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European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)

82nd Joint Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents and Directors of Specialised Centres

21-22 November 2024
Paris

Meeting Report

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

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Thursday, 21 November 2024

WELCOME ADDRESS

Krzysztof Zyman, Executive Secretary of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) welcomed the participants to the 82nd Joint Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents (CPC) and the Directors of Specialised Centres. Present at the meeting were the permanent correspondents of Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, North Macedonia, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic and Ukraine. The permanent correspondents for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Monaco had apologised for their absence due to prior commitments. Mr Zyman welcomed the newly appointed CPC Ms Stefanovic (Serbia) and Mr Chekryhin (Ukraine) who briefly introduced themselves.

1. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA [AP/CAT\(2024\)OJ04](#)

The draft agenda was adopted as proposed.

2. STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Mr Zyman recalled the decisions of the last CPC meeting held on 16 May 2024.

- Mr Stojanovic, Director of the Security Innovation Centre (SIC), Belgrade had presented the centre's activities at the meeting. Subsequently, the CPC decided to admit SIC to the EUR-OPA network of specialised centres.
- Following the decision by the CPC, the secretariat had engaged Prof. Elisabeth Lambert to elaborate a working paper on the right to living in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Prof. Lambert would present the paper at this meeting.

The Executive Secretary had also participated in the following meetings:

- 2nd Technical Workshop of the Global Fire Management Hub organised by FAO, Rome on 19-21 March 2024 as well as the 3rd Technical Workshop on the "Development of an initial roadmap for the Fire Hub – priorities, means and partner roles" held on 28-30 May 2024 at the FAO headquarters in Rome. Further information is available on the [Agreement's website](#).
- Euro-Mediterranean Forum for Disaster Risk Governance, Health Preparedness and Networking Advancement held on 2-3 May 2024 in San Marino, which was initiated and organised by the European Centre for Disaster Medicine (CEMEC). Several directors of specialised centres also attended this event which provided an opportunity for exchange and networking.
- European Civil Protection Forum 2024 organised by the EC's Civil Protection Knowledge Network Platform held on 4-5 June in Brussels. Mr Zyman shared the Agreement's work in this field and presented the Recommendation on the "Use of digital tools such as social media

and mobile applications for successful disaster risk communication”, adopted at the 80th at the CPC meeting on 6-7 November 2023.

- The “Human rights and migration in the context of natural disasters and emergency situations” held on 11 and 12 June in Ankara organised in the framework of the joint European Union / Council of Europe action [“Strengthening the Human Rights Protection in the Context of Migration in Türkiye”](#). The conference concentrated on legal aspects of protecting migrants and internally displaced persons rights, including the case law of the European Court of Human Rights. Mr Zyman presented EUR-OPA’s Recommendation 2021 - 2 on the “Inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in public health emergencies resulting from viral or other pathogenic pandemics”, adopted at the Agreement’s 14th Ministerial Meeting in Matosinhos, Portugal on 24 November 2021. He also presented Recommendation 2016 – 1 on the “Inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster preparedness and response”, adopted at the Agreement’s 13th Ministerial Meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal on 26 October 2016.
- A symposium for young people, democracy and climate action on 24-26 September in Strasbourg. Youth, policy makers, youth workers and youth researchers gathered to discuss how youth can engage with the climate crisis, priorities and challenges, youth research and policy. Mr Zyman held a stand at the forum to raise awareness about natural and technical disasters as well as BeSafeNet.
- 2024 Europe and Central Asia Platform Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction “Empowering communities, building resilience” on 6-8 November in Budva, Montenegro. The platform was co-organised by UNDRR, European Commission and EUR-OPA. Mr Zyman attended the platform with Catherine Emezie to maintain and increase the visibility of the Agreement and to promote the core values of the Council of Europe’s (CoE) mission, particularly a human rights-based community-led approach in DRR. Mr Zyman participated in the ministerial roundtable. The event provided an opportunity to showcase EUR-OPA’s work before approximately 600 delegates from 55 countries. In particular, the BeSafeNet Olympiad Award Ceremony was held at the Forum. EUR-OPA’s achievements were well recognised and well received more so, as protection and prevention remain high on the agenda of member states.
- Online participation in two events jointly organised by the European Centre on Prevention of Forecasting of Earthquakes (ECPFE) and the European Centre on the Vulnerability of Industrial Lifeline Systems (ECILS) on 3 May in Skopje, North Macedonia and on 19 October in Ioannina, Greece. The directors of the centres further elaborated on the events as they presented each centre’s 2024 activities.

In January 2024, a new Reykjavik Process and Environment Department was set up specifically to coordinate existing activities related to the environment. Additionally, an Inter-secretariat Task Force on the Environment was also created to streamline and coordinate CoE activities in this field. Mr Zyman emphasised the increasing recognition of the link between the environment and human rights as living in an unhealthy environment could adversely impact citizens wellbeing and fundamental rights and ultimately undermine democracy. Further to the Reykjavik Summit held in May 2023, the Committee of Ministers (CM) decision enabled the creation of a Multidisciplinary Group on the Environment (GME) mandated to prepare the CoE strategy.

The GME held its first meeting on 25-27 September in Strasbourg. Ms Freitas (PC, Portugal) represented EUR-OPA. The GME will aim to elaborate a strategy for adoption by the CM in May 2025. The strategy will build on the [Recommendation on human rights and the protection of the environment](#) adopted in 2022 which calls on member states to consider recognising the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right. In the light of this development, EUR-OPA seeks to contribute to this reflection and thus commissioned Professor Elisabeth Lambert, legal expert and research director at the French National Centre for Scientific Research, DCS Research Unit to draft a working paper on that topic. As a next step, the Agreement will consider the conclusions of the CDDH report (to be published in the coming weeks) and the Strategy on Environment currently elaborated by the GME, before it considers its position and possible EUR-OPA guidelines in this area.

3. PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES 2024

3.1 Statutory meetings

Mr. Zyman referred the participants to the reports on the Bureau meetings held on 14 February [AP/CAT\(2024\)01](#), 3 October [AP/CAT\(2024\)03](#) and the Committee of Permanent Correspondents (CPC) meeting held on 16 May [AP/CAT\(2024\)04](#). All the meeting reports had been circulated in advance.

4. BUDGETARY SITUATION AP/CAT(2024)05

The draft EUR-OPA budget for 2025 is currently elaborated on the basis of existing 2024 payment grid, adjusted for inflation and may likely be adopted shortly. It is expected that the 2025 budget will allow the Agreement to maintain activities at a level similar to 2024.

5. PRIORITIES OF THE AGREEMENT IN 2025 [AP/CAT\(2021\)11](#)

5.1. Discussion on the Agreement's priorities, including update on the Project "Enhancing Civilian Preparedness for Technological Disasters in Ukraine".

Mr Zyman presented the project for Ukraine which is currently subject to proposals for funding from sources other than the Agreement. If sufficient funds are secured, it is hoped that some specialised centres would be invited to collaborate on this project, as some centres have the required expertise and experience in technological disasters.

Regarding the Medium-Term Plan, there are topics mentioned therein which could still be developed e.g., the protection of cultural heritage - already covered by some of the specialised centres. Mr Zyman invited the participants to share their thoughts on the topics the Agreement could focus on next.

6. THE RIGHT TO LIVING IN A CLEAN, HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

[Working document](#)

6.1. Presentation of the working paper on “State obligations and people’s right to be protected from the serious effects of global warming: realisation of the right to a healthy and sustainable environment in the face of risks and threats of natural hazards”

The Committee discussed the working paper on “State obligations and people’s right to be protected from the serious effects of global warming: realisation of the right to a healthy and sustainable environment in the face of risks and threats of natural hazards”, authored by Professor Elisabeth LAMBERT, legal expert and research director in the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), DCS Research Unit.

In her introductory presentation, Prof. Lambert pointed out that the overall goal of her work is to focus, in the reality of ever-increasing climate risk, on the need to put people back at the heart of risk prevention and preparedness processes. The question it raises for decision experts, researchers and society at large is “how to complement the security-based/conventional approach with a human rights-based approach”?

The question to be answered in the working paper was the following:

- i) How can consideration for a healthy and sustainable environment and, in particular, of a human right to a healthy and sustainable environment and a right to be protected from the harmful effects of disasters induced by climate change guide the actions taken in the context of EUR-OPA to respond to climate change-related risks? Within that scope of research, a subset of questions needs to be considered, such as: what are the responsibilities of European States? Are there any newly emerging responsibilities? How can these new obligations be made more operational, more so given the rights of populations? How can people be more closely involved, given their serious effects and is it important to involve them? What kind of new governance methods should be set up at various levels? What recommendations should be made for the future measures taken by Europe?

The working paper is divided into three parts, of which the first addresses legal issues, about the responsibilities for states and international organisations, and the corresponding rights for population when it comes to climate change. The second part is about operationalisation – how these rights can be made operational, and the third part lays out concrete proposals for potential future actions by EUR-OPA. Prof. Lambert’s presentation focused on parts two and three.

Prof. Lambert recalled the right to a safe climate which is considered as a component of the right to a healthy and sustainable environment according to the UN rapporteur’s statement on environment and human rights. The right to a safe climate is now admitted/acknowledged. In particular, in a ground-breaking judgment of the ECHR in the case of Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland (application no. 53600/20), concerning a complaint by a Swiss association and its members (a group of older women concerned about the consequences of global warming on their living conditions and health) delivered on 9 April 2024, the Court found that Article 8 of the Convention encompasses a right to effective protection by the State authorities from the serious adverse effects of climate change on lives, health, well-being and quality of life.

The first part of the report elaborates on the prevention obligation of States, that is rooted in international law, especially environment law, as an obligation of due diligence conduct, based on two prerequisites. Firstly, the State has the obligation to seek and acquire **knowledge of risks** or threats. In the contrary case, no responsibility can be demanded from a State if the risks have not been identified. Therefore, there must be knowledge of the risks and the **ability of the State to take measures to limit the impact of the risks**. When the two conditions are met, then the State has a responsibility in terms of **prevention**. The obligation of preparing the population is not a new obligation, rather it is a new component of the due diligence obligation.

Consequently, it is necessary to prepare the population to face hazards and involve the population in greater measure for any actions to be efficient. Sociological studies demonstrate that there is social acceptance among populations to adapt to climate change-related hazards. This may be perceived as interventionist for some populations living in risk areas as they may have to resettle in other, less threatened areas. To ensure that such measures are well accepted and to prevent upheaval in the States, it is imperative to involve populations in a greater measure than is the case today.

Citing the Aarhus Convention (1998), Prof. Lambert pointed out that this was the first treaty recognising the rights of the public to participation in the environmental field. The Convention is based on three pillars; right to information, right to participation and the right to access to justice. It is noteworthy that practically all member State Parties to EUR-OPA Agreement have also ratified the Aarhus Convention. Another right that relates to the right to information is the right to science, which is not given enough consideration. This right aims to protect citizens from the emergence of “false science” by ensuring that evidence-based science is used to identify hazards and to guide states’ action to prevent hazards turning into disasters. With regard to governance challenges, Prof. Lambert pointed out the importance of the right to citizen participation. For example, in France the Citizen Convention demonstrated strong interest of the population in environmental matters, with numerous recommendations being made. Another example which very noteworthy concerns Switzerland where referenda are frequently used to determine a course of action for the authorities to take.

Prof. Lambert recommended the following actions for the Agreement to reflect on:

- i) Establishing a monitoring mechanism of the existing recommendations. Currently, only three of the Agreement’s adopted recommendations mention monitoring, which implies a duty for State parties to the Agreement to monitor if the recommendation in question has been implemented. Thus, it is impossible to determine if or what progress has been made, or what difficulties obstruct implementing the recommendations. As a first step, EUR-OPA could address a questionnaire to member States, inquiring about specific measures, called for in its recommendations, that were taken, and if not, what were the reasons for inaction.
- ii) The Agreement should examine and be guided by the “case-file system” set up under the Bern Convention (BC) which allowed interested parties to address direct issues of concern to the Committee. An online form, accessible to the public, could be provided on the Agreement’s website giving information and a basis for engaging with the State concerned. Another option could be to set up a subcommittee to collect the data and analyse it, to identify, good practices.
- iii) Additionally, the Agreement could draft a recommendation addressing all natural hazards and all vulnerable groups related to climate change. Such a recommendation should mention the protection of present and future generations, and explicitly address the right to information,

right to participation, right to science, etc. It could also call for the establishment at national level, of citizen participation modalities that would go beyond simple consultations.

To conclude, Prof. Lambert recalled EUR-OPA's position at the frontline of providing responses to natural hazards linked to climate change. She believes there is a legitimacy for EUR-OPA given its institutional link to the Council of Europe, specific expertise and collaboration mechanism within the network of scientific centres. Unfortunately, it has to be recognised that the Agreement is not referred to in the doctrine due to its lack of visibility.

There is an urgent need to make the duty of prevention and preparedness concrete and effective by placing the citizens at the heart of the process. EUR-OPA should consider taking more precise measures to monitor state actions in this area. This in no case should not be seen as a sanction but rather as a step towards improving the effectiveness of the Agreement's current and future actions. [Link to presentation](#).

Mr Zyman thanked Prof. Lambert for advocating for EUR-OPA and raising many important issues to follow up on. A discussion followed and Mr Zyman advised the participants to ponder on further concrete steps to be taken.

Decision: The CPC will consider drafting guidelines and a recommendation on state obligations and peoples' right to a healthy and sustainable environment in the face of risks and threats of natural hazards, that would take into account the CoE Strategy on Environment and other relevant documents.

7. EUR-OPA SPECIALISED CENTRES' BEST PRACTICES - COMMON PUBLICATION, BY SCENT AND CEMEC

Ms Reynolds (Chair, Slovak Republic) introduced an online publication prepared in collaboration between CEMEC and SCENT on best practices in the area of electromobility that would serve to raise the visibility of the Agreement. The publication is based on CEMEC's expertise in the field of disaster medicine and on SCENT's project 'How to deal with fires in the case of electro modules'.

Given the fact that EUR-OPA produced significant work over many years, it is important to better showcase this work to the outside world. Ms Reynolds invited interested participants to contact her if they wished to collaborate on this initiative.

8. FOLLOW UP ON SYNERGIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE: COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE BERN CONVENTION, THE LANDSCAPE CONVENTION AND EUR-OPA

Mr Zyman recalled discussions on collaboration between the Agreement, the Bern Convention and the Landscape Convention and the progress to date in the light of the work carried out in the framework of the Multidisciplinary Group on Environment (GME). The takeaways of the Strategy on Environment will inform the future collaboration of the three mechanisms to maximise their synergies.

9. INFORMATION ON THE MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM THE FIRST MEETING OF THE AD HOC MULTIDISCIPLINARY GROUP ON THE ENVIRONMENT (GME) HELD ON 25-27 SEPTEMBER 2024 IN STRASBOURG

Ana Freitas presented a summary of the proceedings and the outcomes at the first meeting of the Multidisciplinary Group on Environment (GME) held on 25-27 September in Strasbourg:

This Ad Hoc Working Group was set up by the Committee of Ministers in July 2024, with a specific mandate to prepare a draft Council of Europe Strategy on Environment and a related Action Plan for its implementation, in accordance with the Reykjavík Declaration.

This first meeting had three main objectives: (1) to present this ad hoc working group, (2) approve its terms of reference and (3) elect the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Bureau. Ms Maria Diamantopoulou Ambassador for Greece was elected as Chair, members from Georgia, France, Hungary and the Netherlands were elected as Vice-Chairs + plus three Bureau members.

The terms of reference were approved, and the group's mandate was presented. As the GME seeks to specifically address the impact of the triple planetary crisis (pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity) on human rights, the Member states will be represented by their ministries of environment. At national level, all the activities that were to be established will therefore be developed and coordinated under the umbrella of the environment sector although not limited to it.

The GME established the following timeline:

- A compendium of existing and planned activities, and proposals for new activities on the environment will be presented by the end of the year.
- The draft CoE Strategy on the Environment and the related Action Plan will be presented by March 2025.
- A Progress report on the implementation of the Strategy is due to be presented by 31 December 2025.

The meeting gathered over 100 participants from different sectors and backgrounds, and the discussions mostly addressed how these different stakeholder groups could contribute to the GME activities. Member states, CoE bodies and several international organisations (European Union, Greenpeace, Amnesty International; International Federation of Human Rights etc.) were represented at the meeting. All entities had the possibility to introduce themselves and Mr Zyman, also addressed the meeting on behalf of EUR-OPA, stating that the Agreement was open to collaborate and to participate in the activities and contribute to its development. Ms Freitas observed that there were no representatives of Civil Protection Ministries or Ministries of Interior present at the meeting.

In the light of the above, it is essential that the Agreement maintains an active involvement with a view to contributing a risk reduction and awareness of hazards' perspective to the GME discussions and ensuing documents. The priorities established at by the Medium-Term Plan 2021-2025 and the activities developed by the specialised centres should be given due consideration.

The GME will hold its second meeting on 9-11 December 2024.

10. ELECTIONS OF SUBORDINATE BODIES WITHIN THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT CORRESPONDENTS [AP/CAT\(2022\)08rev](#)

The mandate of the Bureau members was not up for renewal in 2024. However, Mr Balducci announced that he would be stepping down from the Bureau due to other commitments. Ms Freitas volunteered to take over from Mr Balducci. Furthermore, the Executive Secretary invited members to consider joining the Sub-Committee on Projects. As there were no volunteers to join the Sub-Committee, Mr Micallef and Ms Holcinger will continue their work on projects in the existing composition.

Decision: The CPC unanimously elected Ms Freitas (PC, Portugal) to the Bureau as Vice-Chair for a two-year duration. The CPC thanked Mr Balducci (PC, San Marino) for his service.

11. REPORT ON SPECIALISED CENTRES' ACTIVITIES IN 2024 AND PROPOSALS FOR 2025

The directors of specialised centres presented their project achievements for 2024 and the project proposals for 2025.

European Center for Disaster Awareness (BeSafeNet), Cyprus

Mr Christou recalled the objectives of the [BeSafeNet](#) project which serves as an online tool for promoting risk culture among populations by providing valid information on natural and technological hazards on its website. The project invites secondary school pupils across Europe aged 11– 16 years to participate in its annual Olympiad. In 2024, 137 secondary schools in 10 countries participated in the Olympiad held online on 23 February. The teams from Cyprus, Greece and Romania emerged as the winners of the competition. The BeSafeNet Olympiad Award ceremony was held during the Europe and Central Asia Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction organised by the UNDRR on 6-8 November in Budva, Montenegro. Further, the BeSafeNet website has now been updated and is more user friendly for persons with disabilities with the addition of colour adjustment features, screen readers, magnifiers etc.

In 2025, Mr Christou announced that the Olympiad would now be opened to all 46 CoE member states. This proposal was well received. The competition is scheduled for 12 March 2025. BeSafeNet will also collaborate with ECPFE (Greece) to prepare new content on persons with disability and their care givers in case of an earthquake. It will partner with ICoD (Malta) to revise the content on desertification. Mr Christou reminded the CPC that their collaboration was critical to spread information about the Olympiad and thereby widen learning on disasters in the member countries. Mr Zyman and Mr Christou will team up to draft a letter to UNICEF to further promote the project. [Link to presentation](#)

European Center for Forest Fires (ECFF), Greece

In 2024, ECFF focused on the Resilience4ALL project which involved awareness raising on disaster risks via accessible digital tools and drafting of good practices for training of first

responders with regard to persons with physical, visual, hearing, intellectual and cognitive disabilities as well as chronic diseases to ensure that no one was left behind in emergencies. Dr Karma shared several videos which raise awareness and aim to build a culture relating to these issues. ECFF also held a training course for fire fighters on disability management techniques in emergencies. Persons with disabilities are at greater risk during emergencies and the course drew attention to this group and on how to better communicate to them. ECFF prepared a publication on [“Leave no one behind: active involvement of persons with disabilities in disaster preparedness and response towards strengthening inclusive disaster resilience”](#) in addition to several other publications prepared in collaboration with UNDRR e.g., Recommendations for Urban planners and policy makers for heat and wildfire management. ECFF also actively participated in several global events such as the MCR 2030 city-to-city learning forum on developing urban disaster resilience held in Nanning, China on 29-31 July 2024.

In 2025 ECFF will conduct an evacuation exercise with the participation of persons with disabilities. One of the goals is to engage representatives of the disability community at the early stages of planning. A dissemination event focusing on the deliverables of the Resilience 4ALL project is planned. [Link to presentation](#)

Ongoing projects in Ukraine

Mr Chekryhin (PC, Ukraine) informed the participants about specific ongoing educational activities targeting children in Ukraine in the context of the current war. A variety of safety classes are organised in educational establishments e.g., fire safety, technological safety, mine safety and medical training. In addition, mobile security classes that have the same content as regular classes are also held for children who reside close to lines where hostilities are taking place. The authorities are also developing the first educational games, encompassing fire safety, technological safety and mine safety. Children who compete in these games are awarded a certificate giving them access to visit a fire station. This action aims to develop young firefighters and rescuers and the results so far have been good for the children from an educational standpoint.

Euro-Méditerranéan Centre for the Evaluation and Prevention of Seismic Risk (CEPRIS), Morocco

Mr Jabour presented the activities undertaken by CEPRIS in 2024 which focused on awareness raising programmes and strengthening resilience against tsunami hazards and risks in Morocco. Given the geographical context of the region, the plates boundaries between Africa and Eurasia are very active and generate tsunamis which in turn threatens the coast. CEPRIS also engaged in monitoring activities relying on the seismic network that generally triggers a warning shortly after a strong earthquake. In terms of sea level monitoring, data from the tide gauges in Casablanca is transferred directly to the centre in Rabat and to the UN Oceana Commission in charge of regional monitoring. Tsunami modulations in coastal cities near Casablanca can be used to find shelter areas in case of a tsunami. CEPRIS through its awareness raising programme and coastal programme carried out several activities in coastal areas. At the beach, they trained civil protection rescuers on how to act in case of a warning, how to manage an evacuation and use the vertical shelters in an emergency. Since it is very difficult to explain or visualise an evacuation on the coast more so in summer when the beach is crowded, evacuation signage was posted along the coastal paths.

In Rabat, schools were taught how to evacuate and the adequate behaviour to adopt as a group. CEPRIS coordinated different exercises and drills for the schools. In El Jadida in the south of Casablanca, the local university participated in the tsunami ready project's mini drills along the coast. Signage was also set up in order to raise awareness in tsunami hazards for beach visitors, indicating distances that should be covered within a timeline of around 40 minutes along evacuation route which leaves enough time for people to reach the shelter points.

In 2025, all the above elements will be used to produce a video locally and CEPRIS hopes to organise some evacuation exercises. CEPRIS will use examples of past tsunamis in the videos as there are spots and locations where tsunamis caused much damage in the past.
[Link to presentation](#)

Centro Universitario Europeo per i Beni Culturali (CUEBC), Italy

Mr Ferrigni outlined the general structure of the CUEBC programme of activities which is centred on cultural heritage. He emphasised that current landscapes are the result of landscape alterations which also form part of cultural heritage. Not all such alterations may not necessarily be compatible with the environment, but they create cultural landscape we live in today. The aim of CUEBC endeavours is to achieve eco-compatibility. Protecting the environment entails in consequence the need to prevent or mitigate the consequences of natural disasters.

In the past few years, CUEBC addressed this theme while working on the project "Focusing on the knowledge of local hazards existing within local communities" which was one of many projects, interventions, research and actions. Their goal was to collect knowledge through intervention in higher institutions and disseminate it in the media. Besides institutional pathways – given that populations do not typically follow recommendations - there are other noninstitutional pathways which had sometimes proven to be more efficient. This climate change and cultural landscape project focuses on the impact of climate change on cultural landscapes and the knowledge existing within populations, the impact of construction techniques on cultural landscapes, terraces and what could be done to reduce the impact.

CUEBC attempted to define ways to reduce the impact and set up a long-term project to mitigate the abiding effects of climate change on landscapes. There may be a methodological limit to action, but another opportunity exists with AI software which can make a predictive analysis thereby rendering it possible to predict or model what climate would be like in 20 years as well the impact of this new climate structure on land, terraces, crops etc. The project is structured in a way that establishes the connection between climate and certified techniques. The output of this project should firstly be the analysis of the most efficient software to address this problem and secondly how to communicate with local communities so that the research may have a positive impact on local protection of cultural landscapes.

Mr Ferrigni expressed a willingness for other directors to collaborate on this project and will send a written project proposal to the other centres for those who are interested to collaborate.

Friday 22 November 2024

European Centre on Prevention and Forecasting of Earthquakes (ECPFE), Greece

Dr Pelli presented the 2024 activities of ECPFE. For Activity I, ECPFE partnered with ECILS North Macedonia, ECRM Armenia, Cultural Heritage Without Borders Albania and the Croatian Centre for Earthquakes. Phase one of this activity examined seismic behaviour, pathology damages and conservation measures of Byzantine churches in the Balkan region. Several technical visits were organised in Kozani, northern Greece and West Macedonia during which relevant seismic data was gathered. The data after elaboration was presented at the workshop held in Ioannina, Greece on 19 October. Under Activity II, the partner centre ECILS organised a workshop on “Seismic assessment and retrofitting of masonry and preserved structures” held on 23 May in Skopje. Under Activity III, ECPFE participated in a two-day webinar organised by ECBR on “Creating digital knowledge content, means and social media tool DIGIRISX for DRR in the seismic zones of Romania.” ECPFE also participated in the 2024 OASP educational safety initiative activities for people with disabilities on 28-29 October. Under this initiative, both centres collaborated on producing a video for the blind on guidelines for earthquake protection in the workplace before, during and after the event.

In 2025, ECPFE plans the following activities: Phase 2 of “Seismic behaviour of characteristic types of Byzantine churches in the Balkan region” of which the main focus will be to gather supplementary data, categorisation and typologies, innovative construction solutions and culminate in drafting a restoration strategy. Under Activity II, ECPFE will collaborate with BeSafeNet to prepare new content for the website on people with disabilities in earthquake situations from the point of view of both disabled persons and their care givers. Under Activity III, ECPFE will partner with ECBR to create a video introducing guidelines for self-protection of people with disabilities in case of an earthquake. [Link to presentation](#)

Vulnerability of Industrial and Lifelines Systems (ECILS), North Macedonia

Dr Shendova presented ECILS 2024 project activities. Activity I focused on “Seismic assessment and retrofitting of masonry preserved structures (phase II)”. Its main priority was using scientific and technological knowledge to better assess evolving risks and adapt accordingly the resilience strategies. Activity II focused on “Seismic behaviour of characteristics of Byzantine churches in the Balkan region”. One of the priorities was to strengthen DRR governance to manage disaster risk by developing cooperation among the decision-makers and to better define an adequate role for authorities in DRR. Both projects were carried out in partnership with ECPFE. The main results achieved through the activities included introducing a new Greek code to the North Macedonian authorities to protect cultural heritage. The centre will also prepare papers for the International Journal of Architectural Heritage. ECILS also participated in the EUROMED PROTECT-NET Forum held on 2-3 May in San Marino and made a presentation entitled “Roles, activities and state of the art of risk reduction in North Macedonia”. ECILS also participated in the 18th World Conference on Earthquake Engineering held on 30 June to 5 July in Milan, Italy. [Link to presentation](#)

European Centre for Buildings Rehabilitation (ECBR), Romania

Mr Georgescu presented ECBR’s 2024 project activities on “Creating digital knowledge content, means and social media tools – Digirisx” as a follow up to the EUR-OPA recommendation on using

social media tools for successful disaster risk communication. ECBR organised two training webinars on 28 and 29 October involving the local community to debate on topics that should be addressed by digital means, social media and mobile applications for successful disaster risk communication. Different stakeholders and youth were involved in the exercise and the topics covered included national seismic risk reduction strategy, preparedness in earthquake situations, vulnerability and seismic risk in buildings etc. ECPFE also participated in the webinar. Positive feedback was received via an online survey during the seminar.

In 2025 ECBR will continue to produce training materials. Mr Georgescu will continue to partner with ECPFE and exchanging experiences with other EUR-OPA centres, more so the centres in the neighbouring countries. [Link to presentation](#)

European Centre for Disaster Medicine (CEMEC), San Marino

Professor Mugavero highlighted CEMEC's achievements in 2024, underscoring its mission of comprehensive crisis prevention, management, and response. During the year, CEMEC delivered 90 training courses involving 1,517 participants and 217 trainers. These courses addressed disaster risk management, emergency preparedness, advanced medical support, and resilience-building. Additionally, seven major events engaged 540 participants and 23 trainers. Over the 2024-2026 triennium, CEMEC is tasked with training 1,100 public administration employees in San Marino on emergency response and first aid. All activities have been delivered in collaboration with key institutions such as the University of the Republic of San Marino (CUFS), the University of Rome "Tor Vergata" - Department of Electronic Engineering (DIE), and the Observatory on Security and CBRNe Defence (OSDIFE) in Italy.

CEMEC participated in 49 international courses, workshops, and conferences, hosting 4,758 participants and over 52 experts. A key highlight was the EUROMED PROTECT-NET Forum on 2-3 May, focusing on disaster risk reduction governance in the Euro-Mediterranean region, with contributions from EUR-OPA specialized centres and the Agreement's Executive Secretary.

Key projects in 2024 included ENSURE-PROTECT, enhancing civil defense safety through tailored training and equipment, and SHIELD-EXCEL, advancing CBRNe protection and responder training in controlled environments. CEMEC also published 10 scientific articles and participated in 10 international simulations, improving disaster response capabilities and operational readiness.

Formalizing partnerships was a priority, with 10 new MoU signed. CEMEC also expanded its audience, gaining over 2,000 Facebook followers and 8,000 on LinkedIn. Moving forward, CEMEC prioritizes collaboration, innovation, and resilience-building to address global challenges. [Link to presentation](#)

Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South-Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE)

Mr Zyman welcomed to the meeting Mr Rade Rajkovchevski, Director of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South-Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE), who began his mandate in April 2024. Mr. Rajkovchevski summarised the main activities of DPPI SEE. The Initiative is structured around 10 focal points in 10 national civil protection authorities who are all members of Union Civil Protection Mechanism. DPPI SEE focuses on prevention and preparedness in the face of disasters. The main activities include organising two decision-making

regional meetings annually and 7 to 10 Disaster Management Training Program (DMTP) workshops, seminars and trainings. In 2024, the events focused on project design, public-private partnership, dog handlers in search and rescue operations, emergency management in dealing with forest fires and stress management etc. The Secretariat represents DPPI SEE in several other networks in initiatives such as DHL and UNDP's GoHelp Program and GARD project, UNICEF (MoU signed in 2024), 7 activities in child sensitive policy in civil protection and DRM will follow until the end of 2026 etc. DPPI SEE has observer status to the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement. [Link to presentation](#)

Security Innovation Center (SIC), Serbia

SIC was founded in 2011 by the Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade. and joined the network of specialised centres in May 2024. Mr. Stojanovic, Director of SIC, presented their mission which is focused on developing and analysing advanced solutions software products for private and public entities in Serbia. SIC has become a vital bridge between academia research and industry by ensuring that the latest technical products are effectively utilised in real world settings. In 2024 and prior to this, SIC conducted at least 15 risk assessment emergency plans for a variety of clients e.g., the City of Belgrade, media institutions, medical institutions and the National Bank of Serbia. SIC is licensed by the government, the Ministry of Internal Affairs to make disaster risk assessments and develop emergency plans. SIC builds operational emergency plans for different kinds of threats e.g., earthquakes, floods, biohazards, technological hazards etc., and develops comprehensive software applicable to any company enabling multiple simultaneous outcomes. The software is designed to assess all kinds of risks and provide decision support with data visualisation and impact analysis. SIC works in partnership with the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Belgrade to assess all types of risks.

In 2025, SIC plans to intensify collaboration with the Faculty and the National Simulation Centre with a view to organising training sessions with both the private and public sectors, local government units who have developed disaster risk assessment and plans e.g. the commissioner for civil protection who would be responsible to manage a risk situation in their own companies. The goal of the training is to inform, raise awareness and develop specific procedures for responding to the occurrence of natural disasters. The second activity aims to enhance software and offer it to a risk assessment market primarily for legal entities. The software provides opportunities on how to manage risks in the workplace by improving risk feasibility, enhancing decision-making and streamlining the risk management process. However, the disadvantages include cyber security or resistance to change. Mr Stojanovic suggested that this could become an activity in 2025 which could centre on fixing the bugs. Nevertheless, the software has already been successfully tested in two Serbian companies. SIC will continue its collaboration with academic institutions and plans to focus on research related to natural disasters, risk management and DRR issues in Serbia or in the region. [Link to presentation](#)

Specialized Centre for Technological Hazards (SCENT), Slovak Republic

Ms Halúzová shared the 2024 activities undertaken by SCENT. The Slovak University of Technology (STU) is the biggest university in Slovakia. SCENT is an independent entity of STU founded in January 2024. Its activities are mainly focused on technological topics – especially CBRN threats. SCENT could potentially expand to include other topics such as fire management. Future projects will have an educational character. For e.g., a popular festival “Behind 7

mountains”, is held in north Slovakia and is the biggest family festival in Slovakia. SCENT aims to focus on a specific topic each year i.e., chemical protection in the 1st year, and biological protection in the 2nd year etc. SCENT will directly provide lectures in schools and hold practical workshops for children on CBRN topics and also allow them to try out civil protection equipment and scientific experiments. SCENT plans to cooperate with the International Security and Emergency Management Institute (ISEMI) with a membership of former policemen, security officers who provide international level lectures and workshops in CBRN field. ISEMI is ready to cooperation with SCENT in the festival activities. of Further SCENT will prepare a brochure on electromobility in collaboration with CEMEC. At national level, SCENT shared tips with fire fighters on how to behave in case of fires caused by electro mobiles and looks forward to doing the same at international level. Ms Halúzová expressed a wish to cooperate with centres such as BeSafeNet, ECFF and other centres. [Link to presentation](#)

Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Insular Coastal Dynamics (ICoD), Malta

Dr Mamo presented ICoD's 2024 activities. In the last 2 years, he had created several MoU's or links with different departments e.g., the Ministry of the Environment, specifically with the Energy and Water Agency, the Environment and Resource Authority, and more recently with the Ministry of Agriculture. The strong links between ICoD and the ministries was due to the fact that master's degree courses had been opened up to the public. The courses were developed in collaboration with the different ministries, who also sent their employees to the short courses (lasting 3-4 weeks of one study unit). ICoD is also developing material, new knowledge specific to the needs of the different ministries. Its main area of work linked to flooding and drought, water resources in the extremes.

Malta relies on the desalination of ground water as this remains an important source of water for agriculture. In the light of this, the centre is currently studying Malta's dry valley systems which are very important zones for recharge of aquifers. The valley systems contain various dams, and the study examines the water quality, specifically on the contamination of these water sources. The study has a large teaching component involving field work and engaging students in observation to develop understanding through experience. ICoD held several events including a 2-day hackathon during which undergraduates met with academia, government agencies for water utilities, agriculture, the environment and the private sector. The students developed different challenges and explored possible solutions for these challenges, thus moving from ideas to solutions. Each student had to prepare their own pitch.

In 2025, ICoD is planning an activity related to the transfer of knowledge about water management from the older to the younger generation before it is lost and capture local knowledge. Taking some points from establishing social media as a new democratic space, based on C. Rizza's report and page 35 of E. Lambert's working paper. ICoD plans to build a public participatory mapping to bring together knowledge and discussion on social media into an organised space. This would provide information/knowledge about the catchment where photos were taken and also answers to peoples questions. ICoD developed open access software to put peoples observations on a map and in social media make comments or direct them to the site. Dr Mamo expressed an interest to collaborate with other centres in this activity as this tool could be used for any other hazard. There were already plans to link it to BeSafeNet in future, thereby linking students observations on the ground spatially. [Link to presentation](#)

At the end of the presentations, the directors requested that the secretariat creates a page on EUR-OPA's website where the 2024 achievements could be listed and easily accessed.

**12. COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS CHAIRMANSHIPS OVER THE NEXT 24 MONTHS
(AGREEMENT'S MEMBER STATES: LUXEMBOURG, MALTA, MOLDOVA AND MONACO):
OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE AGREEMENT'S VISIBILITY**

Luxembourg:	November 2024 – May 2025
Malta:	May – November 2025
Moldova:	November 2025 – May 2026
Monaco:	May – November 2026

Mr Zyman invited the CPC representatives to suggest activities or events that could be carried out in their country during the chairmanships.

13. FIFTEENTH EUR-OPA MINISTERIAL MEETING: CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The current Medium-Term Plan covers the years 2021 - 2025 and should be implemented prior to holding the next ministerial meeting, that should be held in the course of 2026. The period leading up to the next ministerial meeting should be used to discuss future priorities of the Agreement.

Mr Balducci proposed that San Marino host the next ministerial meeting.

14. OTHER OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN 2025

The priority for the Agreement in 2025 will be to provide funding at the same level as in 2024 for projects activities implemented by the specialised centres. The secretariat will plan for two CPC meetings – one to be held online and one in person in Strasbourg. The priority will be given to work on the topic of the right to a healthy and sustainable environment.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other issues were raised.

16. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next CPC will be held online on Tuesday 20 May 2025.

17. END OF MEETING