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MAY 2024



# IFRC CIVIL PROTECTION GUIDANCE FOR NATIONAL SOCIETIES AND FEDERATION SECRETARIAT RELATIONS WITH EUROPEAN UNION ACTORS

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# About the IFRC

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The [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#) (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 16 million volunteers. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

Since 2007, successive resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent have mandated the IFRC Secretariat to provide advice and support to states on disaster law.

This mandate is shared with National Societies, with whom the IFRC Secretariat jointly implements advocacy projects and supports domestic law reform initiatives.

E-mail: [disaster.law@ifrc.org](mailto:disaster.law@ifrc.org)

# About the RCEU Office

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The [Red Cross EU Office](#) is a membership office representing the 27 National Red Cross Societies in the EU, the Norwegian Red Cross, the Icelandic Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), towards EU institutions and stakeholders. The National Red Cross Societies in each country have a significant role to play in contributing to the Union Civil Protection Mechanism goals as auxiliary to their respective governments and guided by the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) Movement.


E-mail: [international@redcross.eu](mailto:international@redcross.eu)

# Acknowledgements

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This guidance was commissioned by the RCEU Office. The principal authors of this document are Miriam Alba Reina (Disaster Management Officer, RCEU Office) and Tommaso Natoli (Disaster Law Focal Point for Europe, IFRC Secretariat and Italian Red Cross). These guidelines were written with technical oversight provided by Nelson Castano (Manager, Operations Coordination, IFRC Secretariat), Magali Murlon (Head of Unit at the Disaster Management and Development Unit, RCEU Office) and Isabelle Granger (Global Lead, Disaster Law and Auxiliary Role, IFRC Secretariat).

Thanks are owed to the appointed members of the dedicated Civil Protection Task Force and to everyone who contributed to the development of this publication.

 **Cover photo:** In May 2023, the region of Emilia-Romagna in Italy was hit by heavy floods, with over 20,000 people evacuated. Some 300 volunteers and staff of the Italian Red Cross worked to support affected communities: rescuing people and animals, delivering food and others essentials, providing care for people in shelters and helping to clean the affected cities. © Emiliano Albensi

# Acronyms

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<b>CPTF</b>	Civil Protection Task Force
<b>ECHO</b>	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
<b>ECPP</b>	European Civil Protection Pool
<b>EHRC</b>	European Humanitarian Response Capacity
<b>ERCC</b>	Emergency Response Coordination Centre
<b>ESPD</b>	Emergency self-protection and decontamination
<b>EUNS</b>	European Union National Societies
<b>IC</b>	International Conference
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NS</b>	National Societies
<b>RCEU</b>	Red Cross EU Office
<b>SOP</b>	Standard operating procedure
<b>UCPKN</b>	Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network
<b>UCPM</b>	Union Civil Protection Mechanism

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After the summer floods of 2021 in Belgium, members of the Belgian Red Cross distributed food to the people affected.  
© Gilles Lemoine

# Introduction

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## Objectives, scope and definitions

The IFRC Civil Protection Guidance for National Societies and Federation Secretariat relations with European Union actors (2023) aims to lay down practical guidance on principled and constructive engagement with the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (hereafter 'the Mechanism' or 'UCPM'), and national civil protection stakeholders (hereafter 'CP stakeholders').

This guidance is relevant to Red Cross and Red Crescent entities in the light of the changes brought about by the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), and the subsequent relevant [European legislation](#). Specifically, the present document incorporates amendments from the years 2019–2021 pertaining to [Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and the Council](#), and regulating the Mechanism's development. Its purposes are to: facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the current functioning of the Mechanism; illustrate how National Societies (NS) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Secretariat can effectively position themselves and potentially contribute to it; and support their capacities to navigate its evolution in the future.

The rationale of this revision lies in the agreement achieved at the EU Disaster Management Working Group as of 30 June 2022. In this forum, European Union National Societies (EUNS) convened to review the previous version of the guidance (2013) to better support the accomplishment of the objectives identified above.

The institutional relations and forms of cooperation addressed by this guidance target primarily NS whose country is part of the UCPM – both as an EU Member State and as a participating state (to date, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine), as well as the Federation Secretariat (hereafter 'IFRC Secretariat'). Its relevance is intended to be expanded in the future also to NS in states joining the UCPM both as EU Members and as Participating States. Secondly, this guidance recognises the role of the Red Cross EU (RCEU) office as the facilitator supporting the liaison, exchange of information and coordination among its members and vis-à-vis concerned CP stakeholders, including the EU Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC).<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Red Cross EU Office, in representation of the 27 National Red Cross Societies in the EU, the Norwegian Red Cross, the Icelandic Red Cross and the IFRC Secretariat liaises with the ERCC. The ERCC is defined as the 'heart' of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. It coordinates the delivery of assistance to disaster-stricken countries and exchanges information on needs assessments, appeals for assistance, crisis and situation reports by email with EU Member States. The Red Cross EU Office disseminates this information through the EU Disaster Management Working Group and the Heads of International Operations to ensure that EUNS are aware of communication between the ERCC and EU Member States. The RCEU Office together with the Federation Secretariat also works to effectively link the ERCC and Red Cross and Red Crescent partners and humanitarian activities.

The overarching objective of this document is to enhance the implementation of the UCPM activities carried out throughout the entire disaster management *continuum* – from disaster risk assessment, to preparedness, relief and early recovery. However, its main focus is on immediate assistance in response to crises and disasters caused by natural hazards or man-made activities and, specifically, on how to facilitate interactions among relevant stakeholders in specific areas. Essential components for achieving effective coordination between Red Cross and Red Crescent entities and CP stakeholders inside and outside the EU include capacity building, project collaboration, operational cooperation during emergencies, training initiatives, exchange of information, and communication. In pursuit of these objectives, targeted recipients are encouraged to engage in humanitarian diplomacy, guided by the [Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance \(2013\)](#) as the primary reference. This engagement must ensure principled action, thus aligning with the Fundamental Principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality). Furthermore, the document endeavours to foster transboundary collaborations among NS within the scope identified below.

As per its scope, this guidance pertains to NS whose Member States participate in the UCPM and potentially engage in civil protection activities both within and outside the EU territory. Hence, acknowledging that disasters can transcend geographical boundaries, the document adopts a transboundary perspective. It encourages collaboration among neighbouring NS, as long as their respective states are affiliated with the Mechanism, as well as with the NS of the affected state in case this is not part of the UCPM. At the same time, the guidance takes into consideration how civil protection activities are also carried out by subnational authorities (e.g., at the regional and municipal levels) and adopts a multilevel governance approach where relevant for the addressed topic.

The update of the guidance has been conducted through a collaborative process involving consultations with the NS and the IFRC Secretariat. These consultations were conducted within the framework of the Civil Protection Task Force (CPTF) under the coordination of the RCEU and received support from the IFRC Disaster Management and IFRC Disaster Law Units. The consultation plan aimed to gather and analyse the experiences and insights gained by NS during emergency situations, civil protection activities and training exercises. Additionally, the revised guidance incorporates and aligns with the content of existing relevant international documents that have been adopted by both the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the EU. A comprehensive list of these documents is provided in Annex 1 for reference.

A list of definitions of the terms used in this guidance is provided here:<sup>2</sup>

- **Civil protection:** the protection of people, the environment and property against all kinds of disasters of natural origins or induced by human activities. Along with the deployment of forces and equipment in response to an emergency, it also involves the planning and preparation for such events. This includes carrying out risk assessments and agreeing on protection and rescue plans and procedures.
- **Civil defence:** Article 61 of Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I) defines civil defence through the humanitarian tasks carried out for the protection of the civilian population against the dangers arising from hostilities or disasters, and to help it to recover from the immediate effects. Notwithstanding the recent increase in the activation of the UCPM in conflict-affected scenarios like Ukraine, this guidance is not applicable to situations of armed conflict. The guidance can, however, provide insights to comparatively inform decisions affecting the UCPM and NS in conflict scenarios. Conversely, this document acknowledges that, in certain national contexts, the terms ‘civil protection’ and ‘civil defence’ are employed interchangeably. When ‘civil defence’ is invoked in non-conflict settings, this guidance remains in effect.

2. Several definitions used in this section (‘disaster’, ‘disaster management’, ‘disaster preparedness’ and ‘disaster response and early recovery’) were taken from the Sendai Framework Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction made available by the [UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (UNDRR). Other definitions (such as ‘civil protection’) were from the EU Glossary made available by [EUR-Lex](#).



- **Civil protection stakeholder (CP stakeholder):** For the purpose of this guidance, CP stakeholder refers to any entity, organisation or group, both public and private, that actively participates in – or contributes to – civil protection and disaster management efforts. They encompass a broad spectrum of actors, including public authorities at different levels of governance, specialised agencies, first responders, healthcare institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other entities with roles in planning, coordination, response and recovery.
- **Disaster:** A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts. The effect of the disaster can be immediate and localised but is often widespread and could last for a long period of time. The effect may test or exceed the capacity of a community or society to cope using its own resources, and therefore may require assistance from external sources, which could include neighbouring jurisdictions, or those at the national or international levels.
- **Disaster management:** The organisation, planning and application of measures preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. Disaster management may not completely avert or eliminate the threats; it focuses on creating and implementing preparedness and other plans to decrease the impact of disasters and ‘build back better’. Failure to create and apply a plan could lead to damage to life, assets and lost revenue. The term ‘emergency management’ is also used, sometimes interchangeably, with ‘disaster management’, particularly in the context of biological and technological hazards and for health emergencies. While there is a large degree of overlap, an emergency can also relate to hazardous events that do not result in the serious disruption of the functioning of a community or society.
- **Disaster preparedness:** The knowledge and capacities developed by governments, response and recovery organisations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current disasters. Preparedness action is carried out within the context of disaster risk management and aims to build the capacities needed to efficiently manage all types of emergencies and achieve orderly transitions from response to sustained recovery. Preparedness is based on a sound analysis of disaster risks and good linkages with early warning systems, and includes such activities as contingency planning, the stockpiling of equipment and supplies, the development of arrangements for coordination, evacuation and public information, and associated training and field exercises. These must be supported by formal institutional, legal and budgetary capacities. The related term ‘readiness’ describes the ability to quickly and appropriately respond when required.
- **Disaster response and early recovery:** Actions taken directly before, during or immediately after a disaster to save lives, reduce health impacts, ensure public safety and meet the basic subsistence needs of the people affected. Disaster response is predominantly focused on immediate and short-term needs and is sometimes called disaster relief. Effective, efficient and timely response relies on disaster risk-informed preparedness measures, including the development of the response capacities of individuals, communities, organisations, countries and the international community. The institutional elements of response often include the provision of emergency services and public assistance by public, private and community sectors, as well as community and volunteer participation. ‘Emergency services’ are a critical set of specialised agencies that have specific responsibilities in serving and protecting people and property in emergency and disaster situations. They include civil protection authorities and police and fire services, among many others. The division between the response stage and the subsequent recovery stage is not clear-cut. Some response actions, such as the supply of temporary housing and water supplies, may extend well into the recovery stage.

- **European Union National Societies (EUNS):** This guidance refers to the 'EUNS' as the collective group of members associated with the RCEU Office. As of 2023, it consists of the 27 National Red Cross Societies in the EU, along with the Norwegian Red Cross and the Icelandic Red Cross. Given the distinctive nature of interactions between the IFRC and EU stakeholders, any reference to the IFRC must be expressly included. Any change in the composition of the RCEU membership shall not result in amendments to this term. Similarly, it shall not impede the application of this guidance.
- **Public authority:** This guidance refers to 'public authority' as any intergovernmental body, governmental entity or public service institution at various levels of governance that is responsible for ensuring the safety and security of the population during crises and emergencies. These entities operate at various levels, including local (municipal governments and emergency services such as fire departments, police forces or medical services), regional (regional governments and coordinating bodies across multiple local jurisdictions within a particular region or province), and national (national governments and relevant ministries coordinating responses to disasters that exceed the capacity of local and regional authorities), the EU (EU institutions, agencies and bodies of the EU that are involved in civil protection and disaster management) and intergovernmental organisations.

The document is structured in three parts. The first part is a problem statement section which outlines the main issues related to civil protection and post-disaster assistance within the context of the EU institutional system. The second part presents a set of recommendations that NS and the IFRC Secretariat should consider in its relations with respective public authorities and CP stakeholders at both the regional and national/subnational levels. This includes a first subsection on the general policy frameworks of reference and how EUNS should position themselves in this sector, and a second subsection addressing more specific operational aspects. The third part considers a series of thematic-related features of the EU context and highlights specific considerations for the intended recipients of this guidance.



A consortium led by the Finnish Red Cross launched the 2-year Evacuation Ready (EvRE) project in 2022, which is co-funded by the European Union. EvRe aims to deepen cooperation between the Red Cross and civil protection authorities in the Baltic countries. © EvRE

# 1. Civil protection in the European Union

## 1.1. A changing landscape

The complexity of emergency response operations has grown in line with increasingly sophisticated national and international infrastructures serving ever more exposed populations. Many public authorities, including the EU, are developing emergency management and disaster response arrangements in recognition of the increased interdependence of nations and the transnational nature of many hazards and their effects. More specifically, the EU has gradually adopted a series of legal instruments on the basis of which a well-established coordination mechanism – the UCPM – has been set up. This is being further strengthened thanks to the growing provisions of resources and assets by Member States to respond to national and international emergencies.

In practical terms, EU institutions are transitioning from their traditional role as donors in the humanitarian and development sectors to becoming enablers in the domains of disaster prevention, preparedness, and response. Over the last years, this has led the EU to strategically strengthen its ability to protect its citizens through enhanced coordination capacities in several areas such as logistics and critical infrastructure, deployment of specialised personnel, provision of goods and equipment and emergency warehousing. When assessing the available resources in these domains, the capacities of NS are not exhaustively taken into account, potentially resulting in duplication of efforts and inefficient use of available resources.



*After a bridge to Demydiv was damaged in hostilities, Ukrainian Red Cross emergency response team volunteers built a crossing over the river and helped evacuate more than 15,000 people.  
© Ukrainian Red Cross Society*

As part of this process, an increasing convergence between civil protection and humanitarian aid instruments can be noticed at the EU level (see, for instance, the recent evolutions on the European Humanitarian Response Capacity in Info Box 1 below). Considering that this trend will continue to intensify in the foreseeable future, such a development represents both a challenge and an opportunity for NS in defining their role as auxiliary actors in respecting national contexts.<sup>3</sup> Many challenges arise in the first place due to the state-based nature of the UCPM, which carries the inherent risk of jeopardising their independence and neutrality. At the same time, a wide array of opportunities is provided by the existing coordination system in the EU, starting with greater, more stable and secure access to the affected population. This could also reinforce the cooperation within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

### **INFO BOX 1:**



#### **The European Humanitarian Response Capacity**

In 2021, the European Commission announced the establishment of a European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC) in its [Communication on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles](#). The facility is meant to be used when traditional humanitarian delivery mechanisms are ineffective or insufficient. Operationally coordinated by the ERCC (which is the same centre that coordinates UCPM), the EHRC is based on 3 pillars: (1) Common logistics services to EU humanitarian partners (for instance, air/land transport operations and warehousing systems); (2) Prepositioned stockpiles of emergency items in critical areas worldwide; and (3) Provision of expertise.

The EHRC is financed via the EU's humanitarian budget and is additional to the common Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs). In terms of governance, the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) retains decision-making on strategic and operational matters.

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020), the armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine (2022), the Syria-Türkiye earthquake (2023) and large-scale forest fires in several European countries (2023) translated into a notable rise in the number of UCPM activations both within and outside the EU. The outcomes of these interactions include the emergence of new funding opportunities from donors; enhanced engagement with the affected communities and civil protection authorities; and the establishment of NS as credible and efficient humanitarian actors, with particularly strong capacities to share and provide resources, expertise, knowledge and information. This is also thanks to the coordination and support provided by the IFRC Secretariat through its staff based in Geneva as well as in its five regional offices and 50 country or country cluster support offices around the world.<sup>4</sup>

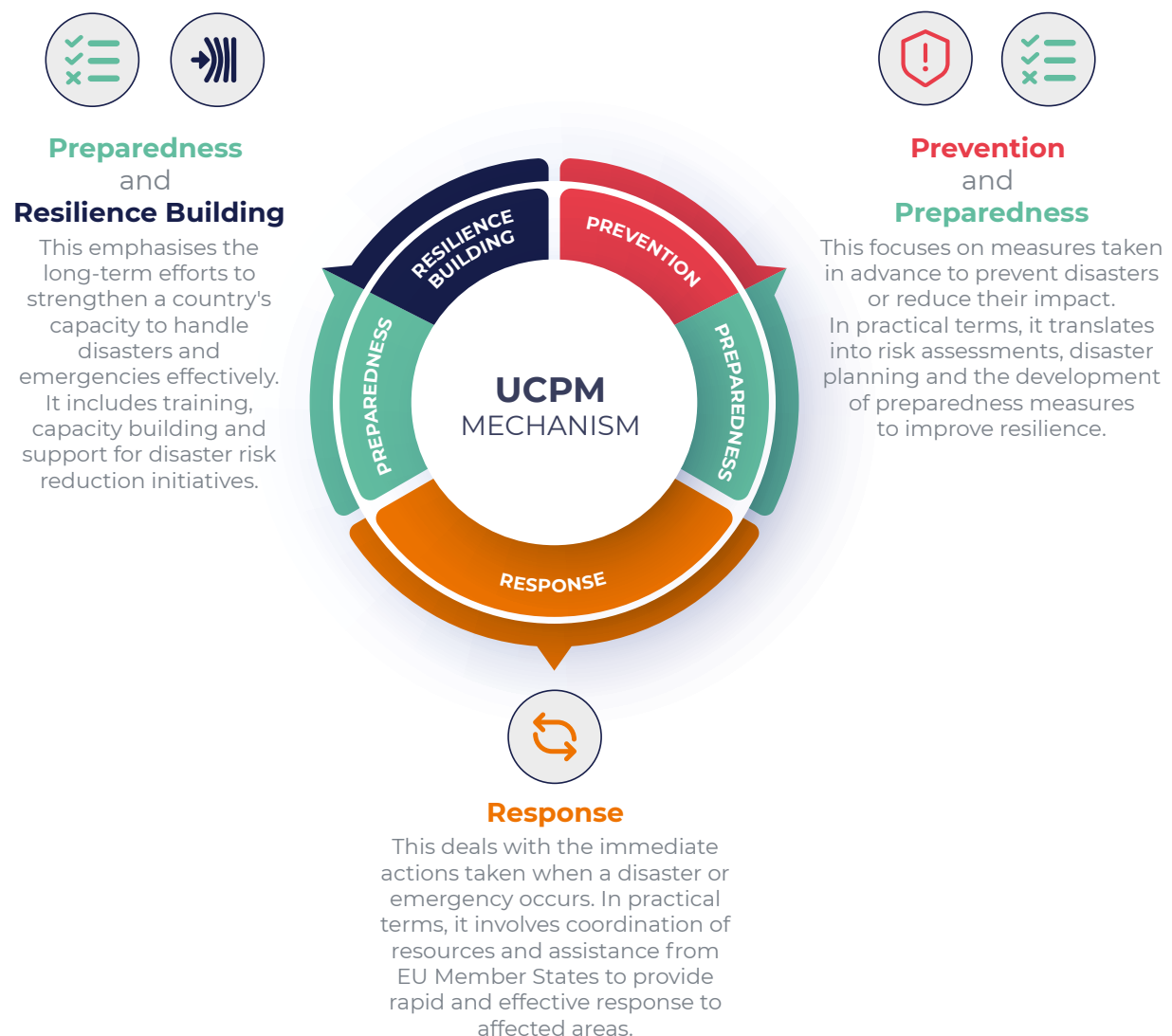
3. Read an [in-depth analysis of the auxiliary role of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#).

4. In addition to the IFRC Secretariat headquarters in Geneva (Switzerland), the IFRC Secretariat is composed of five regional offices: Panama (Americas), Nairobi (Africa), Beirut (MENA), Budapest (Europe) and Kuala Lumpur (Asia Pacific). Regional offices help strengthen and improve regional cooperation between NS. They also conduct disaster and crisis risk management. The IFRC Secretariat also has 50 country or country cluster support offices worldwide that support NS with their programmes and organisational development. For more information, please visit [IFRC people and structures](#).

In this context, NS and the IFRC Secretariat must necessarily position themselves and adeptly navigate the opportunities and risks inherent in these developments. This has to be done in light of the mission and rules established by the [Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement](#), and in line with the relevant content of the Resolutions adopted by the [International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent](#), as well as with the Movement's relevant policies. At the same time, it has to be considered that the relationship between a NS and its concerned public authorities – which bear the primary responsibility for disaster response – has its specific and distinct features in each country, including at the subnational level, and that relevant domestic legislations and regulatory instruments must be respected at all times.

## 1.2. The Civil Protection System in the EU and the development of the UCPM

In October 2001, the European Commission established the UCPM. The Mechanism aims to strengthen cooperation between EU Member States and Participating States on civil protection to enhance cooperation in responding to disasters and emergencies, both within the EU and internationally. It consists of three interconnected pillars:



Operationally, the UCPM is based in the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). The [Mechanism](#) coordinates the response to disasters and emergencies at EU level both inside and outside the Union. Any country in the world, but also relevant international organisations including the IFRC, can activate the UCPM. Following a request for assistance through the Mechanism, the ERCC mobilises assistance or expertise. The ERCC monitors events around the globe 24/7 and ensures rapid deployment of emergency support through a direct link with national civil protection authorities.

The Mechanism incorporates multiple instruments to ensure comprehensive disaster prevention, preparedness and response. These include the [European Civil Protection Pool](#) (ECPP), a voluntary pool of assets pre-committed by Member States for immediate deployment inside or outside the EU. In 2019, to upgrade the Mechanism, the EU established the rescEU reserve, a pool that brings together resources from Member States and Participating States, ready for deployment to a disaster zone at short notice, including a fleet of firefighting planes and helicopters, medical evacuation planes, and a stockpile of medical items and field hospitals that can respond to health emergencies. The European Commission has set up a certification and registration process of these capacities to ensure that they meet high operational standards. In May 2021, to ensure a better response to future challenges, the EU Council adopted a new regulation to strengthen the UCPM.<sup>5</sup> The new rules give the EU additional resource and capacities to respond to new threats such as pandemics in the EU and beyond and boost the rescEU reserve. Information about the Civil Protection Mechanism, its purpose, tools and most recent developments is provided in Annex 2.

#### **PRACTICE BOX 1:**



##### **[UCPM performance](#) in 2022**

In 2022, the response strand was largely marked by the international armed conflict in Ukraine which triggered the largest, longest and most complex response operation in the history of the Mechanism. The UCPM was activated 126 times, and responded to 222 requests of assistance, mainly in relation to the delivery of a wide diversity of items such as medical equipment, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) material and energy supplies in Ukraine. Regarding forest fire response, the EU and its Member States advanced in the negotiations for the procurement of a full-fledged aerial firefighting fleet at the European level. Moreover, the Commission developed a [Wildfire Prevention Action Plan](#) aimed at bringing together tools available under the Mechanism to support Member States in preventing the occurrence of wildfires in Europe.

5. Regulation 2021/836 amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

## 2. General recommendations for National Societies and the IFRC Secretariat

### 2.1. Recommendations based on regulatory and policy frameworks

1

The Fundamental Principles, the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and other relevant Movement policies, should be fully taken into account as primary reference when engaging in EU civil protection activities.

The targeted recipients of this guidance shall promote effective assistance to, and protection of, individuals affected by disasters according to the [Fundamental Principles](#) and the [Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement](#). Equally, the relationship between NS and the IFRC Secretariat and external actors shall be carried out in accordance with relevant resolutions that have been adopted in the statutory meetings by the components of the Movement. Other relevant Movement policies, including the [2013 Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance](#) and the rules governing the use of the emblems, should also be fully considered. A list of relevant documents is provided in Annex 1.

#### **PRACTICE BOX 2**



##### **Promoting principled action by participating in national disaster management systems**

The national crisis and disaster management system in Austria includes cooperation between the authorities and the Austrian Red Cross, fire brigades, police and alpine rescue teams among others. The Austrian Red Cross plays an important role in disaster risk management and emergency response across the country, as specified by national Red Cross law. It balances its involvement with keeping its independence in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and maintaining trust from Austrian citizens ([Red Alert, 2020](#)).

Although NS are encouraged to continue leveraging their auxiliary role and influence regional, national and subnational processes, a potential challenge lies in actions being influenced by the political nature of authorities' decisions. To address this concern, NS are called to establish mechanisms to uphold their full adherence to the Fundamental Principles (2013).



2

NS and the IFRC Secretariat should uphold their respective roles and coordinate internally in respective disaster management systems in line with their core responsibilities and competencies within the Movement.

As stated in the main global frameworks of reference, it is a primary responsibility of national public authorities to provide assistance to people affected by disasters in their territories.<sup>6</sup> NS should always consider that their primary purpose is to supplement public authorities in the fulfilment of this responsibility. Additionally, EU Member States are also called to act jointly, in a spirit of solidarity, to assist an affected country in the event of disaster, at the request of its political authorities.<sup>7</sup>

When involved in EU civil protection activities, NS and the IFRC Secretariat shall reaffirm the full and continued application of the statutory responsibilities and core competencies of the respective components of the Movement as defined in the latter's relevant policies and rules. Likewise, they shall assert the rules and mechanisms on operational coordination and functional cooperation agreed within the Movement and stated in the [Seville Agreement 2.0 \(2022\)](#). Specifically, civil protection and disaster-related activities have to take place in close coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in all contexts in which the latter has a statutory responsibility to act and in regard to all operations and areas that fall within its core competencies and responsibilities.

### **PRACTICE BOX 3**



#### **Towards smart coordination in the Baltic Sea region**

In recent years, the German Red Cross has been driving a joint subregional disaster preparedness planning process that has increased understanding of the potential emergency situations that would require cross-border response, the importance of planning, and how to request or host support from neighbour NS.

The plan gives an overview of National Red Cross Societies' presence and resources in the Baltic Sea region and considers the mechanisms of requesting and hosting international assistance within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It also elaborates on cooperation and coordination between the states and through the UCPM ([Red Alert, 2020](#)).

6. See, among others, the [Guiding Principles for Humanitarian Assistance](#) adopted by the UNGA in Resolution 46/182 on 19 December 1991.

7. Under Article [222](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (solidarity clause), if a Member State experiences a natural or human-induced disaster and its authorities request help, the EU must come to its assistance by mobilising all instruments at its disposal. Coordination must be ensured in the Council of the EU.

3

Concerned NS should ensure a principled fulfilment of their auxiliary role towards the governmental authorities in their respective country.

The auxiliary role means that NS are private and independent organisations, with a recognised public function. Accordingly, they enjoy a specific and distinctive partnership with respective public authorities at all levels, entailing mutual responsibilities and benefits, and based on international and national laws. This refers to any areas in which the NS supplements or substitutes for public humanitarian services, including civil protection activities.<sup>8</sup> In light of this, NS and respective governments should consolidate clearly defined roles and responsibilities including in civil protection and disaster management activities, in respect of the autonomy of NS and their commitment to neutrality and impartial assistance, as well as of their duty to seriously consider any request by their public authorities to carry out activities in these fields.<sup>9</sup>

#### PRACTICE BOX 4



##### Auxiliary role as a means for strong subregional collaboration

National Red Cross Societies in South-Eastern Europe have a comparable auxiliary role to authorities and have similarly structured response mechanisms. In recent years, there has been strong subregional cooperation in many areas, especially in connection with response and recovery from various humanitarian emergencies.

As a result of this collaboration, 12 NS established in 2018 the Neighbours Help First network,<sup>10</sup> open for cooperation with civil protection authorities and other similar networks, such as the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South-Eastern Europe. In these collaborations, the importance of clearly defined auxiliary roles for NS has been recognised ([Red Alert, 2020](#)).

4

Concerned NS should ensure that their mandate in the civil protection sector is duly regulated and facilitated by respective authorities.

NS represent reliable partners for national and local public authorities who have a core response role to undertake emergency management services, to which they can contribute through the delivery of a wide range of civil protection activities including first aid, search and rescue, ambulance services, psychosocial support, food and non-food relief item distribution, and the establishment and management of evacuation shelters. According to this, NS should ensure that their diverse volunteer base and unique capacity to mobilise human and material resources at the community level are acknowledged and consistently regulated by respective public authorities. According to the specificities of the domestic institutional setup, NS should maintain and enhance a permanent dialogue with public authorities at all levels and advocate for the acknowledgement and regulation of their mandate in the civil protection sector through 'Red Cross law' or similar regulatory instruments (e.g. sectoral policies and plans), including with regard to their potential involvement in EU civil protection assistance operations.<sup>11</sup>

8. For further guidance on this topic see the IFRC Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role through Law and Policy, 2021.

9. See [Resolution 2, 30th International Conference \(2007\)](#), paragraph 4.

10. Members: Albanian Red Cross, Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgarian Red Cross, Croatian Red Cross, Hungarian Red Cross, Macedonian Red Cross, Red Cross of Montenegro, Romanian Red Cross, Red Cross of Serbia, Slovenian Red Cross, Cyprus Red Cross Society, Polish Red Cross. Observers: Austrian Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, Slovak Red Cross, Czech Red Cross, ICRC, IFRC Secretariat.

11. Legislative advocacy means pushing for a change to law or policy. A Legislative Advocacy Toolkit is available [on request](#) and can be used by the IFRC Secretariat and NS to strengthen their legislative advocacy knowledge and skills. See also [How to advocate for a new Red Cross Red Crescent law](#)

**PRACTICE BOX 5****Collaborative efforts in civil protection as mandated by Red Cross law**

The Slovenian Red Cross plays a key role in providing first aid and disaster preparedness training across the country, as defined by Red Cross law. Collaboration between civil protection and health authorities is important in public health emergencies and disasters with health consequences. This works well in Slovenia, where, to ensure emergency health care in any disaster, the Slovenian Red Cross has developed its response preparedness together with the authorities. Its field medical care services (including a field mobile unit with a capacity of up to 120 patients, shelter units and first aid teams) are integrated into the authorities' preparedness plans ([Red Alert, 2020](#)).

**5**

Concerned NS should enhance a proactive and institutionalised partnership with respective authorities and advocate for the promotion of legal preparedness to disasters.

NS can provide advice and support to their governments in the development and implementation of effective legal and policy frameworks relevant to disaster risk management ([Resolution 7, 33rd International Conference, 2019](#)). Specifically, they can advocate for the development of effective legislation, policies and plans for disaster management including through the use of advocacy and guidance tools such as the [Guidelines on Disaster Risk Governance](#). As part of this, legal facilities, meaning special legal rights and exemptions, should enable NS to conduct their operations more efficiently and effectively. And when suitable to do so, with appropriate consideration of the Fundamental Principles, NS should ask to be included in relevant coordination and decision-making bodies in the civil protection sector.

## 2.2. Recommendations on operational aspects

6

Concerned NS should support each other in their emergency intervention activities and contribute to mutual development to optimise collective capacities and operational reach of the Movement.

When giving international assistance to survivors of disasters and other emergencies, NS have a statutory responsibility to channel such assistance through the components of the Movement.<sup>12</sup> NS should take advantage of historical relationships with each other, their geographical proximity, and existing operational collaboration and established mechanisms to share their disaster response assets, such as personnel, vehicles and relief stock, also thanks to the support provided by the IFRC Secretariat. Within the EU context, NS shall reinforce their networks, preferably building on existing ones, such as the EU Disaster Management Working Group, and with the support of the RCEU Office and the IFRC Europe Office. Such networks could facilitate consistent exchange of insights and good practices on the development and implementation of relevant regulatory and policy frameworks on civil protection-related matters, at both regional and national/subnational levels.

### **PRACTICE BOX 6**



#### **Streamlining preparedness through emergency operations centres**

Six NS in South-Eastern Europe – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia – have joined efforts to increase their interoperability and emergency management capacity. The NS are creating emergency operations centres in their headquarters that are closely connected through digital tools. Once fully in place, the new technology will allow emergency responders to share various details about any incident, including the GPS location or images via mobile devices. This optimises real-time situational awareness and helps find a coordinated, appropriate response to emergencies ([Red Alert, 2020](#)).

7

The operational involvement of NS and the IFRC Secretariat in EU civil protection activities, including within the UCPM, should be consistent with their role and overall mandate.

NS and the IFRC Secretariat shall engage with national civil protection actors in activities within their competency to enhance effective assistance to and protection of the survivors of disasters and crisis. Their operational involvement should be agreed, planned and structured to ensure continued respect for the Fundamental Principles, in particular preserving the operational independence in decision-making and action of the NS, neutrality and impartiality in the delivery of assistance. Specifically, the [Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance](#) (2013) and the rules governing the use of the emblems (see recommendation 9) should be fully considered.

12. Statutes of the Movement, article 3, paragraph 3.1.

The establishment of an internal legal support service providing advice to operational departments or units and/or the adoption of an operational standard policy should be considered by NS to ensure their principled and consistent action.

In the vast majority of NS, the Red Cross law safeguards the coordination between civil protection authorities and the NS, facilitating the translation of collaborative efforts into practical actions. NS are encouraged to exert their best efforts in establishing guidelines that govern the nature of collaboration. At the same time, it is crucial to recognise that this collaboration presents potential risks and challenges, particularly in maintaining operational independence in decision-making. An illustrative example of this challenge could involve setting clear boundaries, such as in the selection of beneficiaries or the nature of services provided within a deployed module.

### **PRACTICE BOX 7**



#### **Legal and practical foundations for collaborative cooperation**

The Italian Red Cross is part of Italy's civil protection system with permanent presence in the Inter-Agency Coordination Centre, and in the Operational Committee. The civil protection authorities regularly ask the Italian Red Cross for support according to 'duties' (agreed before and defined by the law) for domestic operations and 'offers' for international operations (according to the operational needs envisaged). In various instances, this has been acknowledged as a valuable practice, enabling the assumption and administration of a deployed emergency medical team (EMT 2), as well as facilitating the transfer of goods to another NS through a civil protection operation. In laying the foundation for collaboration, the Italian Red Cross refers to the potential exchange of standard operating procedures (SOPs) or beneficial legal provisions, thus assisting other NS in enhancing their communication with civil protection authorities (CPTF meeting, 2023).

**8**

Concerned NS and IFRC Secretariat operational involvement in EU civil protection activities, including within the UCPM, should duly consider safety, security and the minimum quality standards as per the activities of concern.

The safety and security issues of both beneficiaries and humanitarian personnel, including the potential consequences and the positioning of the Movement should be considered by NS and the IFRC Secretariat. Likewise, NS and the IFRC Secretariat are called to act on security frameworks in place, noting the [Movement Coordination for Collective Impact Agreement \(Seville Agreement 2.0\)](#) and the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief](#), alongside applicable IFRC security frameworks.



*A group of Red Cross volunteers and staff, and other civil protection teams, participating in an emergency training in Georgia to strengthen disaster management capacities, organised with the support of the Italian Red Cross.  
© Italian Red Cross*

To meet recognised minimum standards of quality and accountability in humanitarian action, the [Core Humanitarian Standards](#) and the [Sphere Handbook](#) can be taken as documents of reference. These are necessary requirements considering the need to preserve their capacity to act sustainably in the longer term and preserve the reputation of the Movement. Operationally, a wider approach to quality standards is required as they might intersect or diverge depending on the specific circumstances, the issuing authority, or the particular activity under consideration. When the situation allows, higher attainable standards should be prioritised; nonetheless minimum humanitarian standards shall be upheld at all times.

## **PRACTICE BOX 8**



### **Cross-Movement cooperation making all levels of the response safer**

The procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) and potassium iodide (KI) tablets for the Ukrainian Red Cross Society stands as an example of cross-Movement cooperation in the mission of making all levels of the response safer. In 2022, the NS reached out to IFRC for assistance in procuring both PPE and KI. In 2023, after efforts in logistics and planning, the IFRC Secretariat provided 750 emergency self-protection and decontamination (ESPD) kits to the Ukrainian Red Cross Society in various locations within a certain radius of Ukraine. The IFRC Secretariat staff coordinated with in-country ICRC staff who provided training on how and when to use the ESPD kits (CPTF meeting, 2023).

9

Before being involved in civil protection activities abroad, NS should have access to adequate information on the host country's disaster management institutional system and coordination mechanisms in order to ensure its effective deployment and action.

NS, with the support of the IFRC Secretariat, should have access to available information on the relevant coordinating mechanism and institutional roles within host countries before engaging in civil protection activities abroad, taking into account the contextual nuances of the intervention. While this is normally a responsibility of the affected country's authorities and existing official mechanisms should be prioritised, prompt access to information could also be ensured through direct bilateral contacts with the NS of the affected country, as well as with the support provided by the IFRC Secretariat and its deployed staff in the region or country.

Regular updates should also be provided in the course of the deployment by establishing an information-sharing channel between involved actors. Careful consideration of supplementary documents and guidelines, such as the 2012 [EU Host Nation Support Guidelines](#)<sup>13</sup> and the 2007 IDRL Guidelines,<sup>14</sup> should be considered to support the preparation of country briefings/factsheets and to get a comprehensive understanding of key aspects such as potential obstacles to, and/or facilitations for, their deployment.

### **PRACTICE BOX 9**



#### **Enhancing scenario analysis through heightened situational awareness**

NS responding to emergencies should use the information shared by the EU Host Nation Support Guidelines, and proactive measures can be taken to supplement it. The Italian Red Cross serves as an illustrative example, where, in international emergencies, it initiates a Secondary Data Review through its Situational Awareness team. This involves structuring a scenario and analysing response options (CPTF meeting, 2023).

13. The IFRC Secretariat and EUNS welcome the EU Council Conclusion on Host Nation Support (2–3 December 2010) and EU Host Nation Support Guidelines (EC Working Document June 2012) and recall the recommendations of the Analysis of Law in the EU and a Selection of Member States pertaining to Cross-Border Disaster Relief (IFRC 2010). EU institutions and EU Member States are encouraged to continue with the discussion around 'Host Nation Support' and related projects, simulation and exercises, as well as to consider updating the 2012 Host Nation Support Guidelines.

14. The IDRL Guidelines were adopted at the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2007. Several resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly encouraged states to strengthen their regulatory frameworks for international disaster assistance, taking the IDRL Guidelines into account. The EU also formally 'subscribed' to the IDRL Guidelines in the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid in 2007.

10

Use of Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems and logos by NS and IFRC during operational deployment under the UCPM, in both bilateral and multilateral deployments, should be consistent with relevant rules and policies.

The NS is responsible for ensuring that all relevant and applicable conditions on the use of Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Crystal emblems and NS logos in joint deployments with civil protection actors are reflected in the agreement concluded with UCPM external partners and complied with.<sup>15</sup> These conditions are first enshrined in the 1991 'Emblem Regulations' and the 2003 'Minimum Elements to be included in operational agreements between Movement components and their external operational partners'.

Respecting the conditions mentioned above should not in any way reduce or nullify the efforts to be undertaken to acknowledge to the fullest extent possible the UCPM external partner as donor and partner in reports, statements, advertisements and in all other such materials pertaining to the convened collaboration.

The use of Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems and logos should be agreed by the NS in the disaster-affected country and the IFRC Secretariat should be duly informed. The NS must retain sole control and all rights over the emblem and its logo. In principle, the use of the emblem (as a protective device) together with the logo of an external partner is prohibited. The use of the NS logo (as an indicative device) together with the logo of an external partner should be avoided. Nonetheless, the use of the NS logo (and its name) together with the logo of an UCPM external partner is permitted only subject to all the following conditions:<sup>16</sup>

1. in exceptional circumstances (i.e. if no other way of avoiding such joint use exists, in connection with humanitarian activities or dissemination campaigns).
2. for a specific undertaking (i.e. for a specific project of limited duration).
3. if the joint use is discrete and does not give rise to confusion in the public mind between the NS and the UCPM external partner – in practice, the potential for confusion may often be avoided by a short written explanation of the relationship between the NS and its partner under UCPM.
4. if it is not displayed on buildings and equipment, including vehicles and other means of transport.
5. where it does not compromise the NS identity as a neutral, impartial and independent actor.

15. See ICRC, [Study on the Use of the Emblems. Operational and Commercial and other Non-Operational Issues](#), 2020.

16. Ibid.



**INFO BOX 2****General elements on joint use of logos to be included in agreements with UCPM external partners<sup>17</sup>**

Given the risks for the whole Movement, as described above, the use of joint logos should be avoided as far as possible. The following are the main general elements to be included in agreements with UCPM external partners:

- 1 The NS must retain sole control and all rights over its logo and the emblem, i.e. it must not be required, against its will, to use its logo jointly with that of the external partner.
- 2 When applicable, NS must strictly respect the Geneva Conventions (GCs), their Additional Protocols (APs), the Fundamental Principles, the 1991 Emblem Regulations and the 2003 Minimum Elements. This respect must be understood and acknowledged by external partners.
- 3 Parties to the agreement must not request other uses of its name and logo that are not in conformity with its rules and regulations and with applicable international and national laws.

**PRACTICE BOX 10****Fostering dialogue on logos with concerned UCPM partners**

The sending NS shall enhance its adaptability in accommodating the logo and emblem guidelines. This may include refraining from using its own logo and instead using the host NS logo if necessary. In the same spirit, host NS are encouraged to offer clear guidance to incoming NS, giving due consideration to the IFRC Secretariat (CPTF meeting, 2023).

As per external UCPM partners, it is the NS's right and duty to emphasise the advantage of having the components of the Movement uphold their neutrality, impartiality and independence (or the perception thereof). The respect for the Fundamental Principles gives the components of the Movement the possibility of access to survivors, whom the external partners would not have been able to approach by themselves.

Although not strictly related to UCPM, there are some recent encouraging precedents in this regard. For instance, the new USAID marking rule clearly includes neutrality and public perceptions as grounds for not using the USAID logo. USAID has been one of the leaders over the last 25–40 years in creating rather strict 'identification' requirements. The fact that such an organisation is responding to this issue (positively for the Movement) shows some real promise with other major donors, such as ECHO ([Study on the Use of the Emblems](#), 2020).

17. Ibid.

11

NS involvement in UCPM operations entailing civil-military coordination and/or cooperation must conform to the Fundamental Principles, concerned Council of Delegates Resolutions (noting Resolution 7 on the relations between the components of the Movement and military bodies), the Principles and Rules for Humanitarian Action, alongside relevant policies of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

In recognition that civil protection personnel and assets are often deployed with or alongside military actors, any NS interactions with military forces must be considered in light of the Fundamental Principles and the potential impact on other components of the Movement that might be operating in the country or region, primarily to preserve their actual and perceived independence and neutrality. However, application of the Fundamental Principles does not preclude dialogue with the military and would rarely exclude engaging the military as part of preparedness and planning.

In addition to the Fundamental Principles, all civil-military relations activity should apply the principle of 'do no harm', specifically with respect to second-order consequences of actions and the potential impact this might have on civilians and/or the humanitarian space. NS should further consider all civil-military relations interfaces and the implications for the wider Movement, including the potential for setting of precedents that are, by nature, very difficult to reverse.

All components of the Movement ensure that their decisions are taken with due consideration for potential consequences for other components and the positioning of the whole Movement. Each component favours a clear distinction between the respective roles of military bodies and humanitarian actors, paying particular attention to perceptions locally and in the wider public.

NS and the IFRC may not use armed protection, escorts or military transport except as set forth by the Council of Delegates, particularly in Resolution 7 on [Relations between the components of the Movement and military bodies \(2005\)](#). Further guidance can be found in Resolution 9 Armed protection of humanitarian assistance and the related [report](#) (1995). Other instruments from outside the Movement can also be helpful, including the [Oslo Guidelines' on The Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief](#) (revised in 2007) and the [UN Guidelines On The Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets To Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies](#) (revised in 2006).

### **INFO BOX 3:**

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#### **The use of military assets stands as a NS last resort**

"Any use of military assets by a National Society providing international humanitarian assistance must be approved by the National Society in the disaster-affected country (in consultation with its public authorities) and the International Federation must be informed." ([Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance](#), 2013).

"The use of military assets by a component of the Movement [...] should be a last resort: it can be justified only by the serious and urgent need for life-saving humanitarian action and when there is no alternative means of taking that action. Such a serious decision must be taken by the senior leadership of the organisation concerned." (Handbook on Civil-Military Relations in Disaster Management, n.d.).

### 3. Sector-specific recommendations for National Societies and the IFRC Secretariat on relationships with concerned EU Civil Protection stakeholders

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#### 3.1. Knowledge capitalisation and information management

12

Concerned NS and the IFRC Secretariat should actively stay abreast of the ongoing developments in EU law and policies on civil protection. Likewise, they should regularly receive and share updates with regard to operational aspects of EU civil protection and specifically on UCPM activations.

NS and the IFRC Secretariat are strongly encouraged to attend pertinent forums and maintain a well-informed stance on EU policy development, particularly with regard to the civil protection sector and considering the goals and commitments included in the [European Union Disaster Resilience Goals](#).

While the operational involvement of NS assets in EU civil protection activities is decided, conveyed and regulated by relevant authorities at the national level, it is important that reliable international information flows are kept open and stable. This ensures that NS are duly prepared in case of activation and operational engagement in the UCPM, and provides the opportunity to collect knowledge, best practice and lessons learned in this sector. In this pursuit, the RCEU Office employs multiple communication channels for transmitting information from EU stakeholders to NS and the IFRC Secretariat. A key channel of information is represented by the ECHO Civil Protection Messages, which come from the ERCC and have important details about EU-related crises.<sup>18</sup> Additional sources encompass relevant platforms such as the EU Disaster Management Working Group and the RCEU Newsletter.

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18. The EERC publishes [daily bulletins on its website](#).

#### **INFO BOX 4**



##### **The European Civil Protection Forum**

The European Civil Protection Forum constitutes an example of a relevant forum in which practitioners and decision-makers exchange information about civil protection in the EU. The 7th edition of the forum took place on 28 and 29 June 2022 in Brussels.

Under the overarching theme 'Towards faster, greener and smarter emergency management', the Forum was built around four policy axes: (1) strengthening climate resilience and preparing for extreme weather events, (2) protecting our citizens and adapting to new risks, (3) Europe in the world: reaching beyond geographical boundaries, and (4) embracing innovation and digitalisation: pooling our knowledge. With the support of the RCEU Office, the participation of NS and IFRC Secretariat stands as a great opportunity to discuss ongoing developments in civil protection.

13

Concerned NS and the IFRC Secretariat should capitalise knowledge acquisition about civil protection activities within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Network.

It is advisable to actively encourage the dissemination of good practices especially among the diverse NS. Despite their differences, there might be valuable lessons learned that could be transferred, shared and applied, including with regard to peer-to-peer support to other EUNS to engage in their civil protection systems. NS and the IFRC Secretariat shall facilitate regular knowledge exchange among key parties on topics relevant to civil protection, including engagement with civil protection authorities on pertinent areas as noted in the [EU Host Nation Support Guidelines \(2012\)](#).

#### **PRACTICE BOX 11**



##### **Domestic discussion on civil defence and UCPM during conflict**

In the frame of the EU Disaster Management Working Group 2023, the Swedish Red Cross opened an exchange around civil protection and civil defence at a conceptual, organisational and planning level. The rationale behind this is that civil defence is currently not clearly regulated or defined in terms of law or national instructions, which created a positioning problem for the Swedish Red Cross vis-à-vis the relevant authority. The discussion explored comparatively whether and/or how this debate has taken place in other EU countries, as well as the positioning of the NS in these scenarios.

Ultimately, this forum flagged and informed the relevance of this matter against the Swedish context, which stands as an example of regular NS/IFRC Secretariat/RCEU Office exchange using existing platforms. Likewise, it provoked a peer-to-peer discussion around relevant legal frameworks, as well as the operational tasks assigned to NS as part of the national civil defence system.

14

Concerned NS should give due consideration to, and, to the applicable extent, get accustomed with the SOPs and administrative arrangements agreed between DG ECHO and the IFRC.

In 2019, an Administrative Arrangement enhancing operational cooperation and coordination between the IFRC Secretariat and DG ECHO was signed in Geneva. This document is the overall framework for the collaboration and is further detailed in the SOPs with the ERCC. The first version of the SOPs was approved by the IFRC Secretariat and DG ECHO in 2020. The SOPs apply to emergency preparedness, response and recovery in the field of civil protection cooperation and operations globally. The IFRC Secretariat (HQ in Geneva and/or regional office in Budapest) and, to the extent applicable, NS shall integrate SOPs in their internal tools, guidance and manuals as appropriate, for instance, when referring to information sharing. The IFRC, with the support of the RCEU Office, should share among NS regular updates of relevant documents within the shortest reasonable timeframe.

## **PRACTICE BOX 12**



### **ECHO ERCC/EHRC Liaison Officer (Ukraine 2022 and Gaza 2023)**

Due to the escalation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, the IFRC Secretariat held a meeting with the ECHO Director to establish an EU-IFRC Coordination Cell to mainstream delivery of in-kind donations from Member States and the EU into Gaza. The 27 EU Member States have asked ECHO's European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC) to coordinate and manage the EU logistics pipeline on their behalf.

The IFRC Secretariat's assigned role consisted of managing the pipeline for all in-kind donations coming from EU Member States to the Egyptian Red Crescent Society/Palestine Red Crescent Society. To facilitate this arrangement, an IFRC Secretariat Liaison Officer was appointed to work directly with ECHO EHRC at the DG ECHO Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) in Brussels. This position built on the SOP/Administrative Arrangements established in 2019 between DG ECHO/ERCC and IFRC as well as the former experience of the IFRC Secretariat Liaison Officer stationed at the ERCC during the initial phase of the Ukraine crisis response.



*On 7 November 2023, an EU humanitarian air bridge flight departed from Oostende to the al-Arish airport in Egypt carrying assistance supplies for the people of Gaza.*  
© Red Cross EU Office

## 3.2. Risk mapping and contingency planning

15

Concerned NS and the IFRC Secretariat should be able to inform multi-hazards contingency plans developed by EU Member States, including for domestic and regional use.

In the EU context, risk mapping and contingency plans and scenarios are usually developed by domestic authorities to improve coordination, ensure interoperability between different actors and increase operational preparedness against disasters and other emergencies. Full awareness of the functioning of respective civil protection systems and participation in contingency planning at all levels are key to avoid duplications and ensure operational integration. NS and the IFRC Secretariat should engage in these initiatives in order to improve recognition of Red Cross and Red Crescent capacities, capabilities and operational modalities and lead to better understanding and consideration of NS roles in their national disaster response system. This includes at the subnational level, where local branches of NS and municipal authorities interact and engage in civil protection activities. This should also happen across states and country borders, in coordination with the NS of the host country, the IFRC regional office for Europe, and IFRC Secretariat delegation in the given country(ies), and with relevant information shared with the RCEU Office.

### **PRACTICE BOX 13**



#### **Data interoperability to improve qualitative operations and local resilience**

Crisis Coordinators from the Netherlands Red Cross are available at any time to be contacted by the Dutch Water Authority in case of emergency. The two parties have agreed on the types of emergencies and activities the Red Cross can help with, and their mutual responsibilities during the cooperation. This way, these arrangements are ready in advance.

In 2014, the Netherlands Red Cross started a new initiative: [Ready2Help](#). Ready2Helpers can support the Water Authority in both the dry and the wet season by, for example, inspecting dykes. The Netherlands Red Cross is working together with several governmental and semi-governmental agencies to coordinate and facilitate the use of volunteers in flood risk reduction, food distribution and other emergencies, such as searching for missing people. The same philosophy applies to all deployments of Ready2Help: to add value and support efforts in the best possible way ([Red Alert, 2020](#)).

### 3.3. Civil protection training

16

Concerned NS, in accordance and coordination with respective civil protection authorities and the IFRC Secretariat, should support and join, when possible, EU training programmes on civil protection.

Experts and practitioners who have trained together can interact better out in the field and will be more knowledgeable about the particular requirements of EU civil protection missions. A [UCPM training programme](#) (including both basic and specialist courses) has been set up to reinforce and facilitate European cooperation in civil protection assistance interventions (see Info Box 5). It aims to introduce and illustrate the functioning of the UCPM and other EU civil protection tools, thus ensuring compatibility and complementarity between the intervention teams and other intervention support.

The IFRC Secretariat and NS – the latter in accordance and coordination with respective civil protection authorities – should aim at supporting and joining these initiatives to improve their awareness, capacities and performance in responding to emergencies and disasters according to internationally recognised standards, as well as promote and disseminate their role (from the Fundamental Principles to the field practice).

#### **INFO BOX 5**

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##### **The Union Mechanism Introduction (UMI) training course**

The UMI training course was launched in September 2023. The programme offers tailored training pathways, aimed at preparing experts from the field to perform different roles within the UCPM. Ultimately, it targets experts nominated by Member States to be deployed under the UCPM (first group following the 'deployable path'); and CP stakeholders non-deployable under the UCPM (second group following the 'non-deployable path'). Resources on this path are of unlimited access on the [EU Academy](#) platform.

The IFRC network belongs to the second group, thereby access to the deployable path remains strongly restricted. To this date, the IFRC allocation for the cycles 19 and 20 (2023-2025) is one seat. The IFRC National Training Coordinator (NTC) sits with the RCEU Office in Brussels.

To follow the first training path, two recommendations could be issued. Firstly, NS could facilitate or participate in the ad hoc modules to showcase their role and expertise. To do so, NS should liaise with the RCEU Office. Secondly, concerned NS could apply for any Member States' unused quota as a priority organisation. To do so, NS should approach the NTCs of their Member State.

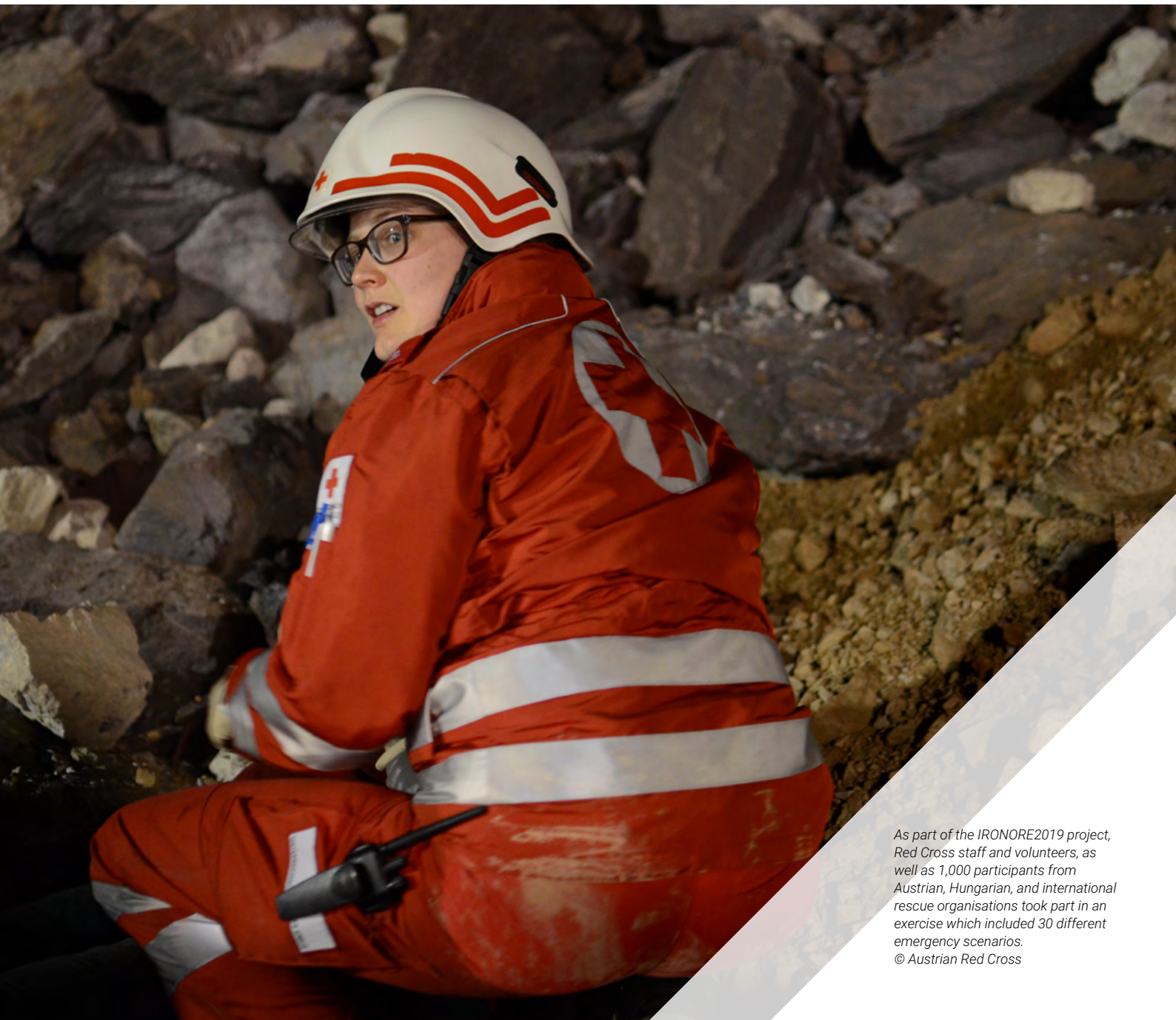
## PRACTICE BOX 14



### IRONORE 2019 testing UCPM activations

As of January 2019, the Austrian Red Cross and Hungarian Red Cross (among consortia members) tested the understanding and response in the framework of the UCPM in an alpine region using a discussion-based exercise and a full-scale civil protection exercise: IRONORE 2019. The exercises offered participants the opportunity to train in mobilisation, interoperability and serving/receiving international assistance following the Mechanism procedure.

IRONORE tested the activation of the UCPM and used EU Host Nation Support Guidelines and other EU and UN-related platforms and guidance such as WHO Emergency Medical Team guidelines. Elements of the latter should be included in future exercises and/or Red Cross and Red Crescent action to improve collaboration between global and regional organisations ([Red Alert, 2020](#)).



As part of the IRONORE2019 project, Red Cross staff and volunteers, as well as 1,000 participants from Austrian, Hungarian, and international rescue organisations took part in an exercise which included 30 different emergency scenarios.  
© Austrian Red Cross





*The Portuguese Red Cross participated in Cascade 2019, a Union Civil Protection Mechanism exercise to test and improve responses to multiple emergency situations.  
© Portuguese Red Cross*

17

Concerned NS, with the support of the IFRC Secretariat and the RCEU Office, should aim to organise and deliver multi-level and inter-institutional training on disaster preparedness, prevention and response.

Training and knowledge dissemination activities are key to gaining a full understanding of EU tools and mechanisms in the civil protection sector, thus enhancing operational preparedness and complementarity. NS, with the support of the IFRC and the RCEU Office, should develop plans to regularly train their staff and volunteers on EU civil protection activities and the UCPM both nationally and supranationally, including at the regional and municipal level. Specifically, inter-institutional training allowing for harmonised capacity building, pertinent dissemination of lessons learned and good practice, alignment of response plans and standard operating procedures, should be arranged at least annually by NS.

When suitable, NS and the IFRC Secretariat should seek opportunities to bid for EU funding to develop and deliver such training, especially where benefits could include raising their profile in EU civil protection activities and identifying areas of improvement in the involvement of EUNS staff (national and local) involved in EU civil protection activities, including when the Mechanism is activated. Further information is given below in section 3.4.

## **PRACTICE BOX 15**



### **The Portuguese Red Cross' participation in CASCADE 2019 exercise**

In 2019, the Portuguese Red Cross participated in the UCPM exercise held in Portugal. The LIVEX (Live Exercise) was organised by the Portuguese National Authority for Emergency and Civil Protection in collaboration with the Directorate-General of the Maritime Authority. It aimed to test and train the response to multiple emergency situations that may occur in cascade (earthquake, floods, chemical accidents, dam ruptures and marine pollution, among others). The exercise mobilised more than 6,000 participants including national stakeholders (Directorate-General of Health), regional stakeholders (Azores Regional Civil Protection and Fire Services Agency) and local stakeholders (S. Pedro do Sul Volunteers).

Likewise, the exercise stands as a solid example of inter-institutional training, encompassing the participation of actors such as the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (Technisches Hilfswerk) in Germany, offering a water purification module, and the Directorate General for Civil Security within B-FAST in Belgium, offering a module for flood rescue.

### 3.4. EU call for funding on prevention, preparedness and civil protection exercises

18

Concerned NS and the IFRC Secretariat, and when relevant with the support of the ICRC, should aim to participate in EU civil protection exercises and EU projects on prevention and preparedness to promote the role, principles and practices of the Movement.

On 13 February 2023, DG ECHO opened the Knowledge for Action in Prevention and Preparedness (KAPP) call for proposals (see Info Box 6). The UCPM co-finances projects that support efforts of Member States and Participating States in the field of disaster prevention and preparedness.<sup>19</sup> Civil Protection exercises (also referred to as 'Full-scale Exercises') and EU projects on Prevention and Preparedness (also referred to as 'P&P') are designed primarily as field tests aiming to establish a common understanding of international cooperation in civil protection assistance interventions and to enhance the overall capacity to respond to major emergencies.

Concerned NS, with the support of the IFRC Secretariat and the RCEU Office, should aim to participate in these exercises and, on submission, engage in coordination efforts during the project proposal phase. In doing so, the RCEU Office could support NS in liaising with EU stakeholders to unpack the call for proposals. Once the project has been granted and completed, concerned NS are encouraged to actively contribute to the evaluation exercises. Likewise, they are encouraged to leverage existing forums pertinent to their field to facilitate the exchange of lessons learned and best practices, as well as to identify operational gaps to address.

#### **INFO BOX 6**

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##### **Knowledge for Action in Prevention and Preparedness (KAPP) call for proposals**

The call aimed at co-financing projects seeking to strengthen cooperation among EU Member States and Participating States on disaster prevention, preparedness and full-scale field exercises in pursuit of the Union Disaster Resilience Goals. The call merged three previously separate calls: 'Prevention and Preparedness', 'Knowledge Network Partnership' and 'Full-Scale Exercises'.

Concerned NS and the IFRC Secretariat are encouraged to attend information sessions hosted by DG ECHO and the RCEU Office. Likewise, they may consider contacting the RCEU Office as a way to establish communication with DG ECHO and enhance the quality of their proposal. In line with its mandate, RCEU Office support mainly focuses on enhancing concerned NS and IFRC strategic positioning, rather than actively participating in the development of the proposal.

19. From 2023, grants for prevention and preparedness actions will henceforth be awarded through the ['Technical assistance for disaster risk management'](#) (single-country) and the ['Knowledge for action in prevention and preparedness'](#) (multi-country) grants.



### **PRACTICE BOX 16**

#### **RED ROSES project on cross-border prevention and preparedness and marine pollution**

The REsponsive Data ecosystem for Resilient and Operational SEcurity Strategies (**RED ROSES**) project, co-funded by the European Commission as part of the UCPM, addresses natural risk prevention and preparedness in the French-Italian cross-border area. The French Red Cross holds the coordination role and coordinates additional consortia partners including the Italian Red Cross.

In practice, the RED ROSES project aims to develop, test and deploy a data and information-sharing tool for cross-border authorities and civil protection actors, to tackle the risks of floods, landslides and forest fires.

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Concerned NS and the IFRC Secretariat may participate in or seek opportunities to bid for funding to develop and deliver multi-agency humanitarian exercises in the civil protection sector.

NS and the IFRC Secretariat may participate in or seek opportunities to bid for funding to develop and deliver multi-agency humanitarian exercises in the civil protection sector, especially where benefits could include raising the Red Cross and Red Crescent profile in EU civil protection activities, as well as a better understanding of NS roles and capacities in civil protection operations. This could also provide a possibility to showcase NS capacities and technical expertise in specific fields of intervention.

### 3.5. Government rapid response teams and consular support services

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In accordance and coordination with respective public authorities, concerned NS should be ready and available to participate in government rapid response teams, including through consular services.

The EU and its Member States are improving coordination in crisis situations, increasingly forming rapid response teams for deployment to support consulates and embassies in disaster-affected areas. These rapid response teams support consular services in assisting citizens and their evacuation, when necessary. A NS may be invited, by its public authority, to participate in their government rapid response teams, in some capacity.

Typically, NS may be invited to provide training services, for instance, first aid or trained volunteers, to deploy with the consular teams to provide basic assistance, medical care and psychosocial support during an evacuation. In these cases, NS personnel are under the government's operational control and contractual obligations and liability rest with the government throughout the deployment. Such personnel could use equipment provided by their governments and be considered to be deployed as a government asset. However, the deployed NS should inform the NS of the affected country of their part in their government deployment as well as the IFRC Secretariat and, where appropriate, the ICRC. This can be done without any Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems or logos, if such deployment would weaken the Movement's capacity to respond. Red Cross and Red Crescent personnel should not wear Red Cross and Red Crescent uniform nor display the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblem in any manner.



*A group of Romanian Red Cross staff and volunteers took part in the International Disaster Preparedness Camp in Comanești, Bacău County in August 2023. In this photo, they are transporting casualties of a road accident to the hospital.  
© Romanian Red Cross*

## 3.6. Disaster law

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NS, with the support of the IFRC Secretariat, should encourage and assist their public authorities in the strengthening of their overall legal, policy and/or institutional frameworks with relevance for EU civil protection activities.

Underpinning every disaster preparedness activity or response operation, whether large or small, is a network of laws, policies and plans which determine who does what, when and how. As maintained by a series of resolutions adopted by the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the Movement recognises the importance of strong laws and policies on the facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief, including within the EU context. To this end, the [Guidelines on Disaster Risk Governance](#) should be considered as useful non-binding assessment tool to advocate and support respective public authorities, when applicable, to review domestic legal and policy frameworks for the management of international assistance (also towards greater preparedness and efficient participation in EU civil protection activities) as well as to support preparedness and response at the national, provincial and local level.

### **PRACTICE BOX 17**



#### **Supporting authorities to strengthen disaster law**

When NS carry out activities critical to the safety and well-being of communities, it is essential that countries classify them as 'frontline', 'emergency' or 'essential' workers, or any other classification that allows them to remain exempt from curfews, limitations on business opening hours and other general population-control measures. A good example of this is Italy, where the Italian Red Cross is recognised as an emergency service and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, exempted from population-control strategies. Likewise, the Spanish Red Cross published a [case study](#) highlighting its experience as a recipient of international aid during the COVID-19 response, underlining the importance of having domestic laws ensuring customs facilitation and tax-exemption measures in place to help the entry of international supplies ([Red Alert, 2020](#)).



German Red Cross teams were deployed during the flood disaster in Rhineland-Palatinate in 2021.  
© Philipp Köhler/German Red Cross

# Annex 1: Regulatory framework

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Relations between the IFRC Secretariat and EUNS with public authorities in the civil protection sector are governed by the following statutory texts, resolutions and policies:

## Statutory texts

- Statutes and Rules of Procedure of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (International Conference (IC) 1986, amended 1995, 2006)
- Constitution of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (General Assembly 1987, amended 1991, revised and adopted 1999 and 2007)
- Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (IC 1965, revised and adopted 1986)

## Resolutions and policies

- Adoption of the Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance (IDRL Guidelines) (IC Resolution 4, 2007)
- Armed protection of humanitarian assistance (Council of Delegates (CoD), 1995)
- Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief (IFRC, ICRC, 1994)
- Disaster laws and policies that leave no one behind (IC Resolution 7, 2019)
- Furthering the auxiliary role: Partnership for stronger National Societies and volunteering development (IC Resolution 4, 2011)
- Minimum elements to be included in operational agreements between Movement components and their external operational partner (CoD, 2003)
- Movement components' relations with external humanitarian actors (CoD, 2011, Resolution and Background report)
- Movement Coordination for Collective Impact Agreement (Seville Agreement 2.0) (2022)
- Movement policy for Corporate Sector Partnerships (CoD 2005, Resolution 5)
- Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance (2013)
- Regulations on the use of the Emblem of the Red Cross or the Red Crescent by the National Societies (IC 1965, revised CoD 1991)

- Relations between the components of the Movement and military bodies (CoD 2005, Resolution 7, annex)
- Specific nature of the Red Cross Movement in action and partnerships and the role of National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field (IC Resolution 2, 2007)

The following documents produced by the IFRC Secretariat and/or the ICRC, also provide relevant guidance:

- Checklist on Law and Disaster Preparedness and Response (IFRC, 2019)
- Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role through Law and Policy (IFRC, 2021)
- National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field: Conclusions from the study undertaken by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC, 2003)
- National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. Study on situations of armed conflict (ICRC, 2005)
- Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law: Guiding Principles (ICRC, 2001)
- Study on the Use of the Emblems. Operational and Commercial and other Non-Operational Issues (ICRC, 2020)

## Annex 2: The EU Civil Protection Mechanism

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### What is the EU Civil Protection Mechanism?

Created in 2001, the **Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)** aims at facilitating civil protection assistance interventions in major emergencies (natural and man-made disasters) inside and outside the EU. As of 2023, 37 countries in total participate in the UCPM: 27 EU Member States, as well as 10 Participating States (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine).

When the scale of an emergency overwhelms national response, the UCPM enables coordinated assistance from its Participating States. Any country in the world, as well as the UN and some international organisations, can request assistance from the UCPM. The IFRC Secretariat has also been given the possibility to activate it, although this has never been done so far. It can also be activated during marine pollution emergencies, where it works closely with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). Even though the UCPM was mainly created to respond to disasters inside the EU, it is likewise activated in third countries.

Since its inception in 2001, the UCPM has responded to over 700 requests for assistance inside and outside the EU. According to the latest available data (2022), there were 323 activations of the UCPM, of which 172 targeted countries inside the EU and 151 targeted countries outside of the EU. Moreover, 17 countries received assistance via rescEU in 2022; and 119 response capacities were committed to the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP) by the end of the same year.





## Civil protection mechanism tools

The UCPM involves EU Member States and Participating States which pool their civil protection resources that can be made available to disaster-stricken countries.

- The **Emergency Response Cooperation Centre (ERCC)**, which operates 24/7, acts as a coordination hub for the assistance offered by EU Member States and Participating States, based on the needs of the affected country. It offers countries a platform of civil protection means available among the Participating States. Any country inside or outside the EU can request assistance through the ERCC. It acts as a communication hub among the Participating States, the affected country and the field experts. In addition, the ERCC provides regular information on the ongoing emergency activities. As per the SOPs to enhance operational cooperation and coordination between the DG ECHO and the IFRC Secretariat (2020), the RCEU Office shares operational updates on major operations with the ERCC and facilitates operational information sharing between ERCC and IFRC.
- The **Common Emergency and Information System (CECIS)** is a web-based alert and notification application which aims at facilitating emergency communication among EU Member States and Participating States.
- The [Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network \(UCPKN\)](#) includes training, exercises, exchange of knowledge, information, good practices and lessons learned, stimulation of research and innovation, and setting up and maintaining an online platform.
- The [European Civil Protection Pool \(ECP\)](#) is made up of national resources from EU Member States and Participating States on a voluntary basis. They constitute a contribution to the civil protection rapid response capability. Modules have been developed in areas such as water purification, high-capacity pumping, urban search and rescue, firefighting, health, evacuations of disaster survivors, emergency temporary shelter, and flood containment.
- [rescEU](#) is a reserve of additional capacities which aims at faster and more comprehensive response to crises. Its purpose is to act as a safety net when national capacities are strained, the means of the ECP are unavailable, or several countries face the same type of disaster simultaneously and are unable to help each other.

The UCPM's general and specific objectives (ICF UCPM Overview, 2023)

<p><b>General</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the <b>cooperation between Member and participating States to facilitate coordination in the field of civil protection</b> in order to improve the effectiveness of systems for preventing, preparing for and responding to natural and man-made disasters.</li> <li>• <b>Promote solidarity</b> between the Member and Participating States <b>through practical cooperation and coordination</b>, without prejudice to the Member States' primary responsibility to protect people, the environment, and property, including cultural heritage</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Specific (per pillar)</b></p>	<p><b>Prevention</b></p> 	<p><b>Preparedness</b></p> 	<p><b>Response</b></p> 	<p><b>Cross-pillar/ Horizontal</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Achieve a high level of protection</b> against disasters by <b>preventing or reducing their potential effects</b>, by fostering a <b>culture of prevention</b> and by <b>improving cooperation</b> between the civil protection and other relevant services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enhance preparedness</b> at national and Union level to respond to disasters</li> <li>• Increase the availability and use of <b>scientific knowledge on disasters</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitate rapid and efficient response</b> in the event of disasters or imminent disasters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase public awareness and preparedness for disasters</li> <li>• Step up cooperation and coordination activities at cross-border level and between Member States prone to the same types of disasters</li> </ul>

### Main changes to the UCPM across 2017–2022 (ICF UCPM Overview, 2023)

<p><b>Prevention</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New <b>risk assessment and risk management obligations for Members States</b> (Art.6), including new reporting obligations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Preparedness</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Establishment and reinforcement of rescEU capacities</b> (including shelter capacities, transport and logistics, energy supply, medical stockpiling, capacities established to respond to low probability risks with a high impact, capacities in the area of chemical, biological, nuclear incidents, mobile laboratory capacities, and CBRN detection, sampling, identification, and monitoring capacities)</li> <li>• Integration of <b>European Medical Corps</b> in the Voluntary Resource pool</li> <li>• Redefinition of the <b>European Civil Protection Pool</b></li> <li>• <b>Scenario building</b></li> <li>• Development of <b>Union Resilience Goals</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Response</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of the <b>European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Establishment and reinforcement of rescEU capacities</b> (including shelter capacities, transport and logistics, energy supply, medical stockpiling, capacities established to respond to low probability risks with a high impact, capacities in the area of chemical, biological, nuclear incidents, mobile laboratory capacities, and CBRN detection, sampling, identification, and monitoring capacities)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cross-pillar/Horizontal</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment and organisation of the <b>Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Others changes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobilisation of the <b>Contingency Margin</b> to provide emergency assistance to Member States and further reinforce the UCPM/ rescEU in response to the COVID-19 outbreak</li> <li>• <b>Reinforcement of the UCPM Decision</b>, including a more flexible UCPM budget structure and establishment of criteria and procedures for recognising long-standing commitment and extraordinary contributions to the UCPM</li> </ul>

## Enhancing EU disaster response capacity

As the UCPM was not able to respond fully to a majority of requests for assistance received during the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, the European Council and the European Parliament invited the Commission to make proposals for a more ambitious and wide-ranging crisis management system within the EU.

In June 2020, the Commission made a proposal for a decision amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a UCPM, adopted by the Council and Parliament in spring 2021. The new regulation entered into force in May 2021. With the changes, the EU intended to make the UCPM more flexible, financially strengthened and operationally enhanced. It is considered critically important that the UCPM is ready to address all transboundary crises – those that affect multiple Member States and several sectors at the same time.

The amendments include several changes and new areas of focus, which read as follows.

- New elements: The Union Disaster Resilience Goals (non-binding), focusing on five key strategic areas of civil protection, each with specific objectives and flagships, the five goals will help to:
  1. Anticipate: improve the Union and the Member States' capability to identify and assess complex disaster risks.
  2. Prepare: increase disaster risk awareness and preparedness of the population e.g. becoming risk-aware and knowing how to prepare at home, school and in the community.
  3. Alert: enhance the effectiveness and interoperability of our early warning systems.
  4. Respond: scale up the UCPM response capacity for wildfire, flood, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) events, search and rescue needs, and emergency health.
  5. Secure: ensure that the civil protection system remains operational 24/7 during and after a disaster, when it is most needed.
- Increased focus on the impacts of climate change; transboundary effects and cross-border collaboration, and the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network (UCPKN).
- Enlarged mandate for DG ECHO allowing to directly procure additional response capacities in the field of transport and logistics and in cases of urgency, strengthening the ERCC role with enhanced operational, analytical, monitoring, information management and communication capabilities. It also focuses on the development of a transnational detection and early warning systems.
- Increase of funding allocation and flexibility: The UCPM received a significant budget increase with more tools to allow for a flexible implementation; EUR 1.26 billion under the 2021–2027 Multiannual Financial Framework and EUR 2.05 billion through the NextGenerationEU recovery instrument.

## Interim Evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism

Article 34 of Decision 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and Council of 17 December 2013 on a UCPM requires the Commission to submit, every two years, a report to the European Parliament and Council on operations and progress made towards the Union Disaster Resilience Goals, capacity goals and remaining gaps, taking into account the establishment of rescEU capacities. The report shall also provide an overview of the budgetary and cost developments relating to response capacities, and an assessment of the need for further development of those capacities. The 2021 [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles](#) stands as the latest available report.

In addition, by 31 December 2023 and every five years thereafter, the Commission shall evaluate the application of this decision and submit a communication on the effectiveness, cost efficiency and continued implementation of this decision, in particular regarding Article 6(4), rescEU capacities and the degree of coordination and synergies achieved with other Union policies, programmes and funds, including medical emergencies, to the European Parliament and Council. That communication shall be accompanied, where appropriate, by proposals for amendments to this decision.

The interim evaluation materialised in an [Interim Evaluation Report \(2014–2016\)](#) launched by DG ECHO in November 2016. The scope of the evaluation encompassed all horizontal activities of the UCPM and those categorised under the UCPM's three thematic pillars – disaster prevention, preparedness and response. In 2023, the European Commission appointed independent experts to conduct an external and independent evaluation from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2022 (herein UCPM Interim Evaluation Report 2017–2021).

On the basis of the aforementioned, the RCEU Office and the Italian Red Cross were contacted by one of these experts to provide some input through a one-to-one interview. Subsequently, the European Commission launched an open public consultation to support the interim evaluation. The consultation period extended from 14 April to 7 July 2023, and was published on the ['Have your say' platform](#) via an online questionnaire. Drawing from the information shared in previous exchanges, a set of key messages were developed by the RCEU Office. The French Red Cross and the Swedish Red Cross participated in the open public consultation.

In addition, between February and April 2023, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) drew up an [Evaluation Report assessing \(ex-post\) the implementation of the UCPM – including rescEU](#). With a view to complementing usefully the ongoing evaluation of the European Commission on this topic, the EESC evaluation has focused on cooperation and coordination in the interventions of UCPM (challenges, hurdles, opportunities). To do so, it collected the views of civil society organisations as well as public authorities. The Swedish Red Cross was appointed as key stakeholder in the consultation.

## Annex 3: Guiding questions based on the guidance recommendations

- 1** Are the Fundamental Principles, the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and other relevant Movement policies, fully taken into account as primary reference when your NS is engaging in EU civil protection activities?


- 2** Are your NS roles and references in respective disaster management systems in line with their core responsibilities and competencies within the Movement, and its auxiliary role as defined by relevant legislation?


- 3** Is your NS mandate in the civil protection sector duly regulated and facilitated by relevant authorities? If not, is your NS seeking a proactive and institutionalised partnership with respective authorities and advocating for the promotion of legal preparedness to disasters?


- 4** Is your NS supporting other NS in their emergency intervention activities and contributing to the mutual development to optimise collective capacities and operational reach of the Movement?


- 5** Is the operational involvement of your NS consistent with its role and overall mandate, and duly considering safety, security and the minimum quality standards as per the activities of concern?


- 6** Has your NS duly collected and/or provided all adequate relevant information on the host country's disaster management institutional system and coordination mechanisms?


- 7** Is the use of your NS logo on personnel and assets involved in civil protection activities consistent with the Movement's relevant rules and policies?


- 8** Does the involvement of your NS in UCPM operations entailing civil-military coordination and/or cooperation conform to the Fundamental Principles and the relevant policies of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement?



# **THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

## **Humanity**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

## **Impartiality**

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

## **Neutrality**

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

## **Independence**

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

## **Voluntary service**

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

## **Unity**

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

## **Universality**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.