German Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Output Paper

Drawing Lessons from Covid-19 for the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network - Recommendations & Results

from the workshop of the German Presidency in the area of civil protection

I Background

The spread of SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) continues to challenge Europe and the global community as a whole. Over the past months the German Council Presidency in the field of civil protection has conducted a series of virtual activities to facilitate a process of drawing first lessons learnt from Covid-19 pandemic and developing recommendations for the future shaping of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network (the Knowledge Network):

- shedding light on the identification and prioritisation of critical infrastructures affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and assessing the role and needs of civil protection authorities in support of those critical infrastructures (online survey 1 - August 2020);
- identifying potential for adjustments of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (the Mechanism) with a particular focus on the Knowledge Network (online survey 2 - September 2020);
- analysing and presenting the survey results as guidance and inspiration for the virtual German Presidency Workshop (input paper - November 2020);

While the proposal on the structure and governance of the Knowledge Network proposed by the European Commission will be discussed in the recently established Preparatory Working Group, the Presidency Workshop placed its emphasis on functions and benefits of the Knowledge Network from the perspective of EU Member States and UCPM Participating States, assessing how it could serve their needs as a central element of the Mechanism, building on their experiences made under Covid-19.

The goal of the German Presidency was to start filling the idea of the Knowledge Network with life, to help unfold its potential and to contribute to its future development, complementing the extensive work already put forward by the European Commission.

The output paper summarises the main results and recommendations derived from this process.
II Recommendations & Results

A processing unit linking existing knowledge

The Knowledge Network can serve as a dedicated entity within the Mechanism where knowledge is processed systematically.

- As a processing unit within the Mechanism, the Knowledge Network should go beyond collecting data and information but add value by turning it into knowledge. It should aggregate, analyse and enhance knowledge and provide well-structured processes serving the needs of its users.
- The Knowledge Network should aid long-term institutional learning, particularly bringing together national perspectives in a European context.
- The Knowledge Network can “connect the dots” by ensuring a systematic exchange of information between all areas of activity under the Mechanism.
- The Knowledge Network should serve as a supporting instrument, combining prevention, preparedness and lessons learnt, thereby strengthening an efficient operational response.

The Knowledge Network can contribute to transparent and evidence-based decision making

- The Knowledge Network should support the scenario-based identification of areas where specific or special expertise is available and has added value.
- The Knowledge Network could contribute to jointly developing framework scenarios at European level which can serve as a point of reference for national risk management planning, giving a common European perspective.

An integrating force following an all-hazard approach

The Knowledge Network can foster innovative and integrated approaches to risk and crisis management

- The Knowledge Network should foster a culture of multi-hazard and multi-disciplinary approaches, integrating public and private expertise (e.g. Critical Infrastructure services experts).
- The Knowledge Network should serve as testing area for new ideas, workflows, methods as well as good practices and for continuously challenging and evaluating the ongoing work under the Mechanism.
- The Knowledge Network should connect the Mechanism to other relevant policy areas and aid cross-sectoral and cross-governmental cooperation by breaking silos of responsibilities.
The Knowledge Network can help deepen cooperation between science and civil protection

- The Knowledge Network should help make better use of science. It can facilitate interaction between science and the civil protection community. It should enhance the visibility and accessibility of scientific contributions and help to identify the specific needs of both scientific actors and practitioners/policy-makers.
- The Knowledge Network should draw on science to develop a flexible toolbox of strategies, methods and processes in risk and crisis management, targeting different groups and contexts.
- To support cross-sectoral risk management, the Knowledge Network should bring science closer to all areas of the Mechanism and support its translation into practice.
- The Knowledge Network should enable a rapid dissemination of proactive, forward-looking scientific findings.

The Knowledge Network can constitute an interface between national, regional and global knowledge.

- In light of the global nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Knowledge Network should be a connecting force between national, regional and global knowledge, maintaining close links to related international processes such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

A central hub with a living memory

The Knowledge Network can contribute to building mutual trust and understanding.

- Trust is crucial for effective risk and crisis management. The Knowledge Network should enhance trust by providing a hub for mutual understanding of processes, systems, stakeholders etc., as a prerequisite for efficient cooperation.

The Knowledge Network can make knowledge easily accessible in an intuitive way.

- The Knowledge Network should provide the infrastructure of a safe (digital) environment to access and share information amongst all users and facilitate mutual cooperation.
- The Knowledge Network should create an online hub centrally linking existing platforms and actors and making cross-sectoral knowledge more easily accessible as a “one-stop shop” (“hub and spoke system”).
- The Knowledge Network should serve as a central component/platform of a continuous, innovative and integrative training and exercises programme, taking stock of existing resources and capacities within its network.
- The Knowledge Network should “memorise” existing knowledge systematically and sustainably.
The Knowledge Network can provide new networking opportunities.

- The Knowledge Network should actively contribute to developing innovative, digital networking opportunities and community building tools in times where face-to-face interactions are not possible, bearing in mind that these cannot be fully substituted.
- The Knowledge Network should support the establishment and maintenance of a living network among the warehouses existing globally and stockpiles to aim for a more coherent logistical backbone of the mechanism.