



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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

Background paper and questions for Plenary session I and Breakout session: What future for the UCPM?

1. Background

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 and 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 and whole-of-society 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 destruction across the Union as clearly showcased once more this summer with severe wildfires and floods across the continent. The situation is aggravated by deep security concerns since the launch of the Russia's war on aggression in Ukraine that has strained Union's key societal and economic values as well as well-being of citizens.

The list of risks perceived by EU citizens is long and diverse. According to a special Eurobarometer report¹ measuring the level of awareness and preparedness of the EU population towards disaster risks, there is a great variety in the types of the risks perceived by the EU population, with risks linked to both impact of climate change and security/social threats ranked among the highest. This report furthermore showcases the need to strengthen risk and disaster related exchange with citizens, to further enhance individual preparedness and build strong social networks which increase our overall resilience and provide first-hand support in case a disaster strikes.

The next European Commission College puts these challenges, and the potential interactions between them, more central on its agenda. In July 2024, President von der Leyen referred in the Political Guidelines for the next European Commission² to the need in Europe for a new ambition on crisis and security preparedness. She announced the future work on a Preparedness Union Strategy, to be inspired by the report on EU civil and military preparedness by former Finnish President Sauli Niinistö that will be presented this autumn [the exact date of the publication of the report is not known yet at the time of drafting of this background paper].

¹ [Disaster risk awareness and preparedness of the EU population - September 2024 - - Eurobarometer survey \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2444)

² [e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en)

Importantly, President von der Leyen also mentioned the need for a common approach to preventing and preparing other new threats, in particular those linked to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) security.

In addition, citizens' preparedness is one of the cornerstones of societal resilience and can reduce the cost of crisis response. To make citizens an integral part of a 'whole of society' approach, in addition to public authorities, private entities and other societal actors, they need to become active actors of their own resilience, via their increased awareness, enhanced ability and active implication in crisis preparedness and response actions.

Discussion on the way forward

To embrace an imminent future of more complex, long-lasting, overlapping and possibly even existential crises, both the EU and Member States need to address the volatile and frequent crisis environment that involves addressing possible gaps and challenges to better anticipate, prevent, prepare, and respond to disasters. The meeting of the Directors-General shall serve reflection on the shape of the UCPM's future in complementarity with an evolving broader crisis management, security and defence policy framework and in line with a whole-of-society and all-hazard approach.

We therefore should assess how the Union and the Member States can achieve the above objectives; a variety of policy and legal elements that can allow implementation of concrete measures to strengthen preparedness and crisis response at EU level shall be considered.

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

Questions for the plenary session I (14.30 – 16.00):

How can EU solidarity be enhanced (under UCPM and beyond) in the years to come in view of the reality of complex and cross-sectoral disasters?

How can we increase societal preparedness across the EU for more extreme weather and new security threats?

Questions for the breakout session (16:15 – 17:30) (each group will discuss the following questions and identify recommendations that will be presented in plenary the next day):

How can we take forward a proactive readiness of the UCPM to face the evolving risk landscape?

Which of your successful national prevention and preparedness actions should inspire the EU level in the development of an EU Preparedness Union Strategy?

What can we learn from your national experience in raising citizen's awareness and preparedness for natural disasters and security risks?