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Or. English

## **European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)**

### **Joint Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents and Directors of Specialised Centres**

**VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE**

### **Meeting Report**

3-4 November 2020  
09:00-17:30 CET

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

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**Tuesday, 3 November 2020**

## **WELCOME ADDRESS**

Krzysztof Zyman, Executive Secretary of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement welcomed the participants to the 2020 Joint Meeting. Noting the absence of the Permanent Correspondents from Algeria, Belgium, Lebanon, Morocco and Slovak Republic, he ascertained that there was a sufficient number of participants to form a quorum. K. Zyman further noted that Ana Freitas (Portugal) would only participate on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the meeting. N. Bouchahm (CRSTRA, Algeria) presented the excuses of the director of centre who was unable to join the first day of the meeting. K. Zyman urged the participants to be patient in case the unfamiliar Kudos format of the meeting could present particular technical challenges.

### **1. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA [AP/CAT\(2020\)OJ03](#)**

The draft agenda was adopted without amendment.

### **2. STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

K. Zyman opened his address by recalling the passing away of Jean-Pierre Massué, the first Executive Secretary of EUR-OPA, on 8 October, underlining his decisive contribution to the setting up and steering of the Agreement during the period 1987–2004, and his outstanding achievements. He also informed about the passing of Mohamed Belhamra, Director of CRSTRA, Algeria on 6 July, very much regretted by all.

A one minute silence was held in respect of the deceased colleagues.

Referring to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Executive Secretary stated that this has evidenced how hazards can have an unprecedented global impact. EUR-OPA has to show its readiness to evolve and contribute to overall efforts to find solutions to these challenges.

K. Zyman provided an update on administrative and budgetary developments and their impact on the Agreement's activities. In addition to the sanitary lockdown which impacted on the working methods, the Secretariat has undergone staff changes: the position of Executive Secretary was filled by Ursula Sticker from March to August and, following Secretariat reorganisation, by K. Zyman from 1 September. The new Executive Secretary recalled his extensive experience of 27 years at the Council of Europe (CoE), acquired serving convention-based monitoring mechanisms, with intergovernmental cooperation as well as assistance activities and fundraising.

The Agreement continues to face financial challenges, further compounded by Algeria's withdrawal effective from 1 January 2021. The Secretariat is taking steps to seek funding from other sources in order to have a greater impact overall. The Agreement is looking to contribute to the CoE Action Plan in the field of migration. Concretely, EUR-OPA is developing a response on how to protect migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in major hazards. To this effect, EUR-OPA has proposed specific actions to be undertaken in 2021-2025 in collaboration with the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees (SRSG) who will also decide on priorities and the allocation of funding for these actions. The Agreement is also exploring other avenues for fundraising. The Secretariat is drafting a proposal for a Joint Programme (JP) between the CoE and the European Commission, to build on BeSafeNet's success. The project seeks to increase knowledge of hazards in secondary schools and to make young people not only recipients of vital information but also actors of change with the capacity to take part actively in democratic processes. The JP is still in the early stages although the CoE hierarchy has shown its support for the initiative. Although the European Commission's response is uncertain at this point, issues relating to major hazards and disasters will continue to be relevant and of priority to the Commission, more so given the impact and duration of the current pandemic.

K. Zyman highlighted that the CoE examines where and how EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement could bring added value, given that there are other international organisations working on similar issues. As such, EUR-OPA must also address issues of the vulnerable groups whose human rights may not be first priority of the policy makers when they develop instruments on responses to major hazards. These were the main issues to be addressed during the Joint Meeting and the participants were urged to provide insights in particular, into the draft Medium Term Plan 2021-2025 and draft recommendations addressing some of these issues.

K. Zyman noted the absence of A. Bantus and Enrico Carri who were both sick with COVID-19.

N. Holcinger (Chair, Croatia) thanked the Secretariat and welcomed the participants. She highlighted the importance of reducing risks and managing disasters.

N. Bouchahm (CRSTRA, Algeria) thanked K. Zyman for the minute's silence held in respect of the late director of CRSTRA, M. Belhamra. She noted that CRSTRA will not engage in discussions beyond EUR-OPA 2020 ongoing projects due to Algeria's withdrawal in 2021. N. Bouchahm affirmed that CRSTRA would continue as partner to the CUEBC, Ravello LoKSAND project in 2021 and any future collaboration as a research centre. K. Zyman regretted Algeria's withdrawal but encouraged CRSTRA to continue collaborating where possible.

D. Christou (BeSafeNet, Cyprus) thanked the Secretariat for their support to BeSafeNet and the Olympiad.

Anton Micallef (CPC and director of ICoD, Malta) commented on the potential of working on vulnerable groups, suggesting that it could open up a wide programme of activities to EUR-OPA.

### **3. EUR-OPA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE BACK-TO-BACK WITH THE EUROPEAN FORUM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

#### **3.1. European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR), 24-26 November 2021, Matosinhos, Portugal**

S. Penzini, (UNDRR, Belgium) expressed, keen interest in continued collaboration with the CoE, the latter also being, together with the European Commission, a member of the EFDRR Secretariat/organising team. The current sanitary crisis having impacted the hosting of the EFDRR in Portugal in 2021, it would now take place via videoconference or in a hybrid format. M. Gubic (UNDRR, Belgium) gave a brief summary of the state of preparation of the EFDRR, which will bring together 55 countries from Europe and Central Asia, private and public stakeholders and other partners focusing on how to think and act differently about disaster risk. It is hoped that the pandemic will be brought under control, giving the member states an opportunity to exchange lessons learnt and discuss how to rebuild better in a coherent manner. As the deadline for the Target E under the Sendai Network expires at the end of 2020, stakeholders will have an opportunity to examine in 2021 the progress towards the adoption of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies, which will be an indicator for the meeting of the targets of the Sendai Framework. Importantly, the member states are expected to adopt the EFDRR Roadmap which will set the priorities and actions for implementation of the Sendai Framework in Europe.

The EFDRR will be a hybrid event which will not require any international travel, with only some national gatherings planned in the host country, Portugal. S. Penzini shared the EFDRR 2021 preparation timeline and milestones. The working groups (i.e., the conference concept group and the roadmap group made up of 25 countries) would be responsible for making decisions about the modalities of the EFDRR, the topics, concepts and development of the roadmap to the implementation of the Sendai Framework for the next 10 years. The first draft of the agenda and concept note will be ready by November 2020 and the sessions organising teams will be formed by January 2021. The final agenda will be ready by Spring of 2021. K. Zyman noted that the EUR-OPA member countries form a significant portion of the working group and that EUR-OPA is interested in meaningfully contributing to the EFDRR and developing synergies. There will be an EFDRR Secretariat meeting next week and K. Zyman will provide an update thereafter.

#### **3.2. EUR-OPA Ministerial Conference 2021, November 2021 (venue tbc)**

K. Zyman gave an update on preparations for the EUR-OPA Ministerial Meeting and invited participants to propose topics and speakers for the event. Given the virtual or hybrid format of the EFDRR, there was no longer a need to host the EUR-OPA Ministerial Meeting back-to-back with the EFDRR. A new date and host are to be decided – also for the Joint Meeting of the CPC and Directors of Specialised Centres in 2021. The main concern is for the Ministerial Meeting to take place in 2021 and for the Medium-Term Plan to be endorsed at the Ministerial Meeting, in order for EUR-OPA's work to continue and to be based on an endorsed action plan. Participants were invited to signal their country's authorities interest in hosting the EUR-OPA Ministerial

Meeting. In the absence of a proposal, the Ministerial Meeting would be hosted in Strasbourg or Paris. K. Zyman invited participants to consider hosting a physical meeting in parallel with hosting a virtual or hybrid Ministerial Meeting.

M. Micallef (CPC, Malta) commented that the content of the Ministerial Meeting would still depend to some degree on the shape and format of the agenda of the EFDRR. He thought it was possible to still host such a meeting during the EFDRR when the ministers would already be tuned into the EFDRR. The final/preferred format is to be determined.

#### 4. DRAFT MEDIUM-TERM PLAN 2021-2025 [AP/CAT\(2020\)04](#)

The Secretariat prepared the draft Medium-Term Plan (MTP) 2021-2025 on the basis of the questionnaire disseminated to the Permanent Correspondents, in line with the decision taken by the Bureau at its meeting on 8 April 2020, for which five comments were received. Following its review by the Bureau on 2 October, it was agreed to use the Secretariat's draft proposal as a basis for further discussion. The draft in its present form builds on the previous work of the Agreement and follows the four priority areas of the Sendai Framework for DRR. The MTP would require a consensus by the participants prior to its adoption, hence the need for a thorough discussion. After the initial discussion at the Joint Meeting, comments and specific proposals should be addressed to the Secretariat by the end of 2020, in track changes. Important questions that State Parties to the Agreement need to consider include:

- in which subject areas should further study, research be conducted and guidelines produced?;
- is the programme overly ambitious? Are its goals this attainable for EUR-OPA?
- does it need to be strengthened? (e.g., on pp4, after the list of priorities, it is proposed to align the MTP with the 7 global measurable targets set by the Sendai Framework;
- can the 2030 indicators set in the Sendai Framework be attained already in 2025? Or, alternatively, the text could read '*make significant attainable goals*'.

The MTP is a major document, as it sets out the Agreement's programme of work for the next 5 years. It reflects the priorities of Sendai Framework and the CoE values. K. Zyman invited comments/suggestions from the participants as it was important for the participants to take ownership of the document. All comments and opinions were welcome as the document was still in its draft form.

F. Ferrigni (CPC, Italy) observed regarding priority no.4, which refers to local risk culture, that a passage could be introduced into the document text to highlight that there is a two-directional flow of information regarding local risks i.e., top-down, from the authorities to the local population and *vice versa*. This would serve to improve the management of local risk. He will submit a comment to this effect.

M. Micallef (CPC, Malta) agreed with the point that the document promises too much and that the goals might be unattainable. He suggested adding the words '*strive to attain...*', '*seek to achieve...*' given the limited competencies and funds available for the Agreement's activities. M. Micallef argued that the entire document should not be overly committing. He will submit suggestions in this regard.

V. Poyarkov (CPC, Ukraine), welcomed the new Executive Secretary, adding that the draft MTP was good. He agreed with the proposal to respond by the end of 2020, as this would allow ample opportunity to examine/revise the document.

N. Holcinger (CPC, Croatia) did not consider the MTP to be too specific or overly ambitious in the goals it proposes to set. The proposal clearly states that these are goals which are not numerically quantifiable. Using track changes and allowing revisions up to end of December 2020 were both a good idea.

K. Zyman agreed to there not being numerically quantifiable goals in the MTP. Following the Joint Meeting, the document will be sent to participants in Word version in English, French and Russian. He reiterated that he looked forward to receiving comments and specific proposals in track changes. The Secretariat would stylistically revise the final draft.

<p><b>Decisions:</b> A Word version of the MTP will be sent to the CPCs for them to make their concrete proposals in track changes.</p>
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- 31 December 2020: the deadline to return the annotated document, indicating proposed modifications, to the Secretariat.
- 31 January 2021: all the modifications will be integrated by the Secretariat in a revised draft document that will be distributed to the CPCs for the second round of consultation.
- 5 March 2021: the deadline for submission of any additional comments to the Secretariat;
- April 2021: the MTP will be discussed with a view to being endorsed by the Bureau. A decision will be taken in April by the Bureau, taking into account the sanitary restrictions in force on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, as to the method of adoption of the MTP.
- Second half of 2021: Adoption of the MTP by the CPCs (by video conference or physically) in advance of the Ministerial Meeting as the MTP should be reflected in the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted in November 2021.

## 5. DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2021 [AP/CAT\(2020\)03](#)

K. Zyman explained the initiatives and proposals aimed at increasing funding for EUR-OPA beyond the contributions of the member states. At this stage, it is uncertain how much funds could be raised to support EUR-OPA's activities or when they would become available as this depends to a large extent on the imminent adoption of the Action Plan in the field of migration and the donors' response to it. Therefore, it is not possible to plan spending at the moment. The proposed Joint Programme for the Promotion of Risk Culture among Secondary School Pupils and Teachers (NB: this is a provisional title) is in its early stages of development and is currently being finalised within the CoE Secretariat. EUR-OPA is looking at the work carried out by the colleagues from the CoE Education Department, particularly, at developing a democratic competencies framework. The position of the European Commission on the possibility of undertaking a Joint Programme in this area has not been probed at this stage and the timeline for discussions with the EC remain open. Until the Joint Programme is agreed upon, EUR-OPA must base its plans on the available funding. The total budget for 2020 is 733K and for 2021 the budget will be 699K following the withdrawal of Algeria.

C. Emezie gave a brief overview of the draft budget for 2021, for information. The Agreement's expected results for 2020-21 included the preparation of guidelines and recommendations that could be implemented in the EUR-OPA member states. No questions or comments followed.

## 6. PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR THE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2020-2021 [AP/CAT\(2019\)04rev](#)

K. Zyman introduced the draft revised version of the document on the priority activities, which was adopted at the 2019 Joint Meeting. The main revisions refer to:

- Algeria's withdrawal from the Agreement from 1 January 2021 (page 1);
- The inclusion of biological hazards, under natural hazards (page 4);
- A paragraph on the COVID-19 pandemic (page 5);
- A caveat was added about commissioning an expert's report on migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in viral pandemics and a similar report on people with disabilities in viral pandemics in the section on the strengthening of the interface between science, technology and policy (page 6).

The experts' reports were uploaded to the draft agenda with the aim of having a basis for reflection that would allow the CPCs to adopt resolutions in these two areas of study. The expanded priorities are a result of the inclusion of biological hazards in the Agreement's scope of work due to the current pandemic. The participants were invited to discuss and comment on the revised document.

S. Badalyan reminded that he had submitted a full proposal regarding the MTP. Armenia's Constitution contains provisions on the rights of citizens to safety and preservation of life in the occurrence of major hazards. More generally, measures taken by governments during hazards have had an impact on other rights e.g., by restricting freedom of movement and freedom of assembly during pandemics. A second proposal was to examine regulatory provisions adopted by governments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as measures taken by governments aimed at saving lives, health, employment and the economy with a view to assessing their impact on the respect for other rights. K. Zyman explained that such proposals belong in the annual workplan of the Agreement and not the in MTP as it is a general framework document. He further noted that the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on human rights is already included or taken on board by the CoE. He proposed to share the relevant CoE documents with the participants. The Agreement shapes its actions in a broad sense and it was agreed to leave the wording of the text in this format.

**Decision:** As no objections were raised, the revised programme of work 2020-2021 was adopted with 2 amendments to the last sentence on page 5 to which a phrase was added at the end (in italics) “prepare stock-taking on issues relating to biological hazards affecting persons, *in particular those belonging to vulnerable groups...refugees including as regards the respect for human rights of such persons.*”

## **7. DRAFT RESOLUTION recognising the inclusion of biological hazards in the EUR-OPA Partial Agreement [AP/CAT\(2020\)01RES](#)**

The text of the draft Resolution was prepared by the Secretariat and reviewed by the Bureau on 8 April. It follows the standard format of resolutions thus far adopted by the CPC. The resolution takes into account ongoing work, particularly the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. It specifically notes the current pandemic and refers to the experience on biological hazards existing within the Agreement. The resolution contains five points (i) including the hazards in the Agreement, (ii) resolving to include them in the MTP, (iii) raises the issue of specific actions and to be developed within the next MTP, (iv) instructs the specialised centres to support, as appropriate to their areas of expertise, the inclusion of biological hazards and (v) instructs the Executive Secretary to implement this resolution.

M. Mala (CPC, Cyprus) stressed the importance of keeping abreast of rapidly evolving situations such as the current pandemic. It was important for EUR-OPA to remain up-to-date on topical issues. F. Ferrigni noted that climate change is also linked to culture as cultural landscapes are also directly impacted by climate change. Such cultural landscapes also help in the prevention of disasters and natural hazards e.g., through restorative practices such as terracing, irrigation. Pilot studies can be conducted to prevent natural disasters. Reinstating the old farming practices could help to tackle and prevent natural disasters or testing the effectiveness of introducing new crops that respond differently to climate change. K. Zyman advised that this could be raised under the MTP or the programme of activities.

A. Micallef preferred to include a clear definition or description of biological hazards. It was pointed out however in this respect that a broad definition was needed to avoid limiting the scope of action or exclude other important areas of work.

N. Bouchahm (CRSTRA, Algeria) questioned if, the addition of biological hazards could impact the funding of projects. K. Zyman explained that some work/projects are not too expensive, such as the two expert reports funded in relation to the pandemic situation. EUR-OPA was also actively seeking other countries to join the Agreement in order to provide their expertise and to share the financial burden of the Agreement’s activities. For example, the Executive Secretary pointed out that Kazakhstan actively collaborates on fire hazards with the GFMC and could seek to formalise this cooperation with the Agreement at some stage. It is also up to the CPCs to make EUR-OPA visible. Through the adoption of documents, in particular recommendations addressed to member states, the Agreement captures the attention of Permanent Representatives and decision makers in the capitals. The Agreement must show itself to be pertinent and it will follow that the budget situation will be improved overall.

I. Arabidze, (CPC, Russian Federation) raised two issues. Firstly, he suggested that the Ministerial Meeting in 2021, if the participants agreed and the sanitary situation allowed, could be held in a hybrid meeting format. The delegation heads could take part via video conference, while their representatives (Permanent Correspondents) could meet physically. Experts would also attend physically. He underlined that despite COVID-19, countries are continuing to support the Agreement and all have witnessed the tragedies that occurred this year e.g., the explosion in Beirut and the earthquake in Turkey and Greece, underlining the fact that extraordinary events will continue to occur, not only COVID-19. In this regard, EMERCOM proposes to invite experts from different countries to a special conference in 2021 on extraordinary events, as part of the annual meeting on major hazards, in Moscow. Financial resources to cover the (physical) participation of experts could be drawn from Russia’s annual contribution to EUR-OPA.

K. Zyman noted that if a physical Joint Meeting were possible, he would suggest holding it in Paris or Strasbourg, unless the CPC decides to host this in one of the member states. Regarding the scientific conference to be hosted within the Security Salon in 2021, he invited EMERCOM to share a concept note providing information on the date, themes, format, workshops and the type of expertise required from EUR-OPA, etc. The CPCs could participate in the conference

physically or virtually, depending on the travel situation. I. Arabidze confirmed that all the information regarding the programme, dates, required expertise would be shared as soon as possible. EMERCOM is maintaining a flexible approach toward the conference format as this will be determined by the pandemic situation. K. Zyman welcomed this idea and looked forward to receiving more information on the conference.

**Decision:** The Joint Meeting adopted the Resolution recognising the inclusion of biological hazards in the EUR-OPA Partial Agreement without amendment or objections.

**8. PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES WITH A VIEW TO ELECTION OF THE CPC CHAIR AND TWO VICE-CHAIRS AND POSSIBLE ELECTION OF THE CPC CHAIR AND TWO VICE-CHAIRS** [AP/CAT\(2007\)32](#) (See Art. 4 - Chair)

K. Zyman recalled that in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Bureau are elected for a 1-year term of office and that they can be re-elected once for another year. Should there be two or more candidates for any of the posts, elections would be held electronically by a secret ballot on 4 November. Should there be single candidates for each post, the CPCs would be invited to elect a Chair and two Vice-Chairs. The current Chair and two Vice-Chairs were eligible to continue in their current posts in the Bureau, having only served one year. Interested candidates for the three posts were invited to signal their interest. The Chair expressed her willingness to continue in this capacity. As there were no nominations or other candidates for the post of the Chair, N. Holcinger was reconducted for another year. M. Mala and A. Balducci also expressed their willingness to serve another year in the same capacity of Vice-Chairs. No new candidates came forward, therefore they were also reconducted as Vice-Chairs for another year.

**Decision:** Natasa Holcinger (Croatia) was elected Chair for the 2<sup>nd</sup> 1-year term. M. Mala (Cyprus) and A. Balducci (San Marino) were elected Vice-Chairs for a 2<sup>nd</sup> 1-year term.

**Wednesday, 4 November 2020**

## **9. PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES 2020**

### **9.1. Statutory meetings**

K. Zyman recalled that the last Joint Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents and Directors of the Specialised Centres was held on 5 and 6 November 2019 [AP/CAT\(2019\)12](#) in Paris. Two meetings of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents were held in a video-conference format, on 8 April 2020 ([AP/CAT\(2020\)02](#)) and 2 October 2020 ([AP/CAT\(2020\)05](#)) respectively. The meeting reports were shared with the CPC within a short period of time after each meeting and they were also uploaded to the draft agenda of the current meeting.

There were no comments or revision of all three meeting reports.

## **8. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND TWO VICE-CHAIRS (CONTINUATION)**

A secret ballot was not required as the incumbent Chair and Vice-Chairs had been confirmed to serve for a second 1-year term the previous day. In the light of the Chair keeping her post for the 2<sup>nd</sup> term of office, the previous Chair (A. Freitas (Portugal)) remains, in accordance with Article 7bis of the Rules of Procedure, a member of the Bureau for a year.

### **9.2. Specialised Centres: [AP/CAT\(2020\)01](#)**

#### **Results of 2020 projects and proposals for 2021 projects**

The directors of specialised centres presented the 2020 project achievements and their proposals for 2021 projects. Each project falls under one or more of the following priority actions of the Sendai Framework:

- Using scientific and technological knowledge
- Developing cooperation among all decision-makers
- Promoting risk culture among the population
- Fostering population's active participation

#### **N. Bouchahm. Scientific and Technical Research Centre on Arid Regions (CRSTRA), Algeria**

The new director, Mr Kechebar Mohamed Saif Allah, introduced himself. He expressed his satisfaction to participate in the meeting, drawing attention to the beneficial nature of the cooperation with EUR-OPA in managing major hazards. The Agreement had been instrumental in helping CRSTRA to address droughts better through the pooling of knowledge and skills, quantification of major risks and awareness raising. Although Algeria is withdrawing, he hoped to continue cooperation with EUR-OPA. K. Zyman assured that they would indeed find ways to continue the cooperation and thanked him for his words.

N. Bouchahm presented the 2020 projects. CRSTRA coordinated the project on Heatwave and risk adaptation strategies. The project aims to identify heatwave spots in arid urban regions. Unfortunately, the centre only partially carried out the project due to the pandemic and the resulting lockdown. For example, heatwave sensors could not be positioned in Biskra and awareness-raising campaigns had to be postponed. However, researchers working on the heatwave project were able to participate in the Major Hazards Seminar organised by CERU, Portugal. Algeria's withdrawal from the Agreement casts doubt as to whether the projects could continue in 2021. CRSTRA was a partner in the projects undertaken by CUEBC, Italy and CERG, France but was unable to carry out some of the activities due to the COVID-19 disruption.

#### **S. Badalyan. European Interregional Scientific and Educational Centre on Major Risk Management, (ECRM), Armenia**

ECRM's 2020 project was to develop proposals to reflect in the Armenian Constitution provisions that would create a guarantee for human rights during emergencies. To date, no mechanism exists to protect lives, property, environment or guarantee the safety of citizens in the occurrence of natural disasters or emergency situations. ECRM aimed to raise awareness that expertise in DRR is necessary



in the drafting of the relevant chapters of the constitution and to induce changes in behaviour. The project partners were ICoD, Malta and ECNTRM, Russian Federation who examined their respective constitutions.

As partner to CUEBC (Italy) on the LoKSAND project which involves the media and schools, ECRM intends to oversee the setting up of new Protect Your Territory (PYT) sites in different regions to keep school children informed. To this end, tests were set up for evaluating the vulnerability of schools involving directors of schools, teachers and parents. It involved several social and public organisations aiming to raise awareness and reduce the risk of major hazards in specific territories. In 2021, ECRM will continue its work on the constitutional project.

#### **D. Christou. European Centre for Disaster Awareness (BeSafeNet), Cyprus**

D. Christou briefly presented the aims and goals of the BeSafeNet project, outlining the different hazards on which the 2021 Olympiad would be based. The Olympiad is a tool for awareness raising in secondary schools and promoting adequate behaviour of children during disasters. He compared the number of participating teams (113 in 2019 and 272 in 2020). In 2020, the students wrote 185 essays about their views, knowledge and/or experience of hazards. He appealed to the participants to share the news about the Olympiad within their professional and social networks and ministries. The Award Ceremony was held online on 10 September for the winning teams from Greece (1<sup>st</sup>), Romania (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Bulgaria (3<sup>rd</sup>). D. Christou shared the new BeSafeNet leaflet which targets a younger audience. D Christou informed about the difficulties encountered by the BeSafeNet IT partner that was negatively impacted by the pandemic. In consequence, BeSafeNet is in the process of migrating its website using a new service provider. Registration is now open for the next 2021 Olympiad slated for 19 February 2021 at 09:00 GMT. [Link to BeSafeNet presentation](#)

BeSafeNet partnered with V. Poyarkov, (Ukraine), A. Micallef (Malta) and D. Castaldini (Italy), who make up the Editorial Board. V. Poyarkov noted the keenness of the schools to participate and the importance of understanding how students perceive disasters. He invited centres to go through the knowledge tests and pass on any critical views, to enable BeSafeNet improve on the existing information. A. Micallef noted that the same countries participated and this shows how BeSafeNet can be used as an educational programme as it is difficult to insert major hazards into existing curricula. Additionally, the recognition continues, through the submission of a peer reviewed paper on marine litter – emphasizing the need to educate citizens through intergenerational learning from parents to children and vice versa. This is true of BeSafeNet. C. Emezie urged all participants to share information about BeSafeNet widely among their networks, adding that the [BeSafeNet leaflet](#) is also available in [French](#) and [Russian](#).

#### **J-P Malet. European Centre on Geomorphological Hazards (CERG), France**

The project was carried out in collaboration with other project centres; GHHD (Georgia), ECILS (North Macedonia), ECNTRM, (Russian Federation) and CRSTRA(Algeria). It focused on the building and testing of low cost sensors for monitoring critical infrastructure, landslides and large engineering projects. The methods, such as satellite imaging techniques, can be used before a landslide to measure movement as the ground shifts or breaks away, whereas sensors on the ground need to be placed where the landslide is likely to occur. Subsequently, the precursors to the crisis are visible and measurable prior to and also during the occurrence. CERG also aims to transfer the methods/software to the project partners for testing and to gather feedback.

In 2021 CERG will prepare tailored guidelines in several languages and organise an intensive course on "Low cost sensors and detection methods for geohazards and infrastructure projects". [Link to presentation](#)

#### **J.G. Goldammer. Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Germany**

J.G. Goldammer shared results of the project on transboundary cooperation in landscape fire management running from 2017 to 2020 with countries such as Chile, Greece, Ukraine, Belarus, Switzerland, North Macedonia, as well as international organisations, e.g. the OSCE. The main objectives were to enhance national, international and interagency cross-boundary dialogue and cooperation in fire management. Furthermore, the project aimed to improve governance of wildfire DRR. Other achievements included the creation of two working groups in the Ukrainian Parliament under the auspices of the Ministry for Environment to develop a strategy for landscape fire management in Ukraine. The government of Ukraine appointed the head of GFMC as co-chair of the Working Group for the development of a Draft State Strategy of a National System of Landscape Fire Management. The GFMC collaborated with the Secretariat to mark the International Day for Disaster Reduction on 13 October.

In 2021, the GFMC will continue its regional cooperation with the OSCE and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) on the *Landscape Fire Management Programme in the Western Balkans*. Transboundary cooperation will also continue with Central Asian countries such as Mongolia, Kazakhstan and China. GFMC work is decentralised to Regional Fire Monitoring Centres in the Russian Federation, North Macedonia and Ukraine. J.G. Goldammer suggested that including them in the EUR-OPA portfolio of centres would enhance its work without placing added financial burden or enlarging the participation in regular meetings. This suggestion was supported by A. Micallef. J.G. Goldammer suggested possibly organising the *High-level consultation on enhancing governance in landscape fire management* in collaboration with Germany during its Chairmanship of the CoE (18 November 2020 to May 2021). The event, foreseen to be held during the Greek Chairmanship (May to November 2020), was cancelled due to the pandemic. [Link to GFMC presentation](#)

### **S. Karma. European Centre for Forest Fires (ECFF), Greece**

ECFF project activities were based on the Sendai Framework 2015-2030, specifically working among people with disabilities to promote their understanding of DRR and include them in the disaster management preparation and response phases. The project also addresses protecting the population against exposure to smoke; specifically, fine and ultrafine particles (UFPs), through awareness raising among vulnerable groups, such as people with respiratory or cardiovascular diseases, elderly, children, infants, pregnant women, smokers, etc. The mapping of high risk areas of forest fires provides on time information for citizens to know about the levels of danger and the appropriate action to take. Communication is enhanced through texting alert messages to the affected areas (112).

S. Karma participated in the BeSafeNet working group meeting held on 4-5 February 2020 in Nicosia and suggested, among other topics, providing material for the website on coping with the environmental and health impacts of forest fires and smoke inhalation on vulnerable groups. A webinar on "*multi-hazards and vulnerable groups: what is the Covid-19 pandemic crisis impacts on people with disabilities in case of coexistence with natural or man-made disasters*" originally planned for September 2020, that was to be organised by ECFF and the Greek General Secretariat for Civil Protection, in collaboration with EUR-OPA, was postponed due to the necessity to concentrate all available resources on the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. However, ECFF intends to organise this in the near future when the sanitary conditions improve.

In 2021, ECFF plans to establish a partnership with ECPFE, Greece and possibly implement the project "*Evacuation of historical places in case of forest fire, focusing on vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities and tourists*". The project will focus on the impact of smoke on firefighters and vulnerable groups of the affected communities, and on safe evacuation for all. Additionally, ECFF has significant expertise on the issues of smoke composition and its environmental and health impacts on possible receptors. Hence, ECFF could provide this knowledge in any relevant EUR-OPA initiatives. [Link to ECFF presentation](#)

### **F. Ferrigni. Centro Universitario Europeo per i Beni Culturali (CUEBC), Italy**

The project entitled *Local knowledge and schools against natural disasters (LoKSAND)* aims to prevent or reduce the impact of disasters through drawing on local knowledge of local risks and involving schools in the activities. The evaluation system of potential threats were recorded on the Protect Your Territory (PYT) website. Information concerning risks was registered, filtered and subsequently transferred to the local authorities e.g., risks related to road networks and highways, water management, geological risks etc. In parallel, the local media were made aware of the risks so that it is known in the public domain and politicians can act accordingly. CUEBC, partnered with CRSTRA, Algeria and ECRM, to define the topics and procedures for the system. Online training sessions were organised to define the format and use of the websites.

CUEBC used the UNESCO site to carry out researches on Amalfi Coast on local risks, rules regarding local planning and development, obvious and hidden risks, a research on memory of risk by seeking documents to ascertain what awareness of risks existed in the local communities. Volunteers were found to be active partners for gathering and publishing information on the website. A second research was conducted to determine which risks applied to the hiking route traversing the Amalfi Coast which covers 15 local communities, all of which are exposed to landslide or hydrogeological hazards. Based on the research, risk maps were produced in collaboration with a centre based in the Slovak Republic to tackle how to filter posts on the websites to ensure that the authorities receive information about genuine risks. The Slovakian Civil Protection Ministry helped in the production of a document setting out a list of activities and cost of implementation. CUEBC plans to launch this project in schools in 2021. [Link to CUEBC presentation](#)

**Adrien Oth. European Centre for Geodynamics and Seismology, Luxembourg**

The ECGS project focuses on seismic monitoring of regions in the Lower Rhine (Germany), Belgium and Luxembourg using a network of 10 seismic stations. The EUR-OPA funds were used to acquire a seismic acquisition system used as a back-up for replacement of defective stations. The pandemic has hampered field work for example by rendering it complicated to move between stations on privately-owned land. In addition, restrictions imposed by the authorities to combat the Covid-19 pandemic put on hold extension of the network of stations. The long term aim remains to gather more information on local seismic activity.

**Anton Micallef. Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Insular Coastal Dynamics, Malta**

Coastal risk assessment and mapping has been carried out over several years. In 2020, the deliverables included organising a workshop on coastal risk assessment (held online) with partner centres. Malta and Italy had sites from which they produced geological and susceptibility risk maps. In NE Gozo, an island in Malta, different coastal shorelines (urban, rocky, cliffs, beaches) were mapped. ICoD will produce a hazard map using the BUWAL hazard matrix which is useful for the implementation of hazard maps in alpine and coastline areas. A. Micallef also shared the Normandy (France) mapping of coastal risks. ICoD makes it a point to acknowledge EUR-OPA in peer-reviewed papers.

As partner to ECRM Armenia, ICoD undertook an analysis of the Constitution of Malta noting that it contained no specific reference to human and civic rights during emergencies. ICoD drew up a "suggested" list of principles for potential inclusion, such as the rights of children including to grow up in a safe, protected and healthy environment, the rights of the elderly, including an environment to encourage healthy ageing, the rights of the vulnerable, disabled and disadvantaged. As partner to BeSafeNet, A. Micallef reviewed the content on the website and added new information on coastal hazards such as sea level rise, tsunamis, hurricanes. In addition, he disseminated the information on the Olympiad competition and evaluated the essays written by the children. [Link to ICoD presentation](#)

**V. Shendova. European Centre on Vulnerability of Industrial Lifeline Systems (ECILS), North Macedonia**

The project on Cultural Heritage and harmonisation of pre-earthquake vulnerability assessment of damage to urban historical monuments was carried out in the old cities of Bitola, Ohrid and Skopje Old Bazaar where the oldest historic buildings date back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Given their exposure to earthquakes, it is important to assess how urban historic centres (UHC) respond to earthquakes, propose steps to mitigate seismic hazards and limit their physical and economic impact. The project also carried out seismic risk assessment of UHC by using multiple specified parameters. Post-earthquake measures include seismic strengthening of old buildings.

In 2021, the project will continue to apply harmonized vulnerability index methods, calibration and seismic vulnerability assessment of other historic buildings. [Link to ECILS presentation](#)

**P. Teves Costa. European Centre on Urban Risks (CERU), Portugal**

The 2020 project analysed the ABS-COVID anthropogenic base factors of COVID-19 spreading in the Portuguese counties. A methodological scheme to collect and process data related to the spread of COVID-19 in order to determine contribution of "human" drivers. The statistics from March to September were presented through a mapping of COVID-19 cases whilst weighing factors such as increase in trend, hotspots, holiday influences and the impact of reopening the counties. Other variables were also considered such as population, socio-economic factors, habitation, mobility etc. The methodology of the study can be used by other countries.

In 2021, CERU will produce preliminary guidelines for fire safety in European hotels under the project on *Earthquake and tsunami ready/safe hotels* in Europe. CERU invited interested centres to collaborate on the project. Awareness sessions on earthquake and tsunami risks to tourists (due to their inability to speak the local language), children and other population groups. [Link to CERU presentation](#)

**E. S. Georgescu. European Centre for Buildings Rehabilitation (ECBR), Romania**

The project focuses on earthquake resilience of important community buildings given that the entire country is earthquake-prone. Buildings constructed before 1940 are in the high risk category. On 22 October, ECBR hosted a webinar on *Seismic risk reduction* addressed to schools and educational facilities. A second online training was held for representatives of local authorities. A follow up survey was disseminated to gauge the knowledge of participants about earthquakes and buildings resilience. ECBR noted the high number of women attendees of both the seminars. The schools received educational materials and a certificate of participation. The project was carried out in collaboration with

ECPFE, Greece. ECBR also looked at the case of an earthquake striking during a pandemic, based on the earthquake that hit Zagreb, Croatia on 22 March.

From 2021, the project will support the National Seismic Risk Reduction Strategy which is intended to be implemented from 2021 to 2050. The strategy aims at saving older buildings with the support of the World Bank. ECBR will also organise more seminars aimed at hospitals, medical, sanitary and crowded facilities. [Link to ECBR presentation](#)

## **I. Oltyan. European Centre for New Technologies of Risk Management (ECNTRM), Russian Federation**

ECNTRM implemented five projects in 2020. Two of the main projects focused on technology for detection and assessment of reliability of significant events in social networks (socio-political, reputational, technological, natural and civil events). Additionally, technology for detecting and analysing rapidly developing social events as they unfold in social networks. The attributes of each event, the graphic form showing the initial source and speed of communication of the information. The social media responses were used to build up models of significantly and rapidly developing events which enabled the project to establish the significance of each event e.g., catastrophic flooding within 5 to 30 minutes and respond in operational terms. For the third project, the pandemic led to the setting up of an educational portals for decision-makers entitled *Protection of the population in emergencies* for digital information and as an educational resource. The technology involves teaching using normal (non-specialist) language by teachers and then using a digital approach developed by the BeSafeNet, to test the different means of responding. This project will continue to run in 2021 with the addition of text and videos to the portal.

ECNTRM partnered with CERG, France on the project to test and diffuse innovative and cost-effective monitoring and early warning systems. ECNTRM also partnered with ECRM, Armenia to analyse the Constitution of the Russian Federation which came into force in 2020. The project will focus on drafting amendments that would safeguard the protection of civil and human rights, to safe life, health and property in emergency situations, providing compensation in the event of damage, since no such provisions are included in the Constitution presently. In 2021, ECNTRM will develop guidelines for emergencies for management bodies and the public as one of many other activities planned for 2021. [Link to ECNTRM presentation](#)

## **10. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

### **10.1 Presentations of publications**

[Draft publication "Disabled Persons in Viral Pandemics: The example of COVID-19"](#)

This paper was prepared by prof. David Alexander, a specialist in DRR and emergency planning management and response which he has studied for the past 40 years, as well as pandemics as disasters which he has analysed for the last 12 years. He shared some salient points. One in six persons is disabled drawn from all different age ranges and varying types of disabilities; motorial to cognitive, temporal to permanent etc. The paper seeks to survey the situation of COVID-19 and disabilities with a view to deriving lessons, practice and experience that would be useful in the current or in future viral pandemic. address DRR expert/studied pandemics in the last 12 years/ or summarise info from science/NGOs, government sources valid Given that at least 100 peer-reviewed papers on the pandemic are being published daily, it is a complex and a challenging subject to address comprehensively. This paper is a summary of information drawn from scientists, NGOs, government reports, quality journalism available at the time it was written. Relevant new material continues to be published.

Viral pandemics tend to exacerbate gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups, people with disabilities belonging to the latter. Access to care is difficult, with welfare greatly reduced. Given the impact of the pandemic, welfare assumes an important role in society and should include and benefit disabled persons; welfare is a human rights issue. The many-sided manifestations of issues connecting COVID-19 to disabilities make it very difficult to address the two issues simultaneously e.g., children with disabilities may have special educational needs, whilst this may be difficult to provide during a lockdown. Similarly, the curtailing of outside playtime during lockdown will disproportionately affect autistic children for whom daily exercise outside is crucial.

Care home infection has been a particular problem with COVID-19, despite the fact that the problem has been known for several years but seldom dealt with. The significant number of deaths recorded for example in UK, Sweden and Italy is illustrative of the problem of disability in care homes. In principle, when assisting and supporting people with disabilities in emergencies, a one-size-fits-all

measure is inadequate. Measures are usually designed to apply to large groups within the whole population affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas people with disabilities require specific provisions. This is not impossible nor unreasonable to achieve with the right sensitivity, responsibility and organisation, more so in disasters or viral pandemics. Specific medical and ethical guidelines have been developed addressing the sensitive issue of rationing acute medical care in pandemic situations, particularly in intensive care wards. Guidelines clearly state that people with disabilities should not be disadvantaged in these circumstances. Such guidelines need to be disseminated and adhered to when it comes to the question of who gets care under life-threatening or all conditions.

In conclusion, disability is a way of life which should not prevent people from living to the best of their potential and their abilities. There is no justification for disadvantaging people with disabilities. In the current pandemic situation, countries that have managed it best are those with the most disciplined population. A culture of fairness and reasonableness towards disabilities is highly variable across European countries and needs to be improved substantially and universally. Two principles should be evident: firstly, when emergencies are managed for and with people with disabilities, they should be protagonists whenever possible and they should be looked after where this is not possible, secondly, this would involve getting together a variety of authorities i.e., the people with disabilities and the organisations that represent them, civil protection organisations/authorities and government representatives along with health and social services to devise solutions to specific problems, solutions that fit the problem because it is properly understood. The care and the shielding of people with disabilities requires input in each member country of the CoE. K. Zyman thanked Prof. Alexander for his presentation and working paper, noting that the paper constitutes the basis for reflection by the CPC and a source of inspiration for a recommendation to be adopted by the CPC. The report will be published as a part of a larger EUR-OPA Major Hazards publication containing also guidelines addressed to various stakeholders and a recommendation.

[Draft publication "Inclusion of migrants and refugees in preparedness and response to biological disasters: case study of the Covid-19 pandemic"](#)

Prof. J. Twigg presented the paper on behalf of the co-authors Lorenzo Guadagno and Reshma Matthews, IOM. The working paper is intended to capture the current situation to identify achievements and gaps and suggest areas for intervention. It is in part a follow up to the 2017 [EUR-OPA publication](#) on Major hazards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees: Their inclusion in disaster preparedness and management.

The methods involved carrying out mostly online wide-ranging document review looking at a range of sources relevant to the pandemic and to issues related to migration with asylum seeking and refugee status. Information was gathered from governments, agency pages, press releases, the news media, preliminary papers from research institutes. Evidence, data and findings were presented in the report under 11 themes of significance for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees as well as the governments. The themes also represent areas where the most information could be obtained.

1. Immigration associated with citizenship and residency rights;
2. Access to health;
3. Access to housing;
4. Access to education;
5. Access to labour and employment;
6. Information and communications;
7. Financial assistance;
8. Material assistance and mutual aid;
9. Advocacy and coordination;
10. Issues of stigmatisation, xenophobia and discrimination;
11. Repatriation and reintegration.

J. Twigg observed that it is still too early to get definitive research findings and analysis on the topic. Moreover, the situation is still changing rapidly. The research had to adapt to these conditions and is therefore not conclusive. However, it does provide a good snapshot of the relevant issues. The study made seven general findings, which could be applied in the second wave of COVID-19.

1. Good policies and practices developed and applied by stakeholders to support migrants, asylum seekers and refugees during this crisis should be continued and developed further to meet future challenges posed by the pandemic.
2. The government and other duty bearers should adopt comprehensive strategies and cross-cutting approaches that go beyond providing services to address underlying factors of vulnerability and marginalisation.

3. Improved data collection is needed to understand and address the risks faced by migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.
4. Coping with the impact of the pandemic requires a multi-stakeholder/all of society approach which would seek to mobilise the capacities of migrants themselves and their groups and organisations.
5. It is essential to plan and implement long term equitable pathways to recovery. Sustained and inclusive efforts are essential in tackling the long term and indirect impact of the pandemic.
6. Policies and interventions should be driven primarily by the needs and rights of the migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. They should have a voice to engage with policy makers and service providers. Particular effort in this context should be made to extend assistance to the most marginalised and excluded groups and individuals e.g., undocumented migrants.
7. Lessons learnt from this pandemic and the relevant practice and approaches should inform action to address the barriers migrants face in their daily lives and to reduce their vulnerability to upcoming crises of all kinds.

Given that this is only a preliminary study, there is still much to learn and the situation is evolving rapidly. The paper is recommended as a starting point although more research is required to understand and promote good practice, understand the problems and solutions in order to address them individually and collectively as a society.

Responding to whether the authors would recommend introducing legal provisions in order to protect migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in pandemic scenarios, it was clarified that the recommendations were primarily made for both practice and regulation. Local institutions are more flexible, adaptive, responsive in legislation prevent the protection of migrants, more so locally than nationally. However more exploration was needed in the area of primary legislation. The European Convention on Human Rights obliges CoE member States, all Parties to the Convention, to guarantee the human rights of all groups of people without discrimination, including migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The question of normative protection of persons belonging to these categories should be borne in mind when discussing both strategic documents or studies or when making recommendations on behalf of the Agreement.

K. Zyman thanked the authors for their excellent work and noted that, similarly to the report on persons with disabilities during pandemics, the report on the situation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees constitutes the basis for reflection by the CPC and a source of inspiration for a recommendation to be adopted by the CPC. The report will be published as a part of a larger EUR-OPA Major Hazards publication containing also guidelines addressed to various stakeholders and a recommendation.

## **10.2 Draft recommendations**

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

The draft text was prepared by the Secretariat, discussed in the Bureau meeting and forwarded to the CPC for consideration. The CPCs were invited to discuss and adopt the draft recommendation. I. Arabidze expressed the importance and topical nature of both themes in the current pandemic situation. The support for disabled persons in viral pandemics and biological disasters does not fall fully within the scope of the Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters. Several government departments such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the Ministry of Health deal with matters relating to disabled persons need to be consulted before the Russian Federation will be in a position to pronounce on the draft recommendation.

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

I. Arabidze explained that this topic falls within the scope of the Ministry of Interior which governs policies relating to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Therefore, it would require some time to obtain an inter-departmental agreement on the approach to be adopted by all the relevant government bodies on these themes. Broadly speaking, EMERCOM support these themes, but would need time until Christmas for this consultation to take place.

K. Zyman recalled that the rules of procedure require unanimity for a recommendation to be adopted. Therefore, texts will not be adopted in the current sitting but only discussed. This does not constitute a setback as the MTP is also to be considered within this timeframe. All were invited to take the time to study the texts. Only the CPCs are required to engage in the discussions relating to the documents and their adoption.

**Decision:** The CPCs will be given until the end of the year to comment on the text of both draft recommendations. Comments will be gathered (in track changes) and sent to CPC members. The Bureau Chair will send the revised text to the CPCs for comments allowing a window of two weeks for any further revisions. Adoption of the texts by written procedure will follow at a later stage.

## **11. OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN 2020**

### **11.1 Other operational activities**

The ICUR 2020 meeting has been postponed until 2022. Further information will be shared at the next Joint Meeting in 2021.

### **11.2 Launch a call for experts for biological and technological hazards**

No urgent decision action is required at this time therefore there were no discussions on this topic.

### **11.3 Visibility**

T. Braulio summed up the action taken by the Secretariat to increase EUR-OPA's visibility as follows:

- Launch of a social media campaign to mark 13 October, the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction highlighting 4 themes; fires, earthquakes, landslides and hydro fossil fuel incidents (e.g., oil spills). This resulted in 61 405 clicks on the dedicated web page "[Stand out in disasters](#)", the [EUR-OPA Facebook page](#) and [Twitter Against Disaster](#). The campaign ran from 7 to 21 October.
- Creation of three short videos for Twitter and for internal use to draw the attention of ambassadors and ministries, particularly the EUR-OPA non-member states. Several themes are covered including fire hazards, drought, dam failures and vulnerable groups; the latter will be circulated on 3 December, Disabled Persons Day.
- Update of the EUR-OPA video to include biological hazards.
- Launch of a quiz on 13 October to test, using the CoE intranet platform, staff and permanent representatives' knowledge of the Agreement. 236 colleagues did the quiz.
- Purchase of visibility items for the 2021 Ministerial Meeting in line with the Agreement's activities such as first aid kits, telephone holders, whistles etc.
- Translation of various existing publications into Greek and Russian. Following a request from the Bureau, the Secretariat is checking the feasibility of translating key documents into Arabic and braille.

## **12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

A. Micallef requested a delay in the financial reporting due to the difficulties resulting from COVID-19. C. Emezic explained that the deadlines were not set by EUR-OPA, rather the Finance Department of the CoE. She stressed the importance of respecting the deadlines set in the grant agreements mainly because any transfers of the balance (grant agreements) could only be processed within the given deadlines.

The directors were asked to resubmit the 2021 project proposals, more so as some centres had to adjust their 2020 activities due to the pandemic.

N. Holcinger, thanked all participants for their contribution and commended the work being done by all. She reminded that more work needed to be done to promote the Agreements' work. She invited participants to take part in the webinar on "Lessons learned on earthquake happening in the midst of a pandemic" on 19 November.

In 2021 the presentations will be made in reverse order alphabetically (Z to A) for the sake of fairness.

## **13. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The Bureau will decide on the date and place of the next meeting. The Executive Secretary thanked all for their participation and closed the meeting.