

## CONTENT

The Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) was established in 2001 to improve the EU response to natural and man-made disasters inside and outside Europe. In the area of civil protection, the main responsibility for protecting citizens and the environment lies on the Member States while the EU coordinates, supports and complements national actions related to risk prevention, preparedness for, and response to disasters. The Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) acts as crisis operational and coordination platform and monitors emergencies 24/7.

The UCPM is governed by Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, which was amended by Decision (EU) 2019/420 of 13 March 2019 with the aim to:

- strengthen the Union response capacities by creating a common European reserve of resources, called rescEU
  - further develop the mutual assistance consisting of pre-committed national capacities, offered by the participating countries under the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP), by setting up higher or new EU co-financing
- improve the prevention and preparedness supporting Member States to enhance their disaster risk management
- create a Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network

The first rescEU fleet established under the reinforced UCPM was set up in 2019 to fight wildfires in Europe. However, the Union Mechanism still relied mainly on Member States' resources. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the limits of this approach in case of large-scale emergencies with transboundary effects and the need for better preparedness and collective urgent response.

To reinforce the UCPM and the crisis management system within the Union, the Commission tabled on 2 June 2020 a new proposal amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU. It replaces the previous from 7 March 2019, amended by the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on 5 March 2020.

- The new proposal enables the Commission to procure directly rescEU capacities. Pre-positioned in logistical hubs, they could be used for national purposes when not needed for operations under the UCPM.
  - To improve planning in prevention and preparedness at EU level, the proposal reinforces cross-sectoral and all-hazard approaches to transboundary disaster risk management, based on 'disaster resilience goals' and planning elements at Union level.
- The ERCC's role would be strengthened by enhanced coordination with Member States' crisis systems and civil protection

authorities.

- To respond flexibly to crisis, the Commission proposes again to delete Annex I, which sets up relative percentages for the distribution of the overall financial envelope among the three UCPM pillars: prevention, preparedness and response. Annual and multi-annual work programmes would indicate the planned allocations.

The new proposal aims to enable the implementation of recovery and resilience measures under the UCPM through financing from the EU Recovery Instrument, Next Generation EU (NGEU). Therefore, €1 268 282 000 would derive from the appropriate MFF heading and €2 187 620 000 would be available through the NGEU.

The total budget allocated to the UCPM would amount to €3 455 902 000 in current prices.

The ENVI committee has reappointed Nikos Androulakis (S&D, Greece) as rapporteur.

On 16 September 2020, the Parliament adopted its position on the reinforced UCPM/rescEU.

- The EP wants the Commission to establish European reserves of medical countermeasures and equipment, to be able to purchase the equipment itself, and to keep the ownership and full control of the capacities it procures, even when they are distributed to the Member States. rescEU equipment have to be strategically pre-positioned inside the Union. Member States should ensure the visibility of the UCPM when they are using rescEU capacities for national purposes. Specific provisions should be put in place to guarantee and control the use and visibility in third countries.

- MEPs reinstate the Annex I and the Commission would update the percentages by delegated acts.
- Significantly larger amount of the funding should be channelled into preparedness that would benefit up to 80% from the financial envelope.
- The Commission has to specify by delegated act the areas where indirect management will be used as a method of budgetary execution.
- The EP clarifies the meaning of the EU's disaster resilience goals as objectives set out to support prevention and preparedness actions that improve the capacity to face disasters with transboundary effects. These goals should be integrated into the Member States risk management plans.
- Regarding the capacities dedicated to medical emergencies, the need of synergies between the UCPM and the EU4Health Programme is pointed out. The creation of specific European Health Response Mechanism is also envisaged.

The Parliament emphasizes the amount of €2 187 620 000 available through the EU Recovery Instrument.

On 30 November, the Council agreed its final negotiating mandate. It foresaw a budget of €1 263 000 000 under MFF 2021-2027 and up to €2 056 000 000 through the EU Recovery Instrument, and maintained the deletion of Annex I.

On 8 February 2021, the co-legislators reached a provisional agreement, resulting from inter-institutional negotiations. The new

Regulation was adopted by the Parliament and the Council.

The new rules confirm the foreseen budget in the Council mandate, define transport and logistical resources as rescEU capacities (as a lesson learnt from the COVID pandemic), allow the Commission to directly procure certain additional rescEU capacities in cases of urgency, and enhance disaster prevention and preparedness. Parliament ensured that sufficient financial resources were allocated to the three pillars of the mechanism under Annex I, reserving funds to be spent on prevention.

The final act was signed on 20 May 2021. The Regulation amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU was published in the EU Official Journal of 26 May. It applies retroactively from 1 January 2021.

### References:

- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/836 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism](#), OJ L 185, 26.5.2021
- EP Legislative Observatory, [Procedure file on Union Civil Protection Mechanism](#), 2020/0097(COD)
- Council of the EU, [Civil protection: Council adopts new rules to strengthen disaster response](#), press release, 10 May 2021; [voting results](#)
- European Parliament, [European Parliament legislative resolution of 27 April 2021 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism \(COM\(2020\)0220 – C9-0160/2020 – 2020/0097\(COD\)\)](#), 27 April 2021
- European Economic and Social Committee, [Opinion, Union Civil Protection Mechanism](#), NAT/798-EESC-2020
- European Committee of the Regions, [Opinion, A reinforced Union civil protection mechanism](#), CDR 3164/2020
- [Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism](#)(consolidated version)

### Further reading:

- Court of Auditors, [Opinion No 9/2020 accompanying the Commission's proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism \(COM\(2020\) 220 final\)](#), OJEU, 2020/C 385/01
- European Parliament, [Resolution of 17 April 2020 on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences](#), 2020/2616(RSP)
- European Council, [Conclusions of 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 July 2020](#), EUCO 10/20

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