to health emergencies, and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents.
- 3.4 As part of the UCPM, the [Emergency Response Coordination Centre \(ERCC\)](#) monitors events around the globe 24/7, mobilises assistance or expertise following requests for assistance and ensures rapid deployment of emergency support through a direct link with national civil protection authorities. Specialised teams and equipment, such as forest firefighting planes, search and rescue, and medical teams can be mobilised at short notice for deployment inside and outside Europe.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/resceu_en, factsheet, last updated 21/06/2021.

- 3.5 In addition, EU Member States and Participating States may commit national resources for emergency response to the [European Civil Protection Pool \(ECPP\)](#). This pool allows for better planning and coordination of response activities at European and national levels, which means a faster and reliable EU response to disasters.
- 3.6 The European Civil Protection Pool increases the predictability of the European response to disasters, ensuring that as many capacities as possible are operational before a disaster strikes.
- 3.7 Supporting prevention and preparedness activities, the EU also increased financial support for capacities registered in the [European Civil Protection Pool](#). The financial support can be used for the adaptation and repair of capacities, as well as to cover operational costs (inside the EU) and transport costs (outside the EU) when deployed under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.
- 3.8 A [training programme](#) for civil protection experts from EU Member States and Participating States ensures compatibility and complementarity between intervention teams, while large-scale exercises train capacities for specific disasters each year.
- 3.9 The [Copernicus Emergency Management Service](#) also supports civil protection operations, providing timely and precise geospatial information that is useful to delineate affected areas and plan disaster relief operations.
- 3.10 The [Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network \(KN\)](#), is a new platform for sharing knowledge, best practices and lessons learned by civil protection experts and emergency management personnel. Through the Knowledge Network, the EU intends to strengthen its [European Disaster Risk Management](#). KN is a new flagship initiative under the revised EU legislation on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) that entered into force in March 2019. The network aims to improve prevention, preparedness and response to crises by filling the gaps in civil protection knowledge, expertise and ideas and by bringing together civil protection and disaster management actors. The establishment and operationalisation of the Network are in progress.
- 3.11 [Peer reviews](#) of disaster risk management (DRM) and civil protection systems provides a country or a region with a unique opportunity to reflect on its readiness to cope with natural and man-made disasters in order to identify ways of strengthening its wider prevention and preparedness system.
- 3.12 Managed by DG ECHO, the Peer Review programme is a tool made available to the civil protection authorities of Member States, Participating States and enlargement and neighbourhood countries under the UCPM.
- 3.13 Training, research and innovation, as well as close cooperation between national civil protection authorities, universities and researchers, are essential elements for thorough prevention and preparedness activities across Europe.
- 3.14 However, the diversity of origins of the means, equipment and human resources available in disaster management through the Mechanism highlights the need for further development and establishment of common technical standards for means and equipment, as well as common standards for operational response procedures.

4. **Turkey – The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)**⁴

- 4.1 Turkey has been linked to the EU under the Ankara Association Agreement since 1964 and a Customs Union was established in 1995. The European Council granted the status of candidate country to Turkey in December 1999 and accession negotiations were opened in October 2005.
- 4.2 The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) is the means by which the EU has been supporting reforms in the enlargement region with financial and technical assistance since 2007. IPA funds build up the capacities of the beneficiaries throughout the accession process, resulting in progressive, positive developments in the region⁵.
- 4.3 EU pre-accession funds help the beneficiaries make political and economic reforms, preparing them for the rights and obligations that come with EU membership. Those reforms should provide their citizens with better opportunities and allow for the development of standards equal to the ones enjoyed by citizens of the EU.
- 4.4 The pre-accession funds also help the EU reach its own objectives regarding a sustainable economic recovery, energy supply, transport, the environment and climate change, etc. The [IPA II regulation](#) came into force on 16 March 2014 and was applicable retroactively from 1 January 2014.
- 4.5 The IPA II regulation was complemented by the [Common Implementing Regulation \(CIR\)](#), a set of simplified and harmonised implementing rules and procedures for all external action instruments, as well as by the [IPA II Implementing Regulation](#) adopted by the Commission on 2 May 2014.
- 4.6 According to data from the European Commission's Financial Transparency System⁶, EUR 1 654.35 million were contracted from the IPA II to various beneficiaries in Turkey.
- 4.7 Also, EUR 1.08 million was contracted from the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Both cases of funding were for expenditure under direct management.

5. **Turkey – Civil Protection Profile**

- 5.1 On 6 May 2015, [Turkey signed an agreement](#) to join the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.
- 5.2 Turkey has experienced a number of major natural disasters that have revealed certain weaknesses needing to be tackled in its disaster management system. As a result, major restructuring was carried out in May 2009, when the "Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency" (AFAD)

⁴ COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Turkey 2020 Report, SWD(2020) 355 final/6.10.2020.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance_en.

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/budget/financial-transparency-system/analysis.html>.

was established, introducing a new disaster management model, shifting the priority from 'crisis management' to 'risk management'⁷.

- 5.3 The presidency conducts work on preparedness, mitigation, risk management, response, recovery and reconstruction. AFAD reports to the Turkish Ministry of the Interior. Amongst the governmental, NGO and private institutions, the presidency provides coordination and formulates and implements policies. AFAD is the main organisation responsible in disaster and emergency situations.
- 5.4 The Turkish National Red Crescent Association, [Kızılay](#), is an institutional disaster management (DM) actor in Turkey, offering a broad disaster response capacity. It is an organisation with nearly 1.2 million volunteers, with 9 regional and 24 local disaster management centres and a capacity of approximately 300 000 staff to deal with disasters. It is a member of the National Platform of Hyogo Framework of Action, which also includes a number of universities, research institutions and professional organisations.
- 5.5 [AKUT](#) is a primary search and rescue organisation in Turkey, with a large number of members and a broad variety of specialised skills. It includes over 200 permanent members and 2 000 volunteer members, owning state of the art technology that can be mobilised in an instant. AKUT also runs projects that will increase search and rescue competency in Turkish society. AKUT is entirely a voluntary, non-governmental organisation involved in searching, assisting and rescuing all who require aid, within its authority and means, in mountain or other nature-related accidents, natural disasters and all other emergency conditions; it has trained, disciplined, high-standard personnel and equipment, and passes on knowledge to society. It has no political affiliation. AKUT has an administrative structure in line with the legal definition of a democratic civil society association. With the 2011 classification by the United Nations International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), it is the first and only Turkish team to achieve this status.
- 5.6 Turkey underwent a peer review in 2015⁸. This peer review encompassed all stages of DRM, taking in policies and practices developed at all levels of government and society. The link with global policies (the 2013-2015 Hyogo Framework for Action and the 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction) and European-level action (ECPM) received particular attention.
- 5.7 The framework for the review covered five broad areas: an integrated approach to DRM, risk assessments, risk management planning, preparedness and public awareness.
- 5.8 The peer review highlighted the fact that Turkey's DM system is organised along the lines of a risk management cycle and is therefore in principle coherent and strong, given the level and number of risks the country faces. It is particularly strong on preparedness and response, and the aim is to bring prevention up to the same level and make it an integral part of risk management policies and programmes.

⁷ TURKEY, CIVIL PROTECTION PROFILE, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. Factsheet, 23 September 2021.

⁸ Peer Review, Turkey, 2015, EUCP.

- 5.9 Most of the recommendations focused on prevention enhancement and included the following:
- 5.9.1 Review older laws, policies, plans and activities to determine whether they need to be revised. This will provide more opportunities to create a disaster-resilient society through a multi-stakeholder, all-hazard approach.
 - 5.9.2 Strengthen the role of municipalities in DRM.
 - 5.9.3 As facilitator, AFAD could further strengthen the multi-stakeholder approach for all parts of the crisis management cycle, with a focus on prevention.
 - 5.9.4 Further develop the preventive pillar on the basis of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, to bring it into line with response capabilities. This will include many elements of the ECPM.
 - 5.9.5 Continue to initiate projects that will develop disaster prevention capacity, including emerging challenges such as climate-change adaptation and sustainable development. Risk assessment processes (identification, analyses and evaluation) should be at the centre of DM work and 'risk-informed' investment.
 - 5.9.6 Use disaster data effectively to prepare a wider range of risk scenarios and associated contingency plans that will enhance disaster preparedness and prevention.
 - 5.9.7 Use lessons learned to create a national framework ensuring a consistent and systematic approach to following up post-disaster reviews so as to improve disaster management and limit vulnerability and losses.
 - 5.9.8 Produce detailed risk maps and risk assessments covering the entire country, in particular for seismic risk, taking into account the best available information on hazard, vulnerability and exposure.
 - 5.9.9 Increase the focus on risk management planning and the reduction of (especially seismic) risk factors. A nationwide quantitative risk assessment should be developed as the basis for a priority scale that can be used to start building, strengthening and retrofitting in the most risk-prone situations.
 - 5.9.10 Strive for effective, efficient, transferable, sustainable and coherent DM policies.
 - 5.9.11 Use open sources to share data and knowledge between programmes in different sectors. Communicate in multi-stakeholder meetings aimed at tackling a specific problem to make use of sectors' varying capacities.
 - 5.9.12 Continue to collaborate internationally with other national and local governments to increase the use of scientific knowledge. Use this knowledge to strengthen public education and awareness.

6. **Civil protection under the Union for the Mediterranean platform (UfM)**

6.1 The UfM is a multilateral partnership focused on increasing the potential for regional integration and cohesion among Euro-Mediterranean countries, including Turkey.

6.2 Within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), after 10 years' hiatus, dialogue on civil protection has been revived. Experts from the partner countries met in Brussels in November 2019 to discuss preparations for [efficient mutual assistance in the Euro-Mediterranean area](#).

6.3 One of the outcomes of the meeting was that an action plan⁹ was endorsed. The actions proposed to be taken forward at regional level and in partnership between the countries associated with the UfM concern:

- host nation support;
- response preparedness;
- risk assessment and situational analysis for rapid response.

6.4 At present the UfM is moving in two main directions¹⁰:

- concerning the role of volunteers as a key factor in reinforcing the action of public emergency services and the involvement of citizens in DRM as a key factor in saving lives, particularly for vulnerable groups,
- concerning the importance of risk communication as a crucial tool to involve and prepare citizens for emergencies and build resilient societies.

6.5 The first direction covers the following main topics:

- developing local first response networks;
- introducing better/new communication tools to reach the public and raise awareness, including women and vulnerable people;
- having an operational and legal framework in place in Disaster Risk Management, including marine pollution;
- improving training and introducing new technological tools for volunteers;
- including educational programmes in school curricula on risk awareness and the role of volunteers in disaster management;
- developing mechanisms and sufficient resources to retain trained volunteers;
- running joint exercises and inter-regional projects;
- further improving volunteer networks.

6.6 The following elements emerge from the second direction covered by the UfM:

⁹ Action Plan, Working group on "Preparing for efficient mutual assistance in the Euro Mediterranean area", 26/11/2019.

¹⁰ <https://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-working-groups-civil-protection-disaster-risk-management/>.

- investing in youth as a crucial element in building resilient, involved societies;
- providing risk communication as a key component of DRM;
- diversifying channels of communication to include the public, not only using social media;
- involving young people from early on, developing "skills for life";
- including local authorities in risk communication and strengthening multi-sectorial exchanges, including the scientific sector;
- organising joint exercises, drills and awareness campaigns, including the private and educational sectors;
- creating a legal framework for using social media and preventing fake news;
- developing joint projects and tools/methodologies that are attractive to all parts of society, young people in particular.

7. **Turkey – UCPM interaction**

- 7.1 From 1990 to date, the following major natural disasters have been reported in Turkey, in terms of people killed/affected and economic damage: eleven earthquake events, two flood events, one mass movement event and one forest fire event.
- 7.2 Turkey has requested assistance five times in the following situations: forest fire (August/2021, amphibious aircrafts, helicopters); COVID-19 (May 2020, consular assistance to repatriate Turkish and EU citizens from Peru and Colombia); Syria – UN Border Monitoring Mission (August/2014, UNDAC mission deployed supporting the Border Monitoring Mechanism); Syrian refugees in Turkey (April 2012, in-kind assistance); and earthquake (October 2011, in-kind assistance).
- 7.3 Since 2014, Turkey has responded and helped out in four emergencies, providing in-kind assistance to: Croatia (December 2020, earthquake); Lebanon (August 2020, Beirut Port explosion); Iran (April 2019, floods); and Sweden (July 2018, forest fires).
- 7.4 Turkey contributes with four modules as part of the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP): HUSAR (Heavy urban search and rescue) (2), MUSAR (Medium urban search and rescue) (1) and EMT-2 (1), all registered in the ECPP.
- 7.5 Turkey has trained eighty-six experts from 01/01/2013 to the present day. To date, no experts from Turkey have been deployed under the UCPM.
- 7.6 Turkey activated satellite data four times from 2019 to 2020.
- 7.7 Concerning humanitarian assistance, the total contribution to Turkey for the period 2015 – 2021 was EUR 3 460 941 460.