
**MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN (MAP)
REGIONAL MARINE POLLUTION EMERGENCY RESPONSE CENTRE FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA (REMPEC)**

11th Meeting of the Focal Points of the Regional
Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre
for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)

REMPEC/WG.37/INF.4
Date: 9 June 2015

Malta, 15-17 June 2015

Original: English

Agenda Item 12

THE EUROPEAN UNION CIVIL PROTECTION MECHANISM

Note by the European Commission

SUMMARY

Executive Summary: This document briefly presents the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism and its tools available for the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention

Action to be taken: The Meeting is invited to take note of the information provided and to consider the use of the presented tools within the framework of regional co-operation.

Related documents: REMPEC/WG.37/9, REMPEC/WG.37/10, REMPEC/WG.37/12

The Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)

1 At EU level, prevention, preparedness and response to natural and man-made disasters, including marine pollution, is dealt within the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), operated by the European Commission, Department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO). Beside the EU Member States, the UCPM is open to the participation of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries which are members of the European Economic Area (EEA), acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates. Currently the UCPM has 32 Participating States: 28 EU Member States, Iceland, Norway, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro. Serbia and Turkey are expected to join the Mechanism soon.

2 Within the UCPM the Participating States provide mutual assistance during major disasters on a voluntary basis and upon request. They also commit to exchange information and to coordinate their operations in order to ensure more rapid and efficient disaster response both inside and outside the EU. The Participating States also use the Mechanism as a platform for improving their disaster prevention and preparedness by developing policy guidelines based on their expertise and best practices, by establishing Europe-wide early warning systems and monitoring tools, organising joint trainings and exercises, etc. More info at: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/mechanism_en.

3 The European Commission has developed a number of tools intended to facilitate the joint work of the Participating States and their cooperation. Some of those tools and services are also available for a broader audience, including all Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention:

- .1 The **Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)** is the operational heart of the UCPM and is accessible 24 hours a day. Any country inside or outside the Union affected by a major disaster can make an appeal for assistance to the Participating States through the ERCC. The Centre co-ordinates requests and offers of help and facilitates deployment of in-kind assistance and expert teams. It also provides updated information on the actual status of an ongoing emergency. In case of a

marine pollution emergency, the ERCC is also the entry point to request oil recovery capacity from the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).

- .2 To facilitate emergency communication among the Participating States, the ERCC and EMSA, the Commission has developed the **Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS)** which has a separate version for maritime incidents (**CECIS Marine Pollution**). It is an internet-based, password protected integrated platform to submit requests for assistance, to make offers and to document, view and share the development of the ongoing emergency in an online logbook.

4 CECIS Marine Pollution is also open for the use of all Contracting Parties of Regional sea conventions where EU is a Party. It is designed in a way that allows communication at both regional and EU levels and supports variety of scopes while requesting for international assistance. An affected country may choose to address the request to a regional agreement, multiple regional agreements or the regional agreement + other Participating States of the UCPM. The scope of the request can be extended during an emergency, if required, e.g. the request can be first addressed to the contracting parties of the Barcelona Convention where assistance from EU may include EMSA capacities, and later extended to all Participating States of the UCPM.

5 Among other functionalities, CECIS Marine Pollution has a discussion forum, can generate emergency statistics and contains a database of pollution response assets of the Participating States and EMSA as well as policy information on HNS and dispersants. Resources in the CECIS database are captured and managed in a way that enables them to be easily searched and plotted on the map. Users are able to update their resources directly in the system at any time. Discussions have started with Regional Agreement Secretariats to find the way to streamline the European and regional reporting of country resources.

6 The European Commission maintains, upgrades and provides trainings on CECIS Marine Pollution to its users free of charge. CECIS Marine pollution was presented to the Contracting Parties at MEDEXPOL 2013 (Athens) and the Info Day in 2014 (Brussels).

7 In relation to POLREP system, CECIS serves for Part III – POLFAC – to manage information and co-ordination of the response phase when international assistance is required. For Parts I and II – POLWARN and POLINF - EU Member States have an obligation (Directive 2002/59/EC as amended) to use SafeSeaNet, managed by EMSA. SafeSeaNet is a tool for monitoring, prevention, detection and alert of maritime incidents. Currently the policy discussions are on-going on a possibility to open up relevant parts of SafeSeaNet for the use of non-EU countries, including Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention.

8 Technical developments are underway to link SafeSeaNet and CECIS Marine Pollution by an automatic push of POLWARN and POLINF messages from SafeSeaNet to CECIS. When this functionality is implemented, CECIS Marine Pollution will host all POLWARN and POLINF messages from SafeSeaNet that will allow automatic feeding of data while creating a request for assistance in CECIS.

9 Every year DG ECHO launches **a call for proposals for disaster prevention and preparedness projects** and **a call for exercises**. With this funding, the European Commission encourages and promotes the exchange of best practices and knowhow on various issues related to civil protection and marine pollution.

10 The call for prevention and preparedness supports the efforts of Participating States, enlargement countries and the European Neighbourhood Policy countries focusing on areas where a common approach is more appropriate: actions aimed at achieving a higher level of protection and resilience by preventing or reducing effects of disasters and actions to improve disaster preparedness.

11 The call for proposals for Civil Protection Mechanism Exercises aims to support exercises simulating the situation and conditions of major emergencies. The exercise must include activation of the UCPM and require involvement of Participating States, enlargement countries or European Neighbourhood Policy countries, mainly with deployment of intervention teams, teams of experts and national key contact point and addressing host nation support.