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EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT
(EUR-OPA)

MEETING OF THE DIRECTORS OF SPECIALISED CENTERS

OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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30 NOVEMBER– 1 DECEMBER 2016

MEETING REPORT

*Document prepared by the Secretariat
of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement*

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The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming the participants (see appendix 1) and proposing to adopt the agenda (see appendix 2). As the projects supported in 2016 and 2017 will be the same, the Executive Secretariat suggested that 2016 results and 2017 expectations could actually be presented one after the other for each project to facilitate the discussion.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE EXECUTIVE

The Executive Secretary took the floor to inform the participants of the forthcoming changes in the Executive Secretariat. He informed that he will no longer be the Executive Secretary; he will take over the Department of culture, nature and heritage which includes the EUR-OPA Agreement. Consequently, from the 1st of January 2017, the new Executive Secretary will be Gianluca Silvestrini. He expressed his thanks for the good cooperation with the Centres and pointed out that his experience in the Agreement will allow him to introduce risk issues in other domains under his competency. He also announced that his deputy, Francesc Pla, will be appointed to another position within the Council of Europe as from the 1st of January 2017 and he thanked him for his excellent job over his eleven years tenure.

The new Executive Secretary, Gianluca Silvestrini, introduced himself by pointing out his work in the sector of cultural heritage for the last 10 years, in particular developing joint projects with the EU in the field, as well as his past work in the environment and sustainable development sector of the Council of Europe. The Deputy Executive Secretary, Francesc Pla, also wished to thank all the participants for the almost 12 years of good cooperation with the Centres in setting up coordinated projects among them.

DISCUSSION OF 2016 ACHIEVEMENTS AND 2017 EXPECTED RESULTS

The Executive Secretary recalled the main aspects of the new Medium Term Plan (MTP) who has been used to select the 2016-17 supported projects. The advancement of these projects was presented by their coordinators according to that new MTP structure.

I.1 Technical and scientific information for decision makers

The Athens Centre informed that within the project "Pre-Earthquake assessment of monuments, comparison of empirical and analytical methodologies", two leaflets on two types of monuments (among the 10 categories identified in the previous project on that topic) were prepared in 2016. In 2017, the planned work is to launch questionnaires to collect information on that two types of monuments.

The La Valletta Centre presented the advancement of the project "Developing Geomorphological mapping skills and datasets in anticipation of subsequent susceptibility, vulnerability, hazard and risk mapping". Focusing on susceptibility maps in the past, the need to work previously on geomorphological mapping has emerged and consequently a first training course on geomorphological mapping was organized while field surveys were done. In 2017, it is planned to carry on field surveys and an early stage of mapping, field maps being worked out during next year. The goal is to move from susceptibility maps to vulnerability maps. Following questions on the target of the course organized, the La Valletta Centre clarified that it tried to vulgarize the information to motivate participation but it will

consider more technical course in the future. Even if the course was not intended for school student, the course material may be used for such simpler work. The project did not consider the automatic follow-up of landslides for specific infrastructures, suggested by the Moscow Centre, and confirmed that symbols used follow the Italian principles and European codes.

The Tbilisi Centre, which celebrated its 20th anniversary, presented its work on the project “Development of cost-effective ground based and remote monitoring and early warning system for detecting debris flow/landslide initiation” to survey long and short term precursors: movement is related to precipitation. Consequently, they have developed soil humidity sensor and mechanical motion sensors, not costly and very effective: for a good monitoring of landslides, a network of such sensors is needed. Concerning the triggering impact, it developed a methodology that requires moving from stationary to time-dependent maps and consequently it was needed to use fuzzy logic to define that map for Georgia. Its work on high dams, and particularly Enguri dam monitoring, was also recalled. The Moscow Centre pointed out that automatic follow-up of events is crucial and risk maps are important but entropic aspects are essential as they introduce pressure to landslides. Consequently, emergency issues for economic activity must be implemented: system has to send information widely and the material has to be protected from human destruction. To be effective, information send to another system to be reused may need a system to translate these data and wish to use solar captors its viability is ensured by putting the tools in the ground 1m below.

The Walferdange centre remarked that the project “Contribution to the understanding of volcano-tectonic seismic activity on the example of the Virunga volcanic province” has allowed learning a lot about volcanic zones from the study developed in Congo DR. The region of Virunga has two major volcanoes that threaten the city of Goma of about 1 million inhabitants and consequently the network of volcano monitoring system KivuSNet has to be developed: a seismic station was installed in 2016. In spite of many issues to overcome, some interesting results have been obtained so far: existing USGS data have been enriched and rapid changes between two volcanoes were identified, allowing better understanding of volcanic interaction. To the question on the contacts with European countries to export such experience, the Centre replied that Italy has very different monitoring tools but can exchange information on scientific data.

1.2 Reinforced cooperation between decision-makers

The Freiburg Centre organized through its Regional Fire Monitoring Centre for SEE and the Caucasus (set in 2010 in Skopje) several initiatives within its project “Enhancing the national interagency and international cross-boundary dialogue and inter-operability in fire management in Southeast Europe and Eastern Europe”. A national round table was organized in Skopje with 27 participants from various stakeholders (government, NGOs, etc.), leading to the setting up of committee and the re-examination of actual legislation. A larger regional Consultation included several Balkan countries and a book was prepared for the participants with national reports and a regional report. The main recommendations of that regional meeting were:

- Sharing of expertise on cross-boundary cooperation: training on regional approach

- Annual preparedness meetings and exercises
- Early warning of wildfires
- Role of voluntary initiatives

A similar regional meeting is planned in 2017 in Kiev. The Executive Secretary a.i. recalled that the new Executive Secretary, Gianluca Silvestrini, will also cover the environment sector: synergies can be searched between the two sectors on impact on flora and fauna of forest fires. Responding to the Yerevan centre question on action in schools to promote prevention aspect, guidelines for population in order to act immediately have already been prepared.

The Moscow centre justified its project “Plan of actions for decision-takers for prevention and response of emergency situations of natural and man-made character” by the need to have good plans to eliminate consequences and apply them correctly. Having participated as expert in several court trials on responsibility, it appeared that action plans have fulfilled the pertinent legislation and thus elaborating and accepting adequate action plans at different levels seems a crucial point. The Centre will like to have information from other centres to improve the document prepared with the structure of such emergency plans: it has prepared a questionnaire in 12 points to collect that information. In 2017, the Centre wishes to prepare standard plans of prevention and elimination at directorate level as it is also important for managers in terms of responsibility. To the question on the need of specific plans for certain categories, the Moscow centre considers it not pertinent as they have focused on the manager’s aspect but includes also the information of population. The Executive Secretary a.i. remarked that, due to increased travels of people, they need to be informed on all risks, even if they are not directly confronted to it.

II.1 Awareness-raising as a prerequisite

The two Athens Centres recalled the activities developed within their common project “Basic principles of building Aseismic Code, evacuation planning of critical infrastructures in case of an earthquake or a fire”. The goal is to produce a textbook on evacuation of disabled people that has considered the possible technical solutions for disabled people. Based on existing experiences in USA and Australia and on the EUR-OPA toolkit, a personal emergency evacuation plan for disabled people was prepared and two case scenarios were developed in 2016. In 2017, the evacuation planning in critical infrastructures will be studied and used in a case study in a hospital. To the question on the difference between fire and earthquake events, they remarked that that fire is often a side effect of earthquakes. Following the Azeri question on the training for rescuers, a Swedish handbook for the rescuers already exists.

The San Marino Centre remarked that the excessive rigidity of health systems to deal with the migrants’ specificities justifies its project “Immediate migrants resource and tool” that provides a simple communication system (word free) to better cope with health problems specific to migrants. Presented in several meetings, the brochure is ready and will be distributed within EUR-OPA and centres in a first step while the associated webpage will be www.migrantaid.eu . In 2017, it is planned to launch a smartphone application and has to solve the problem of informing migrants of the existence of that tool, a task where the Greek and Turkish centres can collaborate. To respond to the questions on the cost of

consultation, it was pointed out that the application will be of little size to reduce connexion costs.

The Nicosia Centre recalled the history of the project “Besafenet. Protect Yourself from Hazards” and the actual content of the website: 12 predefined questions with answers that are available in 5 languages. The San Marino Centre asked on the ways to increase more its visibility and suggested to improve the search keywords associated to the website. The Kiev Centre remarked that any comment on its content will be appreciated to improve it and recommended its use in any kind of training.

As coordinator of the project “Preventive information and education for fighting against the effects of natural disasters”, the Chisinau Centre remarked that all stakeholders must be well prepared to minimize the effects of disasters. That aspect has recently been confirmed when a big fire implied many casualties as they didn’t know what to do in such case. The goal is thus to promote the capability of pupils to protect themselves through cooperation between them and the teachers must also be involved in that process. In 2017, textbooks will be prepared.

The Sofia Centre informed that within the project “The building of a culture of prevention and the important role of exercises in the school establishments together with the annual national campaigns ” it coordinates, the tasks developed in 2016 were to take stock of main trends in the domain identified during the previous year work on national strategies that allowed the already collected material. A questionnaire has been prepared and some responses have already been received. Extra-school programmes, such as exercises on disaster prevention or summer schools, have to be developed and to that end a group including all stakeholders to define them is proposed. In 2017, the questionnaire on the topic will also be sent to non-member states.

The Yerevan Centre explained the content of its project “Development of the methodology for teaching the course Basic knowledge on safe life activities basis for public school teachers” that wishes to stick to an universal approach by linking it to all other studies as it is difficult to have another specific training. Raising the problem of low quality of information on Internet, Children are actually present citizens and consequently need to have information on how to behave in situation of risk. In 2017, the training will be adapted to consider also adults and media information, implying it is included in a more general strategy.

II.2 People's involvement as a duty

The Ankara Centre recalled that 10% of the 2.7 million Syrians live in camps and consequently it was considered to launch a pilot project in one camp in Sanliurfa hosting 110000 refugees. Using the committees already existing in the camps, the goal is to reach the children so that they are aware of the potential risks. To do that, educational material adapted to camps was prepared and translated in Arabic in 2016 to be used in 2017 to train trainers among Syrians who live in camps.

The Kiev Centre recalled that its project “Greater involvement of citizens in the decision making process to protect against disasters - joint emergency planning” main goal is to foster people protection by making public acknowledgeable of the emergency plan in case of disaster. A very comprehensive structure (without any confidential information) has been developed and diffused to various stakeholders in order to collect their reactions to the proposed plan. Each country could adjust that general plan to its specificities and the business sector involvement must be considered as they are also affected in case of disasters: national platforms can cooperate in that task.

The Lisbon Centre informed that due to all logistic constraints, the main workshop planned in 2016 has been moved to 2017. Consequently, the 2016 activities for the project “Involving sales and tourism agents on earthquake and tsunami mitigation measures” had focused on a survey on the beaches and several sessions of information in Lagos and Cascais. The goal of the 2017 workshop is to test the acceptability of the document by professionals and consequently they plan to invite a Dominican Republic participant to explain the impact of such signalling in his country. To the Tbilissi Centre question on the delay before sending the information, it was confirmed that only 30 minutes in Algarve, leaving not enough for a full official alert, but the survey proved that many people were aware to go to upper parts.

The Bucharest centre informed that, even if no project was supported by the Agreement, it has developed contacts with several stakeholders, as for example with prisons which are in seismic prone zones. For 2017, it plans to organize training for 20 persons in order to move from very engineering approach to closer work with communities.

PREPARATION OF 2017 ACTIVITIES

Gianluca Silvestrini informed the participants that the next meeting of the Committee of Permanent will be held on 14th and 15th March in Monaco and consequently the Bureau will be held in February. In order to prepare the documents to be discussed at the Bureau, information from centres should be received in due time: before 15th December for the 2016 report and before the 31st December for revised 2017 activities. He also asked from each centre their respective calendars of major events plans to organize in 2017. Finally, he required that financial reports will be send to the Executive Secretariat as soon as possible and by the latest on 6th January.

DISCUSSION OF 2018-19 ACTIVITIES

The Executive Secretariat briefly recalled the main lines of action included in the new Medium Term Plan. He confirmed the four aspects already used for choosing the actual programmes for 2016-17 and stressed the need to make the 2018-19 work programme even more consistent with that new MTP.

A vivid discussion took place on the respective role of the Permanent Correspondents and the Specialized Centres in implementing the new Medium Term Plan. The Kiev centre highlighted that Permanent Correspondents represent countries and should define priorities

but may often lack the longer term view of proposed projects. All participants insisted in the wish to strengthen the link between expectations of Permanent Correspondents and capabilities of the centres. A consensus thus emerged on the promotion of the role of Permanent Correspondents in defining priorities and in turn they should also promote the diffusion of the Centres' studies. The concern on the frequent changes of institutional counterparts and the consequent continuity of the support to lines of actions was however evoked, emphasizing the longer term approach inherent to the centres' objectives.

The issue of a common language used by all stakeholders to better coordinate actions was also raised. The Moscow Centre remarked that various national norms exist so the coherence of emergency glossary between countries can be studied by preparing a catalogue of available means and signs for risky zones. The Kiev centre suggested using the glossary available in Besafenet website, resulting from previous work done by the Agreement, but the Executive Secretariat pointed out that other glossaries exists and focusing too much on terms may delay addressing more crucial issues. The Freiburg Centre also remarked that the terms used have to adapt to the public concerned. The La Valletta Centre agreed that collecting best practices will be very useful and suggested to re-introduce presentations of centres' activities during the Permanent Correspondents Meetings. The Kiev Centre emphasized that such discussion is in fact about the future of the Agreement

Gianluca Silvestrini recalled the importance of involving the three main structural components of the Agreement: the intergovernmental committee, the network of Specialized Centres and the external partners. The work is often done in parallel but must converge by promoting the dialogue with the Permanent Correspondents and diffuse the centres' work. To facilitate this convergence, he suggested requesting to the Specialised Centres their project proposals based on the priorities identified by the Permanent Correspondents for the Programme of Work 2018-2019. The added value of the EUR-OPA Agreement, compared to other organisations working on major hazards, should be emphasised, making the work also attractive to the Committee of Ministers and external partners, as well as finding an entry point for other interested countries. He also suggested exploring the link with other topics such as vulnerable groups, environment, climate change, cultural heritage, etc.

The Athens Centre supported the idea that policy has to be defined by Permanent Correspondents and then adapt the Centres' proposals accordingly. The Kiev Centre remarked that the goal is to identify a common interest for countries based on their particular interests, even if it may be difficult to convince national authorities of that. The Azeri representative confirmed that a close cooperation with centres is very important in particular for the choice of the projects' topics in order to ensure that they are used.

The Chair requested to receive from the Executive Secretary the topics supported by the Permanent Correspondents in order to identify specific projects and partners.

Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair

The present Chair, Paula Teves (director of the CERU, Lisbon), and vice-chair, Sergey Kachanov (director of the ECNTRM, Moscow) were re-elected for one additional year.

Date and place of the next meeting

Concerning the next meeting of the Directors of Specialized Centres, it was agreed to organize it in Paris on the 23 and 24 November 2017.

APPENDIX 1

AGENDA

1. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA

AP/CAT (2016) OJ 13: Draft Agenda

2. EVALUATION OF THE 2016 ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRES

- A new context: The Medium Term Plan 2016 – 2020
AP/CAT (2015) 12 rev: Medium Term Plan 2016-2020
- Discussion by new lines of action:
AP/CAT (2016) 11: Coordinated projects supported in 2016-17
 - A renewed role for authorities
 - Technical and scientific information for decision-makers
 - Reinforced cooperation between decision-makers
 - The need for greater population's action
 - Awareness-raising as a prerequisite
 - People's involvement as a duty
- General discussion on the actual outcomes

3. DISCUSSION OF THE PROJECTS FOR 2017

- Brief presentation by line of action:
AP/CAT (2016) 11: Coordinated projects supported in 2016-17
 - A renewed role for authorities
 - Technical and scientific information for decision-makers
 - Reinforced cooperation between decision-makers
 - The need for greater population's action
 - Awareness-raising as a prerequisite
 - People's involvement as a duty
- General discussion on the expected outcomes

4. PREPARING THE NEW PROGRAMME 2018 – 2019

AP/CAT (2015) 12 rev: Medium Term Plan 2016-2020

- Clarifying actual needs of member countries
- Identifying adequate resources within the network of centres

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6. ELECTION OF THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE MEETING OF THE DIRECTORS OF CENTRES

7. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING

APPENDIX 2

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