

THIRD DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

Regional Conference

“From Lessons Identified to Lessons Learnt using HNS experience and examples”

(when – 3rd week of May 2026, where – Bodrum, Türkiye)

Background

The main objective of national Civil Protection/Disaster Risk Management (CP/DRM) authorities is to focus their activities on minimising or preventing the impacts of natural and/or technological i.e. industrial hazards. A central mechanism used to increase the effectiveness and consistency of CP/DRM processes and actions is the ability to learn from past experiences, regardless of whether these experiences resulted in positive or negative outcomes. The national CP/DRM authorities should actually aim to become learning organisations that systematically collect, analyse, and act on experiences from events and exercises to reduce hazard’s impacts and improve preparedness. Core concepts combine:

- Organisational learning: learning builds on direct and indirect experiences and must be translated into interpreted knowledge that the organisation can use.
- Collective memory: a readily accessible, shared record of experience is essential to sustain learning and institutional memory.
- Culture and behaviour change: learning only matters when it leads to purposeful modification of routines, procedures, and practices.
- Balance of sources: past experience is valuable but insufficient; proactive thinking is needed to prepare for novel, high-impact events.

There are four key elements contributing to successful lessons learning process:

- Institutional flexibility - a learning organisation must take strategic control of change, fostering an open, adaptive culture and the structural ability to record, evaluate, and implement change rather than allowing haphazard shifts.
- Lessons as processes, not outcomes - treating lessons learnt as a continuous process makes them drivers of change; treating them only as outcomes limits their integration into practice and reduces their practical impact.
- Knowing what and how to learn - defining how an organisation learns (the rules and methods) is at least as important as deciding what to learn; learning methods should align with the organisation’s goals and situational context.
- Experience has limits - relying solely on past events leaves organisations vulnerable to unforeseen hazards; a proactive, anticipatory approach is required to prepare for rare or unexperienced hazards.

In short, the effective CP/DRM depends on deliberate, institutionalised learning that turns experience into accessible knowledge and measurable organisational change. Through a systematic evaluation of actions taken—or not taken — gaps should be identified and filled, successful practices reinforced, and, by integrating these

improvements into the national legal framework and institutional structures, the overall DRM system will be strengthened.

The IPA III region (Western Balkans and Türkiye) has been affected by devastating disasters in the past several years – floods in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia, earthquakes in Albania and Türkiye, summer forest fires throughout the region.

The 2025 fire season, as reported by the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS), was one of the worst on the record. It started earlier and was more intense, significantly impacting also the IPA III region. Multiple IPA III beneficiaries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia) activated the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), leading to deployment coordinated by its Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC).

When a country activates the mechanism (UCPM), the top priority is ensuring rapid support on the ground. The effectiveness of this response depends significantly on the host nation's ability to immediately establish the necessary conditions for receiving assistance.

A consistent implementation of the EU Host Nation Support Guidelines (EU HNSG) involves minimising obstacles to international assistance, ensuring seamless disaster response operations. This can concern any step of delivery – from preparation for deployment, customs clearance, through medical provision (ensuring doctors have the right to operate in the country, for example) to logistics and transportation once the assistance reaches the affected country. In a disaster scenario, the host (receiving) nation needs to be able to provide one interface who can coordinate with all the necessary stakeholders in that country in an efficient and timely manner.

With an aim at assisting the affected countries i.e. Participating States to receive international assistance in the most effective and efficient way EU HNSG were developed in 2012. The EU HNSG are non-binding and provide principles, standards and indications to ensure national structures and procedures are established in support of international response capacities operating in the territory of a requesting country or transiting through the territory of another country to reach the affected country.

Taking into account that in November 2024 the Commission and experts of the Commission Expert Group on Capacities developed the revised/updated EU HNSG, and building upon DG ECHO efforts such as anticipated TAIEX workshop on wildfires, as well as on invaluable HNS experience of the IPA III region including that of 2025 wildfires and the knowledge accumulated within the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Initiative for South Eastern Europe, the EU OSA Project seized the opportunity to organize a Regional Conference addressing the lessons identified to lessons learnt process using the HNS examples. The Conference aims to bring together the IPA III beneficiaries, the Eastern Neighbourhood countries, interested EU Member States and other UCPM Participating States.

Objective

The objective of the Regional Conference is to examine past disaster and exercise experiences in the IPA III region (and beyond), and openly discuss what worked well, what could have been done better, and how lessons identified have been effectively and systematically transformed into lessons learned.

More specifically, the Conference aims to support the implementation of revised and updated EU HNSG as well as the preparation for the forthcoming wildfire season 2026 by:

- Showcasing how lessons identified have been institutionalized within national CP/DRM systems - examine how HNS experiences from the IPA III region and beyond have been analysed and why some identified lessons were implemented while others were not.
- Exploring the mechanisms and strategies used by national CP/DRM authorities to embed lessons learning into their operations - promote structured, repeatable lessons learning mechanisms that move recommendations into institutional reform and legal or procedural change.
- Encouraging regional and interregional dialogue on good practices, challenges, and innovations in lessons learning - share practical tools, templates, and governance approaches that national CP/DRM authorities can adapt to sustain a learning culture.
- Producing concrete actionable (specific, relevant, achievable and measurable) recommendations: national action points, regional peer-review arrangements, and/or a common set of performance indicators for lessons uptake.

A guiding question for the Conference discussion will be:

“How have national legal and institutional CP/DRM frameworks evolved to reflect lessons learnt (LL) from implementing the EU HNSG, and how can these changes enhance future disaster preparedness and response?”

Activities and Format

The participation/audience of the Conference considers having up to three representatives (Head of national CP/DRM authority [Director General], senior HNS expert and senior LL expert) from IPA III beneficiaries, Eastern Neighbourhood countries and interested EU Member States and UCPM Participating States, as well as European Commission (DG ECHO including ERCC, DG INTPA, DG HOME, DG MOVE) representatives, members of the Commission Expert Group on Capacities and interested experts from the wider CP/DRM community.

A Regional Conference combines an expert technical sessions, country case studies, facilitated peer workshops, and an outcomes session producing concrete actionable recommendations for national HNS/LL frameworks and UCPM expert groups. The focus will be on:

- Deployment – coordination between sending, receiving, and transiting countries.
- Operational Support – real-time challenges and solutions during disaster response.
- Demobilisation – lessons from the end-of-operations phase and post-response evaluations.
- Institutionalising Lessons – how national CP/DRM authorities have embedded lessons learning into their legal and operational frameworks.

Expected results

The Conference aims to generate actionable insights and actionable (specific, relevant, achievable and measurable) recommendations by addressing:

- What systems and processes have been established to institutionalise lessons identified from HNS implementation?
- How have these processes influenced national legislation, SOPs, and training programs?

GOPA PARTNERS IN ACTION FOR CHANGE AND ENGAGEMENT S.A. (GOPA PACE)

BD DE LA WOLUWE 2 \ 1150 BRUSSELS \ BELGIUM
TEL. +32 2 89 767 00 \ INFO@GOPA-PACE.COM

VAT: BE 0442745018
WWW.GOPA-PACE.COM

MEMBER OF GOPA CONSULTING GROUP

- What are the success stories and persistent challenges in embedding lessons learning within national CP/DRM authorities?
- How can these insights inform the work of UCPM expert groups and future EU HNSG revisions?

The conclusions and recommendations from the Conference are expected to contribute to:

- Strengthening HNS and LL within national CP/DRM systems, thus further developing national preparedness.
- Enhancing regional cooperation and interoperability.
- Supporting the evolution of the EU HNSG and related UCPM frameworks.

Funding

The EU OSA Project propose to sponsor the organization of the event and participation of the IPA III beneficiaries and the Eastern Neighbourhood countries.

GOPA PARTNERS IN ACTION FOR CHANGE AND ENGAGEMENT S.A. (GOPA PACE)

BD DE LA WOLUWE 2 \ 1150 BRUSSELS \ BELGIUM
TEL. +32 2 89 767 00 \ INFO@GOPA-PACE.COM

VAT: BE 0442745018
WWW.GOPA-PACE.COM

