



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN AID  
OPERATIONS (ECHO)

## Background paper to Item 2 The future of the UCPM

### 1. Background

Similarly to the joint reflection on the future development of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), DG ECHO also wants to use the informal meeting with Directors-General to continue the exchange on the future of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).

While the disaster landscape of the last years has allowed the UCPM to showcase its added value as an effective and efficient emergency instrument, it also tested its limits. Safeguarding the sustainable functioning of the UCPM's disaster management model in its support to national civil protection authorities has therefore become a key concern. At the same time, operational needs and political guidance also ask for further equipping the UCPM for new and emerging risks within a more inclusive all-hazard approach.

The two main challenges for European civil protection will persist for the next years to come: climate change leading to more extreme and unpredictable weather, potentially causing major havoc across the Union, affecting nearly all sectors, and the evolving security threats targeting the very fabric of European society. The next European Commission College will likely need to put these challenges, and the potential interactions between them, more central on its agenda.

In this context, the European Council underlined in its recent conclusions<sup>1</sup> *the imperative need for enhanced and coordinated military and civilian preparedness and strategic crisis management in the context of the evolving threat landscape. It invites the Council to take work forward and the Commission together with the High Representative to propose actions to strengthen preparedness and crisis response at EU level in an all-hazards and whole-of-society approach, taking into account Member States' responsibilities and competences, with a view to a future preparedness strategy.*

In light of this, the Commission College has designated Mr. Sauli Niinistö, former President of Finland, as Special Advisor to President von der Leyen with the objective to prepare a report on strengthening the EU's civilian and defence preparedness in light of the above Council Conclusions. Furthermore, the Council (Ad-hoc Working Party on Resilience) is currently considering the challenges and way forward in the framework of the conclusions on horizontal crisis management. While the discussion is still ongoing<sup>2</sup>, there seems to be an understanding that the Union has made progress in withstanding the destabilising

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<sup>1</sup> EUCO 7/24, 22 March 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Adoption of the conclusions is currently planned for June 2024.

consequences of some of the past events but also needs to further bolster Union's preparedness and resilience, including by reinforcing existing capacities and tools. Alongside a whole-of-society approach, as identified also already in earlier Council Conclusions as key for resilient European societies<sup>3</sup>, building resilience cannot be achieved without actions to strengthen preparedness and crisis response. Which contributions can the UCPM meaningfully provide to these challenges?

## **2. Potential way forward**

Given this political and operational background, an in-depth reflection is needed to shape the UCPM's future in complementarity with evolving broader crisis management and defence policy framework. Enhancing military capabilities in Europe must go hand-in-hand with increased civilian preparedness and resilience. We therefore should reflect together on how propose to political decision-makers the further strengthening of also civil protection and emergency services to respond to the consequences of climate change as well as potential intensified hybrid attacks on our critical infrastructure, including prolonged blackouts, large population displacements, disinformation campaigns, public health crises or CBRN threats. Consequently, DG ECHO and national civil protection authorities might need to consider the revision of existing risk assessments to be able to carry out a rapid impact analysis of potential cross-sectoral implications of newly identified security risks with potential impacts on EU citizens, the environment, critical infrastructure and services. This will allow to propose concrete civil protection actions to strengthen preparedness and crisis response at EU level, as requested by above European Council Conclusion.

### **Directors-General are invited to reflect on and discuss the following questions:**

1. What are the requirements for a successful strengthening of the UCPM to face the new reality of complex and/or long-lasting emergencies?
2. Which ways forward do you see for enhancing civil-military cooperation in order to increase resilience and strengthen overall civilian preparedness to increased security threats in Europe?
3. Which concrete contributions can civil protection provide to strengthen preparedness and crisis response at EU level, as requested by the European Council?

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<sup>3</sup> Council conclusions on strengthening whole-of-society resilience in the context of civil protection, including preparedness to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) threats adopted of 8 June 2023.