

EU civil protection capabilities

SUMMARY

Civil protection is the protection of people, the environment and property against natural and man-made disasters. The Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) is a highly visible and tangible promise by the European Union (EU) to its citizens to protect them when in need, and to act in solidarity in times of extraordinary suffering. It is a distinctively civilian approach to the problem. On the basis of Articles 196 and 222 (the 'solidarity clause') of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), it relies on a voluntary system of mutual assistance and on capacity pre-committed by the Member States. In 2019, this was complemented by dedicated EU capacities via a new tool, called RescEU, and improvements in risk prevention and preparedness.

However, the current coronavirus crisis has shown that the current structures and processes might still not be fit for purpose or in the required state of readiness. The EU needs to broaden and increase its capabilities. This paper explores the issue and identifies potential initiatives to further improve the structural and capability components of EU crisis response. They include options for streamlining civilian and military crisis response and management, improving cooperation with industry, enhancing foresight, war-gaming, international exercises and cyber capabilities, and the development of capability goals, readiness monitoring, and ensured mobility of urgently needed assets.

Introduction

We have seen the fragility of life laid bare in front of our eyes. And we have seen tragedy on a scale unimaginable even just a few short weeks ago in the heart of Europe. [...] When Europe really needed an 'all for one' spirit, too many initially gave an 'only for me' response. [...] the people of Europe are watching what happens next. And we all know what is at stake. What we do now matters – for today as well as for the future.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, [26 March 2020](#).

Civil protection is a highly visible and tangible promise by the EU to its citizens to protect them when in need, and to act in solidarity in times of extraordinary suffering. In the past two decades, the EU has had its fair share of man-made and natural disasters, from terror attacks to forest fires. Some have been handled well, others exposed the need for more and better cooperation and coordination between Member States and with the EU. Similarly, an increased EU global footprint has been accompanied by a rise in its civil protection missions around the world. And here too, the EU has had to react to new circumstances through new capabilities and better management.

What is civil protection?

EU definition of civil protection:

'The protection to be ensured by the Union Mechanism shall cover primarily people, but also the environment and property, including cultural heritage, against all kinds of natural and man-made disasters, including the consequences of acts of terrorism, technological, radiological or environmental disasters, marine pollution, and acute health emergencies, occurring inside or outside the Union. In the case of the consequences of acts of terrorism or radiological disasters, the Union Mechanism may cover only preparedness and response actions.'

Article 1(2) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU.

Protection is a fundamental policy capacity and one of the key functions of the modern state. It comes in various forms, such as environmental, social, data and legal protection. The use of the word **civilian** is intended to highlight those who require to be protected, the largely non-military nature of this protection, and the nature of the disasters it covers. Here, civil protection should be differentiated¹ from **civil defence**, which includes both the protection of civilians and [public order](#) in military conflicts and through military units (Article 61, Protocol I, [Geneva Conventions](#)).²

Union Civil Protection Mechanism

The legal basis for EU involvement in civil protection lies in [Article 196](#) TFEU, which calls on the Union to support and coordinate the civil protection systems of its Member States, and [Article 222](#) TFEU, the 'solidarity clause', which introduces a legal obligation that the EU and its Member States should provide assistance when a fellow member is the object of a terror attack or a natural or man-made disaster.³

Nevertheless, the primary responsibility for protection against disasters lies with the **Member States**. Member State [civil protection capacities](#) vary greatly with respect to their organisational culture, structures, and professionalism. Depending on their development, they are part of different larger organisations, such as the fire department or the military. Some are organised para-militarily, while others are not. Finally, some are centralised while others are decentral and locally structured and led.

The [Union Civil Protection Mechanism](#) (UCPM) is the main system through which civil protection is coordinated at [EU level](#), and is administered via the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations ([DG ECHO](#)). Set up in 2001 to improve the EU's response to natural and man-made disasters such as wildfires, floods, marine pollution, earthquakes, hurricanes and industrial accidents, the UCPM has since then been invoked 330 times around the world. The UCPM relies on a **voluntary system of mutual assistance and on pre-committed capacity** offered by 34 countries – EU Member States, plus six other participating states (Iceland, Norway, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Turkey), as well as the United Kingdom during the transition period as it leaves the EU. This emergency relief can take the form of in-kind assistance, deployment of specially equipped teams, or assessment and coordination by experts sent to the field. The EU's role is to coordinate and complement national action to prevent, prepare for and respond to disasters.

Until 2019, the only way to commit experts, units and machinery was through voluntary provision by member countries at the request of another. The forest fires in 2017 and 2018 revealed the limits of this approach when it comes to responding to complex and recurring disasters. As a consequence, it was decided to create dedicated EU capacities through a new tool, called **RescEU**, and to improve risk prevention and preparedness by helping Member States to enhance their disaster risk assessment and management. Prevention efforts were also increased through cooperation with EU structural, regional and cohesion funds. Finally, efforts were renewed to secure better predictability of which assets were available at what time, as well as aiming for simplified

procedures. The mechanism was still based on member countries taking the lead and on subsidiarity, especially in the context of local disaster response command.

These new UCPM capabilities became law only in 2019, and had not yet been fully implemented, when the **coronavirus surfaced** in China at the end of 2019. The UCPM was [activated](#) by France on 28 January 2020 (with little public acknowledgement by politicians or the media), with the Commission warning of the virus and urging Member States to prepare. When the coronavirus spread through northern Italy, Member States initially failed to respond to calls to supply civil protection assets, especially medical equipment. According to Commissioner Janez Lenarčič, most seemed to have realised at that time that they themselves did not have enough medical equipment. China and Russia appeared to react more quickly and decisively.

Most commentators and policy-makers concurred there would be lasting damage to EU cohesion if such a lack of solidarity was repeated in the future. The Commission and European Parliament therefore agreed that the EU should develop a more robust civil protection system to tackle major crises. Meanwhile, following the slow start, Member States and the EU provided Covid-19 **assistance via the UCPM**. In recent weeks, many member countries have provided [medical equipment](#), including masks and ambulances, offered shelters and [medical care for refugees](#) in Greece, organised and co-financed the repatriation of more than 75 000 EU citizens, and arranged the [transportation](#) of humanitarian workers to hot spots around the world. The rapidly expanding rescEU medical equipment storage is currently hosted by Romania and Germany. The Commission is hopeful that in the future, four to six EU Member States will provide storage for all member countries. The Commission is currently trying to ensure that there is no duplication between the rescEU and the EU4Health (which will invest €9.4 billion in the health care system, including strategic stockpiles) programmes. It is likely that rescEU will focus on first responders, while EU4health will provide equipment to the wider health sector and beyond. The extended RescEU programme is planning to buy and distribute coronavirus vaccines, whenever they become available. The Commission plans to decide on the deployment of such capacities, but it remains to be seen if Member States will approve this.

Existing proposals for civil protection reform

The [proposal](#) by the Commission, as part of the **2021-27 Multiannual Financial Framework**, is to leave most of the civil protection structure as it is, but to expand its power and spend more money on its own capabilities. For the EU to fill critical gaps and act as a safety net when Member States are hit by a crisis and cannot help each other, the Commission will upgrade its own assets by investing €2 billion in RescEU, bringing the total expenditure to €3.1 billion over the next seven years, but front-loaded to 2024. The main investment will be in medical equipment, vaccines, medical expertise, medical evacuation planes and field hospitals, mobile laboratories, as well as in firefighting planes and helicopters. These assets would not only be used in medical emergencies and forest fires, but would also be available for chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incidents, and other major emergencies. RescEU will also pay for the operational costs of readiness units. The structural reform plans focus on reducing reaction time for major emergencies, developing EU disaster resilience goals and supporting national prevention and preparedness planning, and, last but not least, raising the profile of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC). The proposed increase in funding is significant, but lower than some proposals made before the pandemic. As with the RescEU package, this proposal is geared towards finding a speedy consensus with the Member States in a state of crisis.

Less is known at this stage about the Council's ideas for better civil protection. On 22 March 2020, President Charles Michel proposed an [EU-level crisis centre](#), covering not only health, but all crises. However, the uptake was minimal and since then the idea has not been repeated. It is possible the Council will be satisfied with a larger role for the ERCC, as long as Member States retain the lead. On the crisis management spectrum, the [EU Military Staff](#) has set up a task force that will cooperate with the ERCC and liaise with advanced North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) efforts on coordinating military cooperation in fighting coronavirus. It remains to be seen if such ad hoc structures and cooperation will endure after the crisis.

Instruments and structures of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism

RescEU

In order to be able to protect its citizens more effectively, the EU decided to [strengthen](#) its response capacity in 2019, by creating a common European reserve of resources, 'rescEU'. It is meant as a safety net and last resort when national voluntary capabilities become overburdened. While the rescEU capacities are financed by the EU, most of the capabilities are leased rented or acquired by Member States, rather than owned by the EU.

Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)

The [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) is the 24/7 situation room which coordinates civil protection operations, following country requests. When activated, it seeks information on members' capacities and coordinates their deployment. It provides real-time information-sharing, including via the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS) and by using EU satellite maps from the [Copernicus Emergency Management Service](#). It monitors global risks and events and can be scaled up in times of crises. Through the Commission Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), it receives information from 40 field offices worldwide. Its disaster response has [mainly](#) covered forest fires (30 % of disasters between 2015 and 2018), floods (18%), and to a lesser degree cyclones, storms and earthquakes. It also organises civil protection missions in humanitarian aid situations.

European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP)

The [ECPP](#) (formerly known as European Emergency Response Capacity and also referred to as 'the voluntary pool'), brings together and co-funds 110 relief teams and various experts and equipment from 24 Member States and participating states that are kept on standby in the EU countries in which they are based. They train together, can be rapidly deployed globally and function autonomously in disaster zones. The ERCC serves as the main coordination hub for their deployment. One special component of the ECPP is the [European Medical Corps](#). Founded in response to the Ebola crisis in 2014, it enables quick medical assistance and public health expertise from all EU Member States and participating states to health emergencies within and beyond the EU.

European Disaster Risk Management

Through this 2019 [initiative](#), the EU wants to help Member States to develop policies to improve mechanisms for preventing, preparing and responding to disasters by publishing updated risk overviews, deploying advisory missions to areas prone to disasters, research and knowledge [sharing](#), peer reviews of operational set-ups, and enhanced international cooperation through the global UN [Sendai Framework](#).

Broader EU view on civil protection

As explained, the Union Civil Protection Mechanism is the main system for civil protection in the Commission, which has the competence to help EU Member States in their efforts. Nevertheless, the UCPM is complemented by other European instruments and mechanisms inside the Commission, in other EU institutions and outside the EU framework.

Other instruments within the European Commission

Certain **humanitarian and development aid mechanisms** have civil protection characteristics, but in normal times are usually deployed outside the EU. Since the migration crisis, humanitarian assistance capabilities can be used within Europe in exceptional cases. For example, [EU Aid volunteers](#) are volunteer EU citizens who provide practical support to humanitarian aid projects in order to strengthen local capacity and resilience in disaster-affected communities.

The [European Union Solidarity Fund](#) (EUSF) was set up to respond to major natural disasters and express European solidarity with disaster-stricken regions within Europe by covering part of their public expenditure on emergency response measures. The Fund was created as a reaction to the severe floods in central Europe in the summer of 2002. Since then, it has been used in 80 disasters covering a range of different catastrophic events including floods, forest fires, earthquakes, storms and drought. To date, 24 European countries have been supported with expenditure of over €5 billion. In response to the coronavirus outbreak and the urgent need to tackle the associated public health crisis, the scope of the EUSF has recently been [extended](#) to cover major public health emergencies.

The Commission's internal crisis response usually includes the **Crisis Coordination Committee**, which is composed of Directors-General in the affected sectors. They take crisis decisions on behalf of the Commission under the direction of the President. During the coronavirus crisis, this was complemented with a coordinating response team at Commissioner level. The Commission uses its ARGUS general rapid alert system for crisis coordination.

Crisis management arrangements of other EU institutions

The [Integrated Political Crisis Response](#) (IPCR) is the Council's mechanism to ensure coordinated responses to major crises at the highest political level. It calls informal meetings on crises, at expert and political level, can ask the European Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS) for analytical reports, offers a crisis web platform for the exchange of information, and provides an IPCR contact point inside the ERCC. It complements the UCPM by giving it political guidance with all key players in the room. On the other hand, the UCPM process is quite straightforward and effective, so the benefit of this IPCR oversight is not clear. There does not seem to be a clear division of labour in place between the two mechanisms.

The **EEAS Crisis Response System** is a crisis management mechanism preparing operational protocols for certain threats. One example is the EU operational protocol for countering hybrid threats. These protocols are also shared and trained to a certain extent with other security institutions. These protocols involve staff-to-staff cooperation involving all relevant EU institutions. The Parliament is not included.

Civil protection outside the EU framework

The **Euro-Atlantic Disaster Relief Coordination Centre** ([EADRCC](#)) is NATO's principal civil emergency response mechanism in the Euro-Atlantic area. It involves all NATO Allies and partner countries and functions as a clearing-house system for coordinating both requests and offers of assistance, mainly in cases of natural and man-made disasters.

The **United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination** ([UNDAC](#)) is part of the international emergency response system for sudden-onset emergencies. UNDAC was created in 1993. It is designed to help the United Nations and governments of disaster-affected countries during the first phase of a sudden-onset emergency. UNDAC also assists in the coordination of incoming international relief at national level and/or at the site of the emergency. UNDAC teams can deploy at short notice (12-48 hours) anywhere in the world. They are provided free of charge to the disaster-affected country and deployed upon the request of the United Nations Resident or Humanitarian Coordinator, and/or the affected government.

Recurring and exceptional disasters

In financial terms, the most costly recurring [disasters in Europe](#) (also called **extensive risk**, or low-severity, high-frequency events) between 1980 and 2008 were, in decreasing order, droughts, earthquakes, floods, storms, wildfires, and extreme temperatures. Earthquakes and floods top the highest economic costs for single events. Earthquakes and high temperatures have been responsible for the vast majority of deaths.

These standard statistics fail to incorporate low-possibility, high-impact, or **intensive disasters** that affect whole regions, kill many people at once, and/or have severe economic consequences. According to the 2013 United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction [Report](#), global examples besides the current pandemic include earthquakes, tsunamis, large volcanic eruptions, flooding in large river basins, or tropical cyclones. These disasters are even deadlier now due to rising (and more vulnerable) populations, increased urbanisation, and more people living in major hazard areas (such as on the coast in relation to tsunamis). In addition, there are global disasters that only happen very rarely but pose existential risks, such as major meteoric impacts.

According to the [PreventionWeb](#) knowledge platform for disaster risk reduction, 'although the impact of intense (or large) events can be severe and losses high, increasing evidence suggests that the accumulated losses from small and recurrent events are significant'. The coronavirus crisis will again put this common wisdom under scrutiny. As David Alexander⁴ noted after the 9/11 crisis:

During the previous year, some commentators had suggested that too much emphasis was being given to 'routine' emergencies – the usual flood, the common air crash – at the expense of developing believable scenarios for events with very profound consequences but very low probability of occurrence (Waugh, 2000, p. 158). In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks it is suddenly fashionable to contemplate the worst-case scenarios, though no one can yet say whether this is being done systematically and rationally enough to produce usable scenarios.

Since 2001, advances in strategic foresight and planning are sketching a more precise picture of such events, but fixing this difficult problem will be one of the most important tasks for the EU in the coming months.

The changing face of emergencies

Two 'megatrends' are rapidly altering the work of civil protection: climate change and disruptive technologies.

First, **climate change**, together with population growth and rising urbanisation, is worsening most of the 'usual' disasters, such as floods, fires, droughts or epidemics. Due to climate change, structures might already be less resilient when these disasters hit. It is also projected to increase both the likelihood of natural disasters, their magnitude, and their location, as new regions might be affected. Finally, it will increase the consequential effects of these disasters, through increased migration, famine, and political instability. Climate change might also initiate **new forms of emergency**, such as health crises due to unknown pathogens with no existing immunities escaping from the melting permafrost. The loss of land due to rising seawater and desertification are slow processes, but combined with other forces they can lead to rapidly evolving food shortages or instability, for example when ecosystems collapse. Extreme heatwaves hitting urban centres that are not designed to cope can be dangerous. The extensive loss of species could have rapid consequences when, for example, the food chain is affected.

One example for such changes affecting Europe is the trend towards forest fire outbreaks in central and northern Europe, which could change both the operational needs and the future political frame of the UCPM. Fighting **forest fires** has already been the UCPM's main task in recent years, but mainly with southern countries helping each other, with some aid from their northern counterparts. It is unclear at this point how far these changes will affect capabilities and politics.

Digitalisation and other **disruptive technologies**, for example shale gas extraction or new forms of high-speed transport, have a similar effect. They can make 'normal' emergencies worse, for example complicating the resetting of critical systems, such as digitally controlled electricity grid outages after disasters. They could also trigger new emergencies when, for example, a misguided hack wipes out much of the healthcare or banking data of a country, or disables critical infrastructure. On the other hand, disruptive technologies such as 3D printing, drones, artificial intelligence, the internet of things and geospatial and satellite imagery are also improving disaster risk management and resilience, according to the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery ([GFDRR](#)). Climate change and disruptive technologies converge in crisis prevention, where tools such as new irrigation systems, advanced weather forecasting, and more-resilient crop varieties [spread](#) around the world, improving adaptation and resilience.

Potential initiatives

	Initiative	Likely lead actor	What should be done?	
1	Streamline emergency aid	EU, G20, UN	<p>Internal meetings and international stakeholder conferences should clarify the many parallel structures in civil protection, crisis management, humanitarian aid and health policy.</p> <p>It should also clarify the relationship between civil protection and security, especially in crisis management during disasters, both for internal and external missions. Terrorism seems to be a border issue where proper civil protection includes the use of sensitive information. A clearer limitation of civil protection tasks vis-à-vis security management is perhaps needed. Also, civil protection and crisis management need to find new synergies, for example in information and intelligence exchange. Future disaster scenarios need to be included in this new division of labour. It also requires research on how civil protection aligns with international norms such the protection of civilians and the responsibility to protect.</p>	
2	Reassess civil protection decision making	all	<p>UCPM countries should re-order civil protection according to strength and weaknesses instead of present competencies, both as it relates to the EU institutions and the Union, national and local levels. They should assess who can best coordinate the available capabilities, collect and share information; develop strategic foresight, risk analysis and war-gaming; carry out capability planning and acquisition, set up capacities and keep them operational, provide training, gain specialised and practical knowledge and capabilities, observe, interpret and forward weak signals and indicators for possible early warning.</p> <p>The coronavirus crisis highlights that civil protection only works properly if all stakeholders are at the table and there is one single platform where coordination and decision-making takes place. This platform should offset strengths and weaknesses of institutions, and, above all, be able to make good decisions effectively and speedily. The institutional 'docking' matters less; the Commission, Council, or even some non-EU related international 'Schengen' framework could lead.</p>	

			<p>Internationally, the EU should aim for professionalisation and centralisation of civil protection on a global level, either ad hoc or via the UN, the G7 or G20. This could even be a forceful diplomatic tool to foster multilateralism. A recent Atlantic Council scenario report even featured a blueprint for a global agency on disease, conflict, and climate, which acts as a global emergency hub and has certain rights to penalise failures to meet prevention goals.</p>	
3	Civil Protection Headline Goals	Member States, European Commission	<p>Civil protection needs a more specific vision of where it wants to be in a decade in terms of capacity. To achieve this, stakeholders should draw up civil protection 'headline' goals, specifying what capacities will be provided by member and participating states, and which capacities the EU would like or needs to acquire in the next decade.</p>	
4	Improve cooperation with business and civil society actors	European Commission, Member States	<p>The private sector has, in certain fields, become the indispensable source of equipment and the more knowledgeable actor. Some NGOs equally have become highly specialised in disaster response.</p> <p>One goal would be to secure their functioning during crises by designating them as critical and ensuring they do not move their industrial production and structures outside the Union, by building up long-term private-public partnerships, providing funding for reserve production capacities, stocks and research, and providing easily useable funds for in-crisis innovation.</p> <p>Similarly, certain products do not achieve high enough demand in the open market to warrant research and production. These items could be medical instruments or civil protection assets such as firefighting planes. Here the EU needs to provide structures and long-term funding to build up and sustain a monopsony market.</p> <p>Options to include their expertise could consist of a volunteer experts' capacity, comparable to an active reserve component, a voluntary service comparable to the EU aid volunteers, and/or a consulting framework.</p>	
5	Prepare Treaty change proposals	European Parliament	<p>Proposals for the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe could include extended scrutiny and oversight by Parliament, a clearer decision on the role of the European Emergency Response Coordinator, clearer internal and external cooperation and a possible executive capacity for the EU that mirrors that of Frontex.</p>	
6	Revise Article 222	European Union	<p>There is argument both for and against including the coronavirus pandemic in Article 222, the solidarity clause. Listing emergencies would allow hesitant Member States to argue what should or should not be included and therefore does not warrant preparation or solidarity. On the other hand, health or other emergencies could make it necessary to include certain emergency provisions that could be mentioned in the Treaties.</p>	
7	Harmonise and monitor national capacity	Member States, European Commission	<p>The widely differing levels of national capacity could be harmonised to ensure equality of access to civil protection for all EU citizens. This could be done by</p>	

			<p>ensuring the same level of protection for all EU citizens or providing minimal standards.</p> <p>The adherence of Member State capacities to national, EU and international standards would need to be monitored, including through regular large-scale international exercises.</p>	
8	Make civil protection political and strategic	??	<p>In general, the EU's approach to civil protection seems technical and tactical, while it can be argued that it is inherently political and strategic. As the coronavirus crisis has shown – in common with previous such events – bigger crises must involve political intervention and strategic action/messaging. Possible remedies would be the creation of stronger links between the UCPM and the European Parliament and with high-level decision-makers in the Commission, Member States and Council.</p>	
9	Improve strategic planning, foresight, modelling and war-gaming, integrate them into the capacity-building process, with regular updates	European Commission, Member States	<p>It appears UCPM institutions were limited in their planning and anticipation of low probability/high impact events and that politicians and civil servants were each waiting for the other to lead the way. Political actors seemed genuinely surprised at the nature and scale of a pandemic, but it is a fact that health and policy planning experts warned about this event for many years.</p> <p>Experts did not reach politicians or convince them of the importance and significant benefits that arise from effective preparation. Therefore the UCPM needs to make stronger efforts to integrate strategic planning, foresight, modelling and war-gaming/simulation capabilities. One improvement in the ERCC could be a crisis foresight and simulation unit, imagining what a crisis could look like and war-gaming scenarios with experts and decision-makers.</p> <p>Finally, these foresight exercises should be integrated with capacity building, resilience measures and mandatory review processes by Member States and EU institutions, both for exceptional and recurring emergencies. Both the foresight exercises and the planning work done on that basis need to be updated on a regular basis.</p>	
10	Create special climate change and cyber capabilities	Member States, European Commission	<p>Climate change and digitalisation can cause or worsen emergencies. There might be a need for specialised civil protection units and capabilities for such emergencies.</p>	
11	Create an EPCC Cyber Unit	European Commission	<p>The EPCC should build up a dedicated cyber unit to assist mission planning and execution through data analysis, and to secure communication and control.</p>	
12	Differentiate between repeated and exceptional emergencies	European Commission	<p>There is a tension between global, exceptional crises and a broad spectrum of recurring emergencies, such as forest fires and floods, cybercrimes, accidents, and influenza epidemics. This should be better acknowledged, to allow for different sets of procedures and rights. The Commission already does this, when it talks of RescEU capabilities only being used in situations where the affected state is overwhelmed and no other</p>	

			state is able to help, but this could be formalised and made more precise.	
13	Provide different options for capability acquisition and maintenance	European Commission, Member States	Assets for both recurring and exceptional crises may need very different forms of acquisition. Member States should provide the Commission with different options, such as leasing, outsourcing, direct and indirect acquisition of the capabilities and their maintenance and staffing. The leasing and outsourcing of capabilities, for example, limits their availability in crises. Privatising logistical or repair services might mean that, in times of need, key personnel is unavailable, as working on other contracts for a higher bidder. Direct purchase would make capabilities more available, but also more expensive. These issues should be duly thought through when preparing to buy EU capabilities. One key partner here could be EU armed services, who have specialised knowledge and could also assist with more complicated procurement procedures (e.g. the European Defence Agency).	
14	Improve joint procurement, certification and emergency quality exceptions	European Commission, Member States	In addition, joint procurement needs to improve. According to <i>Politico</i> , in the Covid-19 crisis, it took weeks for countries to inform the Commission how much protective gear they needed before it could launch its first tender. Mask quality also fell short of the required standard. Finally, there is no straightforward certification regime . One way to improve this situation would be to establish a procurement agency that negotiates and buys healthcare and civil protection capabilities for the Union as a whole (or two separate agencies). This would be a large, but probably hugely cost-saving measure. Another possibility is a health and civil protection equipment certification process for the Union based on national authorities. This needs to work fast in emergencies and therefore needs sufficient (human) resources. Finally, for innovative products to quickly come into use during times of crises, exceptions of liability are needed for firms that provide innovative solutions.	
15	Set readiness targets and dates	European Parliament, European Commission, Member States	A new Civil Protection Directive should allow Member States to instruct the Commission to set dates for partial and full operational readiness of old and new capabilities and units, to provide guidelines on reaching targets in terms of operational and structural parameters, and have neutral mechanisms in place to verify them.	
16	Improve link with EU agencies	European Commission, European Council, European Parliament	The link between the UCPM and agencies such as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control , the European Medical Agency, the Satellite Centre, and the European Union Institute for Security Studies should be strengthened. The Commission and Council have both started this processes, but the European Parliament should monitor their follow-up.	
17	Reinvent and rebrand civil protection	European Union	Civil protection should possibly be reinvented and rebranded . Is civil protection a capability provided by one specialised institution, such as the <i>Technische Hilfswerk</i> (THW), or one community, or should it be	

			considered a task to be undertaken by all actors present during an emergency? Should it therefore also be rebranded along the lines of an activity, of an institution (such as Frontex), or a movement or network? The European Parliament should put forward a corporate identity, and especially decide where to use the very catchy RescEU label .	
18	Counter disinformation in civil protection missions	European Commission, Member States	UCPM participants should also take note and incorporate in their procedures that their missions are seen in other places as part of a global conflict of narratives between democracies and authoritarian challengers. The extensive propaganda efforts, hybrid operations and disinformation campaigns carried out by China and Russia during the coronavirus crisis (especially in Serbia), should be considered in mission planning and execution, particularly as to how to best verify the work carried out and to prevent the misuse of video footage, sensitive information and assets.	
19	Incorporate other policy areas	European Commission	To deal with many of the most dangerous and most complex issues civil protection can face, UCPM structures need to have institutional links and cooperation with other policy areas , such as climate change (e.g. forest fires, flood protection), healthcare (new forms of illnesses due to climate change and pandemics), foreign policy (civil protection as political instrument), security (critical infrastructure), international law (cultural heritage, bio weapons , rights and protection of civil protection units).	
20	Coordinate with EU4health programme	European Commission	Strengthen and clarify the coordination between EU4health and UCPM. Ensure the inclusion of civil protection organisations' and experts' views in EU4health policy, such as possible new capabilities to research dangerous pathogens, or the certification of medical equipment. If necessary, provide the means to commandeer research and capacities from companies for civil protection purposes.	
21	Ensure mobility of units and assets	European Commission	The UCPM should ensure that units and assets, including those in high demand, are able to travel within the EU and participating countries, even after borders are closed to the public. In addition, host nations should ensure they prepare infrastructure that is capable of hosting and maintaining assets such as planes or helicopters.	

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ D. Alexander, 'From civil defence to civil protection – and back again', *Disaster Prevention and Management*, 2002, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 209-213.
- ² Definition boundaries to civil protection are blurry, however, as terror attacks are included in Art. 222, and specialised military units and other security forces do take part in civil protection missions, just not in a public order and crisis management function. **Crisis management** is the stabilising of conflicts or disorder through military and civilian means and capabilities. In contrast to this, EU civil protection and humanitarian assistance is seen as **crisis response**, balancing cooperation with security providers with neutrality on the ground. Many other similar concepts are in wide use. The internationally often used **disaster risk management** focuses on the whole cycle of crisis prevention, mitigation, preparation and response. Other concepts include emergency evacuation and recovery; crisis or emergency management and emergency preparedness (civil protection in the United States of America); contingency planning; civil aid.
- ³ C. F. Parker, T. Persson, S. Widmalm, The effectiveness of national and EU-level civil protection systems: evidence from 17 member states, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2019, 26(9), 1312-1334.
- ⁴ D. Alexander, 'From civil defence to civil protection – and back again', *Disaster Prevention and Management*, 2002, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 209-213.

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<http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)

