

Strasbourg, 21 April 2021

AP/CAT(2021)05

**EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT
MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT CORRESPONDENTS**

VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

12 April 2021 (9:00-17:00)

MEETING REPORT

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

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PARTICIPANTS:

Bureau members:

Nataša Holcinger (NH): Chair
Alessandro Balducci (AB): Vice-Chair
Mikaella Mala (MM): Vice-Chair
Ana Freitas (AF): previous Chair

Council of Europe (CoE) Secretariat:

Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons (MDP): Head of Landscape, Environment and Major Hazards Division
Krzysztof Zyman (KZ): EUR-OPA Executive Secretary
Catherine Emezie (CE): EUR-OPA Secretariat
Tania Braulio (TB): EUR-OPA Secretariat

1. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA

The agenda AP/CAT(2021)OJ01 was adopted with an amendment to the order of business, whereby points under Agenda Item 5 were addressed before points under Agenda Item 4.

2. STATEMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The Executive Secretary, Mr Krzysztof Zyman, gave an update on EUR-OPA' activities and recent developments. France is still in lockdown hence CoE staff are required to telework as a matter of necessity. The restrictions on international travel remain in place with only essential missions allowed. KZ touched upon the budgetary situation, the adoption of guidelines pertaining to vulnerable groups (migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and people with disabilities) and the 2021 Ministerial Conference. The details are elaborated under the specific agenda items.

KZ informed the Bureau that he had received an invitation to attend the Integrated Safety and Security Exhibition 2021 to be held on 12 – 15 May 2021 in Moscow. An invitation has also been extended to the Chair of the Committee. The Security Exhibition is a bi-annual multilateral which brings together representatives of many countries, as well as Russian agencies and local authorities. KZ and NH participation will depend on the sanitary situation and the international travel restrictions at the material time.

3. BUDGETARY SITUATION

KZ informed the Bureau about the financial situation of the Agreement. The 2020 accounts were now closed and the 2021 financial year was well underway. Contracting Grant Agreements for projects implemented in 2021 by the Specialised centres has proceeded at a sustained pace.

EUR-OPA is adjusting to the financial loss incurred as a result of Algeria's withdrawal (43,332K). The Agreement is proceeding with activities as normal and meeting its objectives. The lockdown reduces costs overall as most activities will be held online e.g., the Bureau meetings, the CPC meeting in June, the BeSafeNet Olympiad Award Ceremony.

4. PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES 2021

4.1 Statutory meetings

Report of the Joint Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents and Directors of Specialised Centres (3-4 November 2020) [AP/CAT\(2020\)06](#)

The Executive secretary recalled the main decisions taken at the last plenary meeting and discussed their follow up. The issues are as follows:

4.1.a Adoption of the Medium-Term Plan 2021-2025 [AP/CAT\(2020\)04rev](#)

The Bureau discussed finalisation of the Medium-Term Plan (MTP) and its method of adoption. Proposals received from Morocco and the Russian Federation had been integrated into the document. No further comments were received following the second round of consultations. The

MTP will be discussed and possibly adopted at the June CPC meeting with the view to being endorsed at the Ministerial Conference and referred to in the Ministerial Declaration.

4.1.b Adoption of the two recommendations presented at the Joint Meeting in November 2020

[Revised draft recommendation "enabling and protecting persons with disabilities during a viral or other pathogenic pandemic as well as another biological disaster"](#)

[Revised draft recommendation "Inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in preparing for and responding to biological disasters"](#)

The Bureau discussed the two above-referenced draft recommendations. KZ confirmed that comments had been received from the Permanent Correspondents and integrated in the drafts. Both texts are ready to be adopted by Ministers at the Ministerial Conference on 24 November 2021.

4.2. Revision of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents [AP/CAT\(2007\)32](#)

KZ presented a proposal from Secretariat to review the set-up of the Agreement. The Bureau engaged in a preliminary discussion on the need for revision of the CM Resolution establishing the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement and the Rules of Procedure of the CPC, following the Agreement's evolution in the decades since its establishment and in the light of the development of the normative framework within which it operates. KZ explained that the CM Resolution establishing the Agreement was adopted in 1987 while the current Rules of Procedure were drawn up in 2007. Changing membership, growing awareness of new challenges posed by natural, technological and biological hazards compounded by the evolution of the institutional, legal and administrative environment in which the Agreement operates all point to a need to review and update some of the procedures. The draft revised document has undergone a legal review at the Council of Europe and has been consulted within the Secretariat. The revisions also include the following draft proposals:

- Refocusing the Agreement on the Protection Against Major Natural, Technological and Biological Hazards and Strengthening Resilience in the face of Disasters, while taking into account relevant UN Sustained Development Goals, Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk reduction 2015-2030;
- Invitation to countries beyond Europe to join the Agreement;
- Clear conditions for according and withdrawing Observer status;
- Procedure for inclusion and exclusion from the network of Specialised Centres and updating of the list of specialised centres to reflect the reality of centres actively collaborating with the Agreement;
- Renewed emphasis on collaborative work, with centres in member countries coordinating the activities.

In the light of this, KZ proposed three documents:

- The draft version of the revised Rules of Procedure of the CPC of EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement [AP/CAT\(2021\)02](#).
 - a. The rules will be modifiable by the CPC;
 - b. The functioning of the CPC, its Bureau and the Secretariat is revised;
 - c. It contains a proposal to elect the Bureau for two years to be renewable once. The provision relating to the former chair will be maintained for the sake of the experience, continuity and smooth functioning of the Bureau;
 - d. The Secretariat's tasks and relationship with the Chair are defined;
 - e. It mentions the possibility of forming sub-groups and committees.
- The draft resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the CoE on the Revised Statute of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Protection Against Major Natural, Technological and Biological Hazards and Strengthening Resilience in the face of Disasters [AP/CAT\(2021\)03](#).
- The draft Revised Statute of the Enlarged Partial Agreement (EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement) [AP/CAT\(2021\)04](#) establishing clear rules on:
 - a. membership;
 - b. exclusive competencies reserved for decisions to be taken at the Ministerial Meeting;
 - c. functions of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents;

- d. functions of the Network of Specialised Scientific Centres;
- e. Agreement's budget.

The three documents will be discussed at the CPC meeting scheduled for 16 June 2021 and at the CPC meeting to be held the day before the Ministerial Conference (23/11). The CPC will be invited to consider these documents and give the greenlight to forward the documents to the CM. The CoE Committee of Ministers will decide what steps to take in due time.

AB regarded the changes proposed as being positive but insufficient to reinvigorate the Agreement. He opined that the Agreement would be substantially strengthened by accession of the Council of Europe member states from the western part of the continent. KZ emphasised the need for the Agreement to act fast to stem the tide of countries withdrawing and to seek to attract new members among all member and interested non-member states. NH stressed that the EU has several networks. However, the added value of EUR-OPA is to offer a different tool such as the collaboration between centres. Changing the rules and procedures was a step in the right direction. MDP thought it necessary to clarify the basis of the agreement. The rules of procedure should be clear and the CM would also be reminded of the Agreement's activities. The Agreement responds to concrete problems that countries face. The CoE is about human rights and bringing solutions to problems faced by the citizens. This item will be put on the agenda of the CPC in June.

4.3. Specialised Centres

CE informed the Bureau about projects financed through grants in 2021 [AP/CAT\(2021\)01](#). Only the coordinating centres' projects are listed in the document. Grants have been awarded to fund 11 projects to the tune of 135K euros. A couple more specialised centres will also receive grants. The 2021 projects are at continuation of the project phase which began in 2020.

4.4. Operational Activities

4.4.a BeSafeNet project: Olympiad on "How much do you know about disasters?"

MM informed the Bureau about the outcome of the 2021 BeSafeNet Olympiad. 138 teams participated, with Romania emerging 1st, Croatia 2nd and Romania 3rd. The teams were able to participate in the Olympiad, whilst adhering to the social distancing rules in place. The 2021 Olympiad Award Ceremony will be held online due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

CE and KZ updated the Bureau on the JP proposal on BeSafeNet highlighting the collaboration with the Framework for democratic competency. The proposal is now included in the CoE programme management tool and is awaiting validation by the Director General. The proposal has been forwarded to the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes which handles funding at the CoE.

4. EUR-OPA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE BACK-TO-BACK WITH THE EUROPEAN FORUM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (24-26 November 2021, Portugal)

4.1. European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction

The Bureau were updated on the organization of the EFDRR to be held in Matosinhos, Portugal. KZ continues to participate in the EFDRR working groups' meetings. It has been decided that the forum would last three days, with the opening ceremony taking place on the 2nd day. The main event will be held on 25/11 with thematic discussions also scheduled on 26/11. It is proposed to hold the EUR-OPA Ministerial Conference on 24/11.

AF informed the Bureau that the host country is aiming for a physical meeting with an opening ceremony on 25/11 gathering the UN special representatives, the European Commissioner and other high-level representatives. Themes highlight the complementarity between EUR-OPA's Ministerial Conference and the EFDRR with topics such as, Covid-19 and the inherent risks in Europe, Financing long-term resilience, Leaving no one behind, Technological disaster displacement, implementing the Sendai framework etc. The decision on the format for the EFDRR will have a spill over effect on the Ministerial conference. The Portuguese Authorities will confirm the format of the EFDRR in the next days. It was suggested that a virtual meeting could see higher participation. Experience shows that the ministers send their representatives; e.g., at the last EUR-OPA Ministerial Conference held in 2016 many States were not represented by ministers but rather by the Permanent Correspondents or high-ranking civil defence officials.

KZ will use the opportunity of his visit to Moscow to speak to as many ministers and key representatives in order to convince them to attend the Ministerial Conference.

4.2. EUR-OPA 2021 Ministerial Conference

The Bureau were invited to decide on the date and form of the forthcoming Ministerial Conference as well as its agenda, and the themes to be covered at the meeting. The date is confirmed for 24 November, from 15:00. The overall theme is *Building more inclusive societies through better preparedness for and response to disasters*. The CPC is expected to adopt the MTP, and the ministers will adopt the ministerial declaration making reference to the MTP. Should the Revised Statute of the Agreement be adopted by the Committee of Ministers in due time, the Agreement may require a new vision reflecting new priorities thus necessitating a revision of the MTP at that stage. The CPC will be asked to approach ministers to encourage them to intervene at the Ministerial meeting and to suggest other speakers who could make a contribution.

NH suggested a lighter agenda as there might not be sufficient time for detailed discussions and several speakers per session/hour; to perhaps focus on just one topic due to time constraints. AF and AB agreed with this proposal.

MDP added that if the meeting was to be held in a hybrid format, the ministers could be invited to send pre-recorded messages. AF clarified that decisions concerning organisational details should be left to the host country to ensure an orderly meeting.

<p>Decision: The title of the Ministerial Conference is confirmed. Points one and two will be combined to maximise the available time. This will be discussed at the next CPC meeting.</p>

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting of CPCs will be held on 16 June. Meeting documents will be sent four weeks in advance.

6. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

7. END OF MEETING