

Western Mediterranean Region
Marine Oil & HNS Pollution Cooperation Project

Activity Report

**CECIS Marine Pollution workshop for
the Mediterranean countries**

WP 6: Workshops and Trainings
Action 6.1: Sub-regional workshop
on CECIS and MedERSys

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Participants: All



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Activity Report

CECIS Marine Pollution workshop for the Mediterranean countries 22-23 October 2019 Brussels, Belgium

Summary:

The regional CECIS Marine Pollution workshop for the Mediterranean countries was organized in accordance with the Western Mediterranean Region Marine Oil and HNS Pollution Cooperation Project (West MOPoCo Project) and the recommendations of the 13th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (June 2019, Malta). The objective of the two-day workshop was to provide knowledge on CECIS Marine Pollution interface and functionalities as well as to envisage the use of CECIS Marine Pollution in the whole Mediterranean to enhance coordination of requests and offers of international assistance. This workshop facilitated debate to discuss options to set up the Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean.

SUMMARY SHEET

Title of workshop:	CECIS MARINE POLLUTION WORKSHOP FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES
Host:	The Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operation (DG ECHO)
Venue and date:	DG ECHO Address: Rue de la Loi 86, Brussels, Belgium 22 to 23 October 2019
Type:	Sub-Regional
Organized by:	REMPEC
Co-financed by:	The Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operation (DG ECHO) under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism with the support of the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)
No. of participants:	23 participants
Project number:	826397
Participating countries:	Project Beneficiaries: Algeria, France, Malta, Morocco, Spain, and Tunisia Countries invited and sponsored by the European Commission: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Montenegro and Turkey
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1. Background

1.1 With a view to assist the Contracting Parties (CPs) in the implementation of the 1976 Emergency Protocol and the 2002 Prevention and Emergency Protocol, the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) had managed to mobilize various sources of funding, including EU funding mechanisms. The Western Mediterranean Region Marine Oil and HNS Pollution Cooperation Project (West MOPoCo Project), co-financed by the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), runs between 2019 and 2020 and involves REMPEC together with the Western Mediterranean coastal States and other partners.

1.2 The West MOPoCo Project supports the Western Mediterranean coastal states: Algeria, France, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Spain and Tunisia in strengthening their collaboration and cooperation in the field of preparedness for and response to oil and HNS marine pollution by enhancing the quality and interoperability of their response capacities.

1.3 This Project, coordinated by Secrétariat Général de la Mer (SGMer), France, is being implemented through an inter-regional effort, including participation of REMPEC, the Bonn Agreement and the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), and with the technical support of expert institutions such as the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation (ITOPF), the French Centre of Documentation, Research and Experimentation on Accidental Water Pollution (CEDRE), as well as the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA).

1.4 With its proposed pilot approach, which could be replicated in other regions and sectors, the project aims to increase each countries' preparedness for receiving international assistance, improve trans-border and macro regional cooperation, enhance quality and interoperability of response capacities and procedures, and enhance cooperation between civil protection, maritime and environment communities.

1.5 Whilst efforts have been made to facilitate the reporting needs of the Mediterranean countries taking into consideration the Mediterranean regional information and reporting systems (MEDGIS-MAR, MENELAS, BCRS, EcAp), there is a need in particular for EU Members states to interconnect these systems with the European systems in particular the Common Emergency and Information System for Marine Pollution (CECIS MP).

1.6 Since 2017, this has also been a topic of common interest for other Regional Agreements such as HELCOM and the Bonn Agreement. In recent years, both HELCOM and the Bonn Agreement have decided to use CECIS MP as their regional emergency communication system as well as the database of inventories of equipment/pollution response resources.

1.7 Further to the revision of the CECIS MP Resources Database structure in 2017, access to the CECIS MP application was granted to the Regional Agreement Secretariats and recently opened to third countries sharing a sea basin with the EU. Access to CECIS MP can be now granted upon a written expression of interest by a relevant national authority of a third country addressed to DG ECHO at the European Commission.

1.8 On the other hand, the 19th ordinary meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP19) (February 2016, Greece) adopted the Mediterranean Guide on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Responding to Marine Pollution Incidents (the Med Guide), and tasked REMPEC to develop an electronic version of the Guide, to facilitate to the competent authorities the notification of incidents and the request and offer of assistance. The electronic version of the Med Guide was put online in 2018, together with a beta version of an electronic communication system (MedRSys).

1.9 In order to ensure the optimum use of both systems, the CECIS Marine Pollution workshop for the Mediterranean countries (the Workshop) aimed to train the participants on the use of CECIS MP, to provide them a testing environment for CECIS MP, learn about the tool and to share best practices and lessons learnt with the view to initiate discussion on the opportunity and on the options to set up a common emergency communication system for the whole region.

2. Workshop Objectives

2.1 The general objectives of the workshop were:

- to provide participants with a testing environment to acquire technical knowledge on CECIS MP interface and functionalities;
- to present participants the “Emergency Communication Procedure” currently used by part of the Mediterranean for the notification of marine pollution incidents and the request of assistance and the recent developments made for its modernisation;
- to envisage the use of CECIS MP in the whole Mediterranean to enhance coordination of requests and offers of international assistance; and

- to further discuss options to set up a Common Emergency Communication System for the whole Mediterranean for an integrated approach for notifying incidents and receiving and offering international assistance.

2.2 The corresponding activities for these objectives were respectively:

- Activity 6.1 “The Sub-regional workshop on CECIS MP and MedERSys”;
- Activity 3.3 “Mediterranean Emergency Reporting System (MedERSys) upgrade”.

2.3 The target audience initially comprised representatives of national authorities responsible for the preparedness and response to Oil and HNS marine pollutions within the Western Mediterranean Region and more specifically those in the EU countries, namely France, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Spain and the neighbouring countries namely Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Considering the importance of this workshop for the Mediterranean region, DG ECHO has kindly offered to extend the invitation to other Mediterranean coastal states and to sponsor non-EU Member States of the region, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Monaco, Montenegro, Syria and Turkey. The list of participants is set out in **Annex 1** to the present report.

3. Proceedings

Opening of the Workshop

3.1 On Day one, Mrs Asta Mackeviciute, DG ECHO, welcomed the participants and briefly presented the program of the two-day workshop to be held in the premises of DG ECHO, reproduced in **Annex 2** to this report. Then Mr Christophe Blazy, REMPEC, briefly presented the West MOPoCo Project, its objectives, activities as well as its expected deliverables between 2019 and 2020.

3.2 This introduction was followed by a presentation of the context and objectives of the workshop by Mr Malek Smaoui, REMPEC. He introduced the international and regional frameworks in relation with the communication of reports and urgent information concerning pollution incidents and the request and offer of assistance in case of critical situation established by the 1990 OPRC Convention, the 2000 OPRC-HNS Protocol and the 2002 Prevention and Emergency Protocol to the Barcelona Convention. He focused on the obligation of the Contracting Parties, such as, the obligation to inform REMPEC and neighbouring Mediterranean States in case of pollution incident and to provide international assistance to other States if requested.

The existing communication systems in the Mediterranean: the “Emergency Communication Procedure” and CECIS MP

3.3 Mr Smaoui introduced the “**Emergency Communication Procedure**” developed by REMPEC to be used by the competent authorities of the non-EU Mediterranean coastal states, in case of emergency, to notify pollution incidents to and to request assistance from REMPEC or the neighbouring Countries:

- The first communication should be made through a phone call on REMPEC’s **Emergency line (+356 79 50 50 11), operational 24 hours a day, or sending an Emergency e-mail (emergency@rempec.org)**, automatically forwarded to the emergency mobile phone line.
- Once contact has been established by mobile phone or e-mail, further communication, using the POLREP formats, **would be exchanged using REMPEC's fax or the Emergency email**, to report on pollution incidents using POLWARN, POLINF format and,
- in case of need of assistance, to request assistance using the POLFAC format, and detailed using the assistance Forms of the Mediterranean Guide for the equipment or experts through the MAU.

3.4 Mrs Mackeviciute and Mr Etienne Marchand, DG ECHO, then started the CECIS MP training session where participants were split into two groups for English and French speakers. The two-hour training session provided participants with a first overview of the different modes offered by CECIS MP (operational, training, exercise), opening and managing an emergency in the system using different functionalities as well as information about policy and statistics and the Data Base to access information about available experts and response equipment in the EU Member States to be deployed in case of an emergency.

3.5 The introduction to CECIS MP was followed by an operational part to better familiarise the participants with the use of the system and to develop hands-on experience through the simulation of an emergency scenarios in the Mediterranean with request and offer of assistance between the Mediterranean States.

3.6 After the training, all participants were gathered to share their experience with the existing “Emergency Communication Procedure”, their first impression on CECIS MP and to discuss their willingness to use this platform. The debate set the baseline for the final discussions on Day two of the workshop in order to explore ways and options to set up the “Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean”.

3.7 During Day two, Mr Smaoui started by introducing participants with the recent development on the “Emergency Communication Procedure” following the adoption, in 2016, of the Med Guide to assist CPs in managing requests and offers of assistance from other countries and organizations when confronted to large, complex or significant marine pollution incidents. He focused on its usefulness, especially its Annexes, respectively Annex II.1: Pollution Reporting System (POLREP), Annex II.3: Request of Mediterranean Assistance Unit experts and Annex II.4: Request of equipment, products and specialized personnel. Indeed, they were used during the Agia Zoni II incident (Greece, October 2017), exercises in 2018 (e.g. Simulex, Maltex, Tomassos) and they were included in different Sub-Regional Contingency Plans in the Mediterranean (between Cyprus, Greece and Israel, and between Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia).

3.8 Mr Smaoui also presented the online version of the Med Guide, developed in 2018, to improve the quality, speed and effectiveness of decision making process in case of marine pollution, as well as the electronic emergency reporting system for the Mediterranean (MedERSys) aiming at modernising the existing “Emergency Communication Procedure”, through the digitalisation of the POLREP and the Request of assistance Forms of the Med Guide to enable their completion and dissemination either to notify marine pollution incidents or to request and offer of assistance electronically.

Towards the adoption of a common emergency communication system for the Mediterranean.

3.9 The final session of the workshop was dedicated to debate about duality of two communication systems and on the options to set up a “Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean”.

3.10 The session started with an overview of the decisions and recommendations previously taken in this regard:

- In accordance with the Regional Strategy for the Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ship (Regional Strategy 2016-2021), adopted by COP 19 in February 2016, the Contracting Parties agreed to “envisage the use CECIS MP in order to enhance coordination of requests and offers of international assistance” (Specific Objective 21).
- The Inter-Secretariat Meeting between HELCOM, Bonn Agreement, REMPEC, EMSA and DG ECHO (London, UK 2017), recommended the interconnection of different Communication Systems regarding the inventories of equipment/pollution response resources in the EU which is considered as a topic of common interest for the relevant Regional Agreements.

- The declaration of the representative of the European Commission, at the 13th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (June 2019, Malta), that CECIS MP is open to third countries sharing a regional sea basin with the Union to enhance coordination. Indeed, the access to CECIS MP can be granted upon a written expression of interest by a relevant national authority of a third country addressed to DG ECHO at the European Commission.
- Referring to the envisaged development of the electronic version of the Med Guide, within the EU-Funded 2019-2020 West MOPoCo Project, the representative of the European Commission highlighted that rather than creating a new communication tool, the adaptation of CECIS MP to the need of the Mediterranean region could be a more viable option. Particular considerations included the cost of development and maintenance of online information systems.
- The request of the 13th Focal Points of REMPEC (June 2019, Malta) to REMPEC to envisage the use of the CECIS MP, within the West MOPoCo Project, in order to enhance coordination of requests and offers of international assistance.

3.11 The discussion provided an opportunity for each delegation to share their view on the most appropriate options to share information about national resources, to report pollution incidents and to communicate in case of an emergency (see Section 4, Findings).

3.12 The workshop ended with the visit of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) within the premises of DG ECHO. Participants were introduced to the operational team of the ERCC insuring a 24/7 monitoring and dealing with emergencies channelled through CECIS for civil protection emergencies and CECIS MP for marine pollution emergencies.

4. Findings

4.1 All participants of the workshop acknowledged the necessity to have a single communication emergency system in order not only to facilitate and fasten the exchange of information in case of a pollution incident and request for assistance, but also to facilitate the maintenance of the platform and to reduce the cost. This analysis was highlighted by several feedbacks within the development and implementation of the Sub-regional Contingency Plans between EU and non-EU Member States as regard to communication in case of emergency (e.g. SCP between Cyprus, Greece and Israel, and SCP between Cyprus, Egypt and Greece under construction) and also in consideration of marine pollution incidents that could affect neighbouring Mediterranean EU and non-EU Member States in regions such as the straits of Gibraltar and Sicily, the Adriatic and Ionian sea and the north east Mediterranean.

4.2 In the EU, POLREP is shared via SafeSeaNet and CECIS MP. SafeSeaNet is the system to report incidents while CECIS MP is primarily dedicated for requesting and offering assistance. DG ECHO reminded that there is already a direct link between the two systems to avoid duplication of reporting and that all POLWARNs and POLINFs are automatically pushed from SafeSeaNet to CECIS MP to facilitate creation of a request for assistance. However, in case of third Parties that are not users of SafeSeaNet, CECIS MP can accommodate the whole POLREP from the alert phase to the request for assistance. Third countries may also get limited access¹ to SafeSeaNet.

4.3 Participants also pointed out the necessity to report national resources available in case of an emergency to one single system to avoid duplication, inconsistency, inaccuracy and confusion of the information available. Indeed, the EU-Member States mentioned the challenge they experience to fulfil their obligations regarding the update of Data Bases in MEDGIS-MAR and CECIS MP which is a unique and single database to report national marine pollution resources in the EU. Therefore, they recommended REMPEC and DG ECHO to find a way to accommodate their respective systems via a possible interconnection of the different Data Bases in order to ensure a smooth transfer of information between the different organisations and avoid overlap in the procedures for the countries.

¹ Upon a request to EMSA, third Parties may get limited access to SafeSeaNet to exchange POLWARN and POLINF in case of pollution incidents. The conditions for them to access SSN are: (1) For a limited period of up to one year; (2) Through the SSN web interface (textual interface) only; (3) For a limited number of identified users; (4) Access rights limited to reporting and requesting Incident reports of type POLREP with geographical area restriction to the country's area of interest (e.g. Mediterranean).

4.4 DG ECHO clarified that third countries are not obliged to report neither to CECIS MP nor to SafeSeaNet but those systems can serve as regional platform, as is the case of HELCOM and Bonn Agreement. Moreover, using the same system creates a possibility of inter-connection among regional agreements. Regarding the resources database, the decision to share information is borne by each third country based on their willingness to provide appropriate response, means and resource to other countries which would be beneficial in case of an emergency. Having the information already shared in the system also greatly facilitates and fastens the assistance.

4.5 The workshop raised the issue that currently EU Member States must use two procedures for reporting pollution incidents in the Mediterranean. This creates duplications for them and shortcomings for the non-EU countries. Therefore, the workshop stressed the need to consider how current approaches could be streamlined into a Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean. Certain delegations from EU-Member States suggested to have CECIS MP on the same platform with EMSA's applications (SafeSeaNet, CleanSeaNet) but DG ECHO explained that this would still imply the need to be the user of both CECIS MP and SafeSeaNet.

4.6 Most of non-EU countries attending the workshop acknowledged the usefulness of the training they had on CECIS MP and showed interest in using this system as a unique communication platform in the future to exchange information and request/offer of assistance in case of emergency. However overall, delegations found that the CECIS MP platform was confusing and difficult to use without a proper training. They suggested DG ECHO to modernise and upgrade the platform to make it more user-friendly and quicker for the communication between States and relevant organisations. They recalled that emergency situations are stressful and require easy procedures to ensure a timely response. DG ECHO recalled that since its creation in 2009, CECIS MP has been used for various pollution incidents demonstrating its operability to deal with real emergencies and rapidness to transfer the information. Nevertheless, DG ECHO confirmed the possibility to consider upgrading the CECIS MP based on specific suggestions from the participants.

4.7 In case of adoption of CECIS MP as Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean, the discussion stressed the importance to update the system to reflect the different needs of Mediterranean countries. However, participants recalled that the need from one country to another can differ and that different tools already exist. Therefore, it was suggested that experts within the West MOPoCo project (1) from REMPEC, ISPRA and Cedre explore the existing best practices in case of emergency to obtain a harmonised system for the Mediterranean, (2) evaluate whether CECIS MP

can cover all essential needs and requirements for single communication emergency system for the whole Mediterranean, and (3) identify an additional ‘wish list’ of extra functionalities in CECIS MP.

4.8 Two delegations suggested the instauration of a Committee composed of members of the different Mediterranean countries to adopt a common system within a legal and governance framework. DG ECHO and REMPEC acknowledged this suggestion but reminded that due to geopolitical issues and difference of interest, certain States might not be willing to share their information, especially between EU and non-EU Member States.

4.9 Certain delegations from non-EU member States raised questions about the accessibility to CECIS MP in terms of procedure and officiality. DG ECHO recalled that the admission to the platform was granted at no-cost following the request/expression of interest from a national competent authority addressed to DG ECHO as well as the designation of one national administrator for the country. This administrator can then create accounts for other users within his country and manage their rights. DG ECHO acknowledged that all communications coming from the national user account are considered as official and should be processed accordingly. It is the responsibility of each country to ensure that the communication made through CECIS MP is also considered as official internally.

5. Recommendations for next steps to set up a Common Emergency Communication System

The following recommendations were captured during the workshop and ensuing discussions and presented to participants on the final day of the workshop:

- . 1 The workshop recommended the necessity to have a single communication emergency system for the whole Mediterranean;
- . 2 The workshop requested REMPEC, DG ECHO and EMSA to cooperate and contribute in order to assist the Mediterranean coastal States in the development of a single communication emergency communication system for the whole Mediterranean based on the existing systems (CECIS MP, SafeSeaNet, Emergency Communication Procedure) and Data Bases (MEDGIS-MAR and CECIS MP);
- . 3 The workshop strongly considered the requirement of the Specific Objective 21 of the Regional Strategy (2016-2021) and the recommendation of the 13th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC to “envisage the use CECIS MP in order to enhance coordination of requests and offers of international assistance”;
- . 4 The workshop stressed the need to also involve all the Mediterranean coastal States in the exploration of the most appropriate solution to meet the above objectives in the perspective of the 14th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC in May 2021;
- . 5 In this regard, the workshop invited REMPEC to liaise with its OPRC Focal Points to carry out a survey gathering national needs and requirements (technical, administrative, logistical, operational, etc.) with a view to integrating these elements in a common system and to agreeing on a common approach;
- . 6 The workshop also tasked experts within the West MOPoCo project from REMPEC, ISPRA and Cedre (as per point 4.8 above) to evaluate whether and to what extent CECIS MP can accommodate the findings of the survey by the MTWG as well as the needs and requirements for the common emergency communication system;
- . 7 The West MOPoCo project experts from REMPEC, ISPRA, and Cedre should prepare, in consultation with national competent authorities, a detailed analysis for its consideration by the 14th Focal Points Meeting of REMPEC in 2021;
- . 8 In the meantime, DG ECHO invited non-EU countries to have national consultations regarding possible expression of interest to access and use CECIS MP;

- . 9 Finally, DG ECHO and REMPEC encouraged Mediterranean coastal States to update the current Data Bases (MEDGIS-MAR, CECIS MP) with their national data (equipment, experts).

6. Logistics

6.1 The workshop was organized by:

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With the assistance of:

Mr. Christophe Blazy

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6.2 The workshop was held at:

DG European Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid Operations – ECHO
ECHO B1 – Civil Protection Horizontal Issues
B-1049 Brussels/Belgium
Address : Rue de la Loi 86, Brussels, Belgium

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6.3 Tea, coffee and water were covered by West MOPoCo project as well as lunches for sponsored participants.

6.4 The workshop language was English and French, with simultaneous interpretation provided by the European Commission.

PRESENTERS AND FACILITATORS

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Annex 1 – Participants

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Annex 2 – Workshop Agenda

Schedule	Activity	Facilitator
Day 1 – 22 October		
10:00 – 10:15	Welcome by DG ECHO and REMPEC	Mrs. Mackeviciute Mr. Smaoui
10:15 – 10:30	Presentation of the West MOPoCo Project	Mr. Blazy
10:30 – 10:45	Aims of the workshop by REMPEC	Mr. Smaoui
10:45 – 12:30	CECIS training session (split in two groups FR and ENG)	All
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	All
13:30 – 15:15	Continuation of the CECIS training session	All
15:15 – 15:45	Coffee Break	All
15:45 – 17:00	First impressions on the tool and discussion	All
Day 2 – 23 October		
09:30 – 10:00	Welcoming Coffee	All
10:00 – 10:30	The Emergency Communication Procedure in the Mediterranean: POLREP, REMPEC assistance; by REMPEC.	Mr. Smaoui
10:30 – 10:45	The electronic version of the Mediterranean Guide on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Responding to Marine Pollution Incident: Achievements and limits; by REMPEC	Mr. Smaoui
10:45 – 11:00	Adaptation of CECIS Marine to the Mediterranean region: A viable option; by DG ECHO	Mrs. Mackeviciute
11:00 – 11:45	Options to set up the emergency communication response system for the Mediterranean, debate.	All
11:45 – 12:00	Visit of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)	All

Annex 3 – Pictures



WEST MOPoCo is co-financed by the European Union in the framework of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. DG-ECHO.









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