

The European Security and Defence Union

Disasters, conflicts and humanitarian crises

Europe's strategy to
protect and rescue
people worldwide



Essentials on European defence

Natalia Pouzyreff,
Member of the Assemblée
Nationale, France



Humanitarian aid on the ground

Babatunde Anthony Ojei,
International Rescue
Committee (IRC), Nigeria

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Is the Third World War a bleak prognosis?

Was the Ukrainian war correspondent, Yuriy Butusov, right when he said, in a recent interview in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, that the Third World War has already begun with the war in Ukraine? The Spanish author, Raúl Sánchez Cedillo, in his book *This war will not end in Ukraine*¹ refers back to the slide into World War I and also thinks that the next world war has already begun.

The world order is indeed at a turning point. China and Russia are aiming for a multipolar world to replace the US as the leading power. But will the multipolar world only be a transition phase, at the end of which China will rise to become the leading world power?

While Putin brutalises his country and takes Russia back to the dark ages, the US strongly supports Ukraine. Thus engaged, the US capacity to intervene in another region is weakened from Beijing's perspective, and the US will no longer have the power to prevent China from taking Taiwan by force.

It is therefore plausible that the war in Ukraine is strengthening the ties between Moscow and Beijing, as both have a common adversary: western democracies. In addition, China has a major interest in the war continuing. By keeping the US bound to Europe/Ukraine, China can hasten the advent of a new world order in which, becoming stronger than war-weakened Russia, it can vie with the US to be the world's co-leader, in order to later replace it as the dominant world power.

This China, governed today with an iron fist to the detriment of human rights and democratic values, immense

by its demography, its land mass and its diversity, has succeeded in muzzling the poor masses and boosting its weight in the world by its nuclear weapons, its access to space as well as its enormous armaments projects on land, sea and air.



Hartmut Bühl

photo: private, iStockphoto.com

And what could Europe's role be in a future world order? Without doubt, it must be strong and sovereign to be a solid partner in the global system. French President Emmanuel Macron's vision of a common European political identity should become a common objective. He is convinced that Europe should strive for more strategic autonomy so as not to be drawn into conflicts, which are not in Europe's interest. But Macron is not calling for Europe's military self-sufficiency nor strategic autarky and is not questioning the alliance with the US. Rather, he wants a Europe able to better assert its interests in a new world order.

This is very much in line with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's speech at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 9 May 2023: Europe must not fail to reach out to true partners and allies around the globe and be itself a reliable partner. And its societies must build resilience against every attack on democracy, whether from inside or outside the Union.

1 Raúl Sánchez Cedillo „Dieser Krieg endet nicht in der Ukraine: Argumente für einen konstituierenden Frieden, Transversal Texts, 2023

IMPRESSUM: The European – Security and Defence Union

Headquarters: International Consulting
6, Rue du Château, F 28260 Berchères-sur-Vesgre (FR)
E-Mail: hartmut.buehl@orange.fr

Publisher and Editor in Chief: Hartmut Bühl, Berchères-sur-Vesgre (FR)
Phone: +49/172 32 82 319

E-Mail: hartmut.buehl@orange.fr

Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Nannette Cazaubon, Paris (FR)
E-Mail: nannette.cazaubon@magazine-the-european.com

Editorial Assistant: Céline Angelov, Linz a. Rhein (GE)
E-Mail: editorial.assistant.esdu@gmail.com

Translator: Miriam Newman-Tancredi, Strasbourg (FR) and London (GB)

Layout: Beate Dach, SpreeService, Berlin (GE)

Advertisement & Sales: Hartmut Bühl, Berchères-sur-Vesgre (FR)

Phone: +49/172 32 82 319

Print: Polyprint GmbH (GE)

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The European – Security and Defence Union is the winner of the 2011 European Award for Citizenship, Security and Defence, and was awarded in 2019 the Jury’s Special Prize of the same competition.

Diplomacy

European Political Community meeting in Moldova



Family picture at Mimi Castle in Bulboaca, Moldova, 1 June 2023

European Union, 2023, source: EC – Audiovisual Service

The second European Political Community (EPC) summit was hosted on 1 June 2023 by the Republic of Moldova at Mimi Castle in Bulboaca. Nearly 50 heads of state or government, including the leaders of the EU's 27 Member States, took part in the event. The President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the President of the European Parliament also joined the meeting. Discussions focused on joint efforts for peace and security, as well as energy resilience and connectivity and mobility in Europe. The summit built on the foundations of the initial EPC meeting of October 2022 in

Prague where leaders mainly discussed Russia's war in Ukraine, and the energy crisis. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who attended the second summit in person, pushed for Ukrainian NATO and EU accession. The EPC goes back to an idea of French President Emmanuel Macron who, a year ago, called for a new forum for diplomacy as a way of discussing security challenges such as the war in Ukraine with non-EU countries. Inaugurating the second summit, Moldova's President Maia Sandu said that the European Political Community could "grow into a key platform for pan-European action for security, for peace, for Europe."


Publications

2023 Schuman Report

On 16 May, the Robert Schuman Foundation presented its "Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union 2023" in Paris, in the presence of French Minister of State for Europe Laurence Boone, the foundation's President Jean-Dominique Giuliani and several of the report's authors. The event took place at "Europa Expérience", a new interactive public space dedicated to the European Union.

The 2023 Schuman Report takes stock of the profound changes that have taken place in Europe and that were accelerated by the shock of the Ukraine war. The publication includes contributions from leading personalities, including Moldovan President Maia Sandu, and offers 30 original maps and a full set of annotated statistics.

The book is available in paper and digital versions in French, and in digital format in English. > <https://tinyurl.com/urp2f769>

 **web:** www.robert-schuman.eu

"Mérite Européen"

Former MEP Karl von Wogau awarded

On 15 March, Dr Karl von Wogau, a long-time member of the EPP group in the European Parliament (EP), was honoured by the foundation "Mérite Européen" in the EP in Strasbourg. The German Vice-President of the foundation, Diemut Theato, awarded him the "Mérite Européen" gold medal. In his commendation, former EP President Prof Dr Hans-Gert Pöttering emphasised Wogau's merits especially in the creation of the European single market and the introduction of the euro as a currency in the Union. His tireless efforts for more than a decade as President of the EP's Subcommittee on Security and Defence, to help found the basis for a common European defence, are still valid. In his acceptance speech, Dr von Wogau stressed that the Union was more important than ever, and he called on Europeans to finally make European defence their own.



From left to right: Hans-Gert Pöttering, Diemut Theato, Karl von Wogau, Michael Gahler, and Othmar Karas

photo: © Kangaroo Group

The editors-in-chief of this magazine to which Dr von Wogau contributed a set of essential articles congratulate him on this high award.

Humanitarian aid

The 2023 European Humanitarian Forum

The 2023 European Humanitarian Forum, co-hosted by the European Commission and the Swedish EU Presidency, took place on 20-21 March in Brussels. With over 2,000 participants from EU Member States, international, national and local organisations and partners, countries affected by humanitarian crises and donors, the forum was the opportunity to further strengthen the cooperation and partnership among them. The discussions, political debates and practical workshops allowed to put forward innovative approaches to address the most pressing humanitarian challenges. EU Member States together with the Commission announced the planned humanitarian funding of €8.4bn for 2023.

Key topics discussed included the increasing gap between humanitarian needs and resources, the effectiveness and efficiency in aid delivery, the response to climate related crises, and safe humanitarian action in conflict areas.

Humanitarian needs and resources: the forum identified the expansion of the donor base as a priority, with a focus on “non-traditional” donors such as international financing institutions, the private sector, emerging donors.

Ensuring aid delivery: participants highlighted the importance of ensuring efficient aid delivery through better prioritisation with limited resources, increasing the share of multiannual and flexible funding, and enhancing the participation of local and



Plenary session during the 2023 HUmanitarian Forum, 20 March 2023.

photo: ©ESDU

national actors and women-led organisations.

Climate related crises: the forum discussed ways to mitigate climate-driven disasters, the importance of anticipatory action and of combining approaches to tackle root drivers of crises while addressing immediate needs and strengthen resilience.

Humanitarian action in conflict areas: participants stressed the need for a more systematic approach to intensifying humanitarian diplomacy and investing in community-based initiatives to improve respect for international humanitarian law by armed actors.

Web: <https://europeanhumanitarianforum.eu/>

On our behalf

From issue no 48 (autumn edition) onwards, our magazine will change ownership. Mr Peter Tamm, owner of the Tamm Media Group via his Mittler Report publishing house will take over from the current publisher Mr Hartmut Bühl. Our publication will be integrated in the Mittler Report Verlag GmbH, located in Bonn, Germany.

> <https://mittler-report.de/en>

However, with regard to the concept, the content, the choices and authors to invite and the design of each issue, our magazine will keep its line as a politically independent quarterly publication, as Hartmut Bühl remains the responsible editor-in-chief and will keep his editorial team and collaborators with him.

We will continue to work from Paris, Brussels, London and Berlin; will continue to invite personalities from politics, EU institutions, academics, NGOs and thinktanks to give their view on the European and global

news; will also continue to serve as a platform for professional exchanges of views and discussion on urgent political, economic, and societal issues with the aim to inform our readers widely on complex European and global subjects. We thank our esteemed authors for their engagement and our readers / customers for their loyalty.

Under the new ownership of Mittler Report Verlag, we are looking forward to the new synergies allowed and the opportunity for our magazine – created by Hartmut Bühl over a decade ago – to be widely distributed and to reach new readers.

Nannette Cazaubon and Hartmut Bühl



In the Spotlight

++Civil Protection+++



The EU Civil Protection Mechanism was activated 11 times in 2022 to help countries tackle wildfires

© ECHO, Jeremie Mazena

The European Union Civil Protection Mechanism

European solidarity in action

by Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Crisis Management, European Commission, Brussels

You are at home when you hear the wildfire warning over the radio. You need to leave immediately. Your thoughts race immediately to your children, still at school...

It was August 2022 when France requested help from the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (*hereafter the Mechanism*) in the face of a forest fire over twice as large as any the country had seen for over a decade. The EU immediately sprang into action, mobilising 360 firefighters from Austria, Germany, Poland and Romania and six aerial firefighting airplanes from Greece, Italy and Sweden to tackle the blaze.

When worst-case scenarios become reality

That summer alone, the Mechanism would be activated 11 times to fight forest fires in Europe – deploying 31 aircraft, eight helicopters and six teams to tackle one of the worst forest fire seasons in the continent's history.

These are the moments the Mechanism is there for: when the worst-case scenarios suddenly become reality. Thanks to the Mechanism, team Europe is there wherever and whenever people need it. It shows European solidarity in action.

As Commissioner for Crisis Management, I understand the importance both of disaster resilience and of swift, coordinated response in emergencies. This is what the Mechanism is designed for: when national authorities are overwhelmed and neighbouring countries are threatened, we must come together and respond quickly and effectively to protect everyone.

The Mechanism also focuses on disaster preparedness, national prevention actions and the exchange of best practices. This cooperation is needed now more than ever before. According to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, almost half of the world's population lives in regions highly vulnerable to the worst effects of the climate crisis. In the last decade, deaths from floods, droughts and storms were 15 times higher in these areas. It is imperative that we are prepared to face these disasters together.

In the face of this worsening situation, we must not only prepare for the future but learn from past crises. That's why we have established the five Disaster Resilience Goals to strengthen the Mechanism, anticipating and withstanding the effects of future emergencies. This new policy crosses sectors and borders to save lives and better protect communities.

The Mechanism is there for everyone

Any country can request assistance. This request is received by the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), a hub



“We can only ensure a safer world by working together: to prevent, anticipate and respond to crises and to save lives.”

Janez Lenarčič

has been European Commissioner for Crisis Management since 2019. He was previously the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the EU in Brussels (2014-2016) and State Secretary for European and Foreign Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister in Ljubljana (2008-2014).

based in the European Commission in Brussels that monitors and analyses the global situation 24/7. This centre then coordinates the pooling of national and European resources and ensures rapid deployment through a direct link with national civil protection authorities.

However, as we have seen in recent crises, national resources are often not enough. That’s why we are taking our own steps to boost the EU’s strategic capacities. This year, Commission President von der Leyen announced a doubling of airplane capacities for the upcoming forest fires season. We are also developing strategic stockpiles of key resources (rescEU) to ensure a faster and more comprehensive response – in the fields of health, energy, transport and more.

I am proud to see the Mechanism at work today across the world. Since its creation in 2001, it has responded to over 700 calls for assistance. The fact that almost half of these calls took place in the previous three years shows our increased commitment to delivering aid within the changing risk landscape. In Ukraine, the Mechanism has been running now for over a year – by far its longest and most complex operation.

Enhancing global preparedness and response

As well as bringing together all 36 members¹ of the Mechanism in a common cause, we are working with global partners across the G7, Australia and beyond to strengthen global preparedness and crisis response. This collaborative effort is also strengthening cooperation between the EU and neighbouring countries. In my time as Commissioner, we have welcomed new participating states from the Western Balkans and beyond to the Mechanism, with Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina joining last year and Ukraine joining this April.

It is vital that we continue to invest in our collective resilience and response capacities. As the climate crisis worsens and the geopolitical balance shifts, the work of the Mechanism becomes more important than ever. However, civil protection is

a national competence, meaning the EU can only support and coordinate the efforts of participating countries. That’s why we need to step up our resources together to ensure the Mechanism works to its full potential.

We also need to work with the private sector to ensure that the resources are available when we need them, even when they are in high demand. Because we can only ensure a safer world by working together: to prevent, anticipate and to respond to crises and to save lives.



How does it work?

The **European Union Civil Protection Mechanism** supports EU and non-EU countries responding to emergencies such as natural disasters, health crises or conflicts. Countries can request assistance through the Mechanism when an emergency overwhelms their response capabilities.

Following a country’s request for help, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) coordinates and mobilises the assistance or expertise provided by the Member States. The centre monitors events around the globe 24/7 and ensures rapid deployment of emergency support through a direct link with national civil protection authorities.

72 countries and three international organisations (UNHCR, UN OCHA, WHO) requested assistance in 2022. Out of a total of 106 activations, 30 were inside and 76 outside the EU. Following Russia’s invasion, the support given to Ukraine in 2022 is the largest operation ever under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

Source: European Commission

¹ The 27 EU Member States + 9 participating states (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine)

In the Spotlight +++ European Defence +++

The run for capabilities

Essentials on European defence

by Natalia Pouzyreff, Member of Parliament
(Yvelines/6th district), Member of the Defence
Committee, Assemblée Nationale, Paris

Since 24 February 2022, the war on Europe's doorstep has led to a surge in military spending amongst European countries. Germany has conducted a total shift in its defence policy and has dedicated a special €100bn fund. Poland, for its part, has raised its defence expenditures with the aim of reaching 4% of its GDP and has stated its ambition to have one of the most capable armies in Europe. As for France, the government has issued a new planning defence law (Loi de Programmation Militaire) for 2024-2030 devoting €413bn to its armed forces.

An urgent need for rearmament

The return of a direct threat and the need to refurbish the equipment sent to Ukraine have led to an urgent need for rearmament. Weapons manufacturers have to boost their production. However, recent events have shown that European Member States are struggling to agree on a common purchasing policy. Such non-concerted initiatives jeopardise the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB). The European defence construction relies on a long-term and consistent effort. The challenge faced by European Member States is thus to reconcile short-term answers with the preparation for the future that is key for European strategic autonomy.

Concentrating resources, avoiding dispersion

Several instruments such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund (EDF) have been implemented by the European Union aiming at a more integrated defence capability. Still European policy, based on competition, too often favors a spreading of funding leading to the dispersion in skills and manufacturing capabilities. As an example, the EU HYDEF missile interceptor project has been initially awarded by the Commission to a consortium despite their relatively lower expertise compared to

“Strengthening the European pillar within NATO is not contradictory with the emergence of a European power.”

missile manufacturer MBDA. The European Commission is currently reviewing its position on the matter. If we want to reinforce our EDTIB we have to concentrate resources and build world industrial leaders. This is a matter of consistency and credibility of the defence policy in Europe.

The indispensable interoperability with NATO

Interoperability with NATO capabilities is also a key issue. NATO remains the backbone of the collective defence in Europe. The hypothesis that the conflict in Ukraine will last and that the United States will have to concentrate their forces in the Pacific region cannot be ruled out. In this perspective, European Member States must align their defence policies in

order to assume their responsibilities in sharing the burden of the transatlantic security on one hand and to develop their ability to decide and act by themselves on the other. Indeed, strengthening the European pillar within NATO is not contradictory with the emergence of a European power especially since the same armies are concerned. Furthermore, it is expected by NATO that allies must be able to foster their forces and even take the lead at army corps level. Still the most capable and willing European countries must be able to decide and act together in a coalition in case the United States are not involved. With this in mind, operational readiness must be at the heart of our common defence policy. This will both benefit the transatlantic alliance and European sovereignty.

Natalia Pouzyreff



photo: private

is a member of the French Parliament (Assemblée Nationale). She is a professional engineer who worked for over 25 years in the aerospace and defence industry, first for Thales and then Airbus. Part of her career has been spent abroad, and she was Eurocopter Chief representative in China (2006-2009). In the French Parliament she sits on the Defence Committee, she is a member of the Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly and chairwoman of the group on Russia at the Assemblée Nationale.

NGOs – frontline resilience in a hostile environment

The Syria-Türkiye earthquakes in 2023

by Dr Hazem Rihawi, Senior Programs Manager,
American Relief Coalition for Syria (ARCS) /
Co-Chair of InterAction's Syria Working Group,
Washington DC

On February 6th, 2023, at 4:17 am, a colossal earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale, with its epicenter near Gaziantep, struck the Southern region of Türkiye and Northwest Syria. This seismic event was swiftly followed by another significant earthquake, with a magnitude of 7.6, on the same day at 1:24 pm. The impact of these unprecedented earthquakes, coupled with subsequent powerful tremors and countless aftershocks, has been nothing short of devastating. In Türkiye alone, over half a million structures have suffered damage, while in Northwest Syria, more than 10,600 buildings have been either partially or totally destroyed. The human toll has been staggering, with a reported 50,500 fatalities in Türkiye, 4,540 in Northwest Syria and an additional 1,414 lives lost in government-controlled areas in Syria.

Disastrous conditions for a population in need

The conditions in Northwest Syria created a perfect recipe for a disastrous situation, as nowhere else in the world could these earthquakes have struck a more fatigued and under-served population. In that particular region, approximately 4.5 million Syrians resided, with 4.1 million individuals requiring humanitarian assistance and over 1.8 million being internally displaced. Compounding these difficulties, the humanitarian response in Northwest Syria, after 12 years of protracted crisis, was encountering donor fatigue, resulting in an anticipated 30% reduction in funding for the year 2023. This expected loss of funding has led to a discernible contraction of humanitarian operations by UN agencies and the NGO community, primarily impacting local Syrian non-governmental organizations (SNGOs). Moreover, the situation was further complicated by the fact that the United Nations (UN) agencies faced additional challenges as they were granted authorization by the UN Security Council to carry out life-saving cross-border humanitarian operations solely through a single crossing, Bab Al-Hawa, for only six months at a time, due to restrictions imposed by two veto-wielding countries, Russia and China.

Türkiye and Syria – different realities

As the dawn of February 6th broke in Türkiye and Northwest Syria, revealing scenes of mind-blowing destruction, the stark contrast between the search and rescue operations in these

two regions was truly remarkable. In Türkiye, a coordinated governmental response, complemented by a substantial international effort, unfolded with the arrival of numerous teams from around the globe. Their mission was clear: to save as many lives as possible during the critical first hours and days when the survival of civilians trapped under the rubble hung in precarious balance.

Meanwhile, in Northwest Syria, a different reality played out. With limited resources and heavy equipment, only the Syrians themselves, alongside dedicated Syrian NGOs, tirelessly worked to dig through the wreckage. Their years of experience in saving lives amid the rubble, a result of enduring barrel bombardments and ongoing conflict, allowed them to navigate the treacherous conditions and deliver vital humanitarian assistance to the survivors. In the meantime, the UN, UN agencies and the international community were completely paralyzed at the border and could not figure out a way to overcome political complexities to save lives. As a result, international systems designed to respond to earthquakes did not mobilize within the first critical three days of the earthquake to conduct search and rescue activities in Northwest Syria, nor did they scale up the humanitarian response to the levels required by the increased needs in the area.

NGOs – resilient frontliners

In reality, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), specifically Syrian and Syrian diaspora NGOs, emerged as the resilient frontliners, providing essential aid and support to affected populations in a hostile and complex environment. Despite facing significant challenges, these organizations demonstrated remarkable resilience, resourcefulness, and unwavering dedication.

Dr Hazem Rihawi



photo: private

is the Senior Programs Manager at the American Relief Coalition for Syria (ARCS) and the Co-Chair of InterAction's Syria Working Group. He is a pharmacist who graduated from Aleppo University in Syria and has a Master of Public Health degree from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg

School of Public Health. Dr Rihawi has over 9 years of extensive leadership experience in humanitarian responses, focusing on health and coordination.

GUEST COMMENTARY

Finland in NATO – a bitter geopolitical price for Moscow

by Harald Kujat, former Chief Military Committee NATO, Berlin

On 4 April 2023, 74 years after the founding of the North Atlantic Alliance, Finland was admitted as its 31st member.

The President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, declared that “Finland is committed to the security of all NATO member states”, referring explicitly to one of the core requirements for NATO membership. Finland, like Sweden, whose accession is still awaiting Türkiye’s approval, has excellent credentials for membership. At the same time, Russia, as a consequence of its invasion of Ukraine, has suffered a severe political setback.

Any European state can become a member of the North Atlantic Alliance if it is invited to do so by a unanimous decision of member states. The precondition is that it is in a position to contribute to the security of all member states of the Alliance and further the principles of the North Atlantic Treaty. These notably include a functioning democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.

Ukraine has requested membership once the war is over. In view of its increasingly critical situation, a number of voices have called for Ukraine’s accession while the war is still ongoing, to prevent Russia from winning. However, this would be tantamount to NATO entering the war against Russia.

A comparison with Finland shows that Ukraine is still a long way from NATO membership, judging by the standards of the North Atlantic Treaty. The purpose of the Alliance is not to assume responsibility for the security and defence of a non-NATO state by inviting it to join. The Alliance is one of “mutual collective security”, which means that only a state that can contribute to the security of all other member states in the same way that they contribute to the security of the applicant state can become a member.



In respect of the principles applicable to a state’s internal situation, neither can Ukraine, at least for the foreseeable future, comply with the conditions laid down by the North Atlantic Treaty. If these principles were to be waived in respect of Ukraine, the Alliance would renounce its claim to be a community of values and endanger its political solidarity and inner strength. Particularly as the goals of the Alliance are not only to maintain a collective defence capability but also to preserve peace and international security.

Russia reacted to Finland’s accession by declaring: “Finland’s situation is fundamentally different to that of Ukraine”. From the outset, Moscow has considered NATO enlargement primarily from a strategic angle, considering a country’s geostrategic position and its defensive potential. In other words, the extent to which its NATO membership would alter the strategic balance between Russia and NATO. On these grounds, by invading Ukraine, Russia is prepared to pay a high price to prevent Ukraine from becoming a NATO member, which would very likely mean US armed forces being stationed in Ukraine.

Russia will certainly not give up trying to prevent its geopolitical rival, the US, from gaining strategic advantages by Ukraine joining NATO, particularly that of endangering the nuclear strategic balance between the two nuclear superpowers. This geostrategic antagonism cannot be settled by the war in Ukraine. It can only be settled by European peace and security arrangements which encompass both Ukraine and Russia and in which the great power rivalry between the US and Russia does not endanger European autonomy.

A photograph of two firefighters in full protective gear, including helmets and jackets with reflective stripes, working in a charred forest. They are holding a white fire hose. The ground is covered in black ash and charred remains, with some sparse, dry vegetation. The background shows a dense forest of tall, thin trees, some of which appear to be dead or heavily charred. The sky is overcast and grey.

MAIN TOPIC:
Civil protection and humanitarian aid:
Europe's strategy to help people worldwide

The EU's crisis management system, protecting people and saving lives in emergency situations in Europe and beyond, has received global recognition. But this instrument for collective response must adapt to the sharp increase of emergencies worldwide due to political crises and conflicts, but also natural disasters triggered by climate change driven extreme weather events. A worrying trend that confers a central role to civil protection and emergency management.



The EU's flexible and adaptable crisis management means
Responding to the sharp increase in emergencies across the world

Medical evacuation of a Ukrainian patient to a hospital in the European Union

© European Union, 2022 (photographer: Bartosz Siedlik)

Interview with Julia Stewart-David, Acting Director, Disaster Preparedness and Prevention/Civil Protection Horizontal Issues (ECHO B.1), and Hans Das, Director for Emergency Management and rescEU (ECHO A), DG ECHO, European Commission, Brussels

The European: Ms Stewart-David, Mr Das, you both hold leading positions within the European Commission's Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). Let me first ask some questions on the European Union's (EU) policy on crisis management and civil

protection inside and outside the Union before coming specifically to humanitarian aid, both being complementary. When it comes to civil protection, the EU assumes a supporting role, coordinating voluntary contributions of in-kind assistance from countries participating in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). DG ECHO plays a key role in this coordination process. Ms Stewart-David, could you explain to our readers in what situations the UCPM is triggered?

Julia Stewart-David: All professionals in civil protection and disaster risk management know disasters are getting more and more complex and multi-sectorial. Starting from this basis, when a disaster strikes, any country in the world, but also the

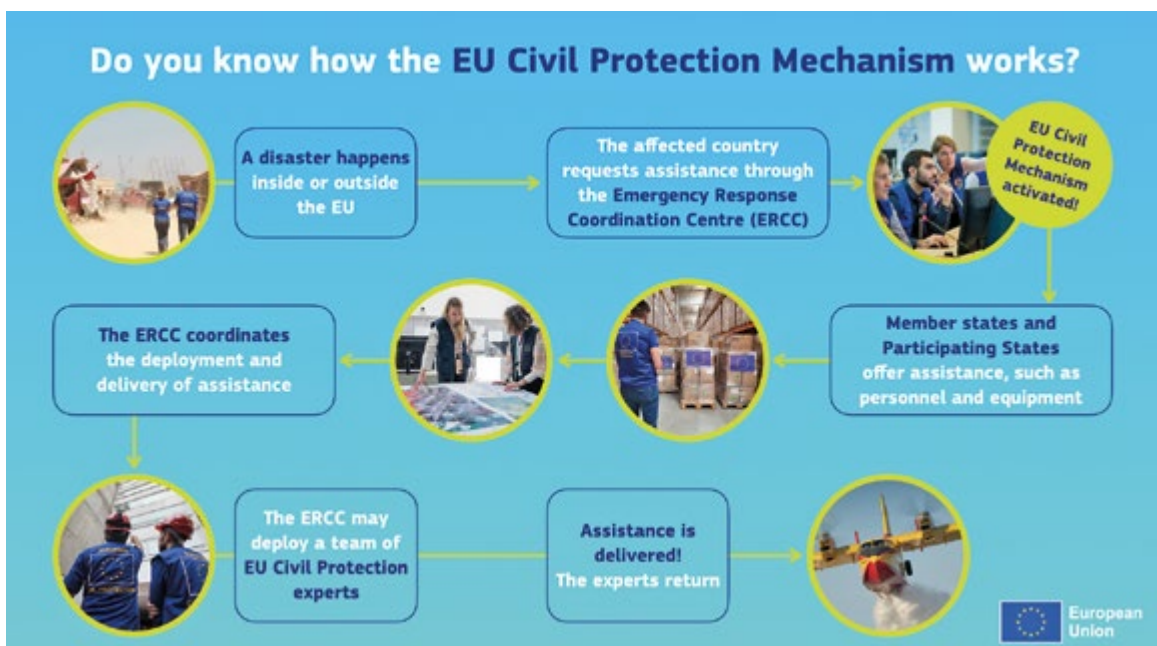


figure 1 The EU Civil Protection Mecanism (UCPM)

UCPM operations between 2002 and 2022

United Nations and its agencies or a relevant international organisation, can call on the EU Civil Protection Mechanism for help. After a request for assistance through the UCPM, the European 24/7 Emergency Response Coordination System (ERCC) coordinates and mobilises assistance and expertise (see figure 1).

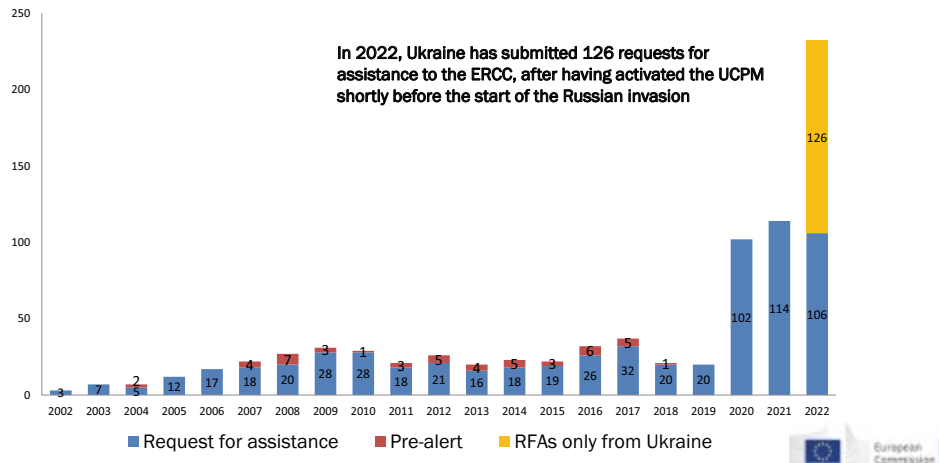


figure 2 The activation of the UCPM between 2002 and 2022

The European: Mr Das, could you tell us how this system can be adapted to the challenges of different types and increasing numbers of crises?

Hans Das: We indeed witness a sharp increase in emergencies across the world that overwhelm national response capacities. Since 2019, the ERCC has received requests for assistance in the context of 322 crisis situations in EU Member States and countries outside the EU. Covid-19, the war in Ukraine, major on-set disasters and the effects of climate change on natural hazards have triggered an exponential increase in UCPM activations (see figure 2).

We expect this trend to continue also in the future. It is extremely worrying. The role of civil protection and emergency management is fundamentally changing. At EU level, we have to focus more on the anticipation of crisis situations and their cascading effects, refine and strengthen our early warning systems and significantly scale up European capacity overall to deal with large-scale emergencies. In DG ECHO we have taken solid steps already last year to reinforce the capability of the ERCC in this regard.

The European: The Union has the ambition to further develop its capacities to be able to react appropriately to crises of different nature, even multifaceted or hybrid, or emerging simultaneously. Ms Stewart-David, is the Union already prepared for this?

Julia Stewart-David: It is true! Crises and emergencies are becoming more and more intersectoral and the Union is confronted with an unprecedented level of threats, some of which have been considered unthinkable until very recently. For this reason, the EU and Member States have collectively identified five disaster resilience goals that address areas with the need to strengthen Europe’s resilience to disasters and crises. Adopted at the beginning of 2023, the European Disaster Resilience Goals are a common baseline to support prevention and preparedness actions for disasters capable of causing multi-country transboundary effects. Prevention and preparedness activities, knowledge sharing, and cross-border and international cooperation are key.

The European: Mr Das, in this context, is a voluntary European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP) to which nations commit resources such as medical teams, experts, specialised equipment, or transportation still adapted to these new challenges?

Hans Das: The UCPM has significantly expanded the response capability of the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP) in recent years. The ECPP has become a cornerstone of Europe’s capacity to quickly mobilise modules and teams across borders and into a variety of disaster scenarios. It is indeed based on voluntary contributions but follows capacity goals that are defined together with Member States. The ERCC regularly invites Member States to mobilise their capacities from the pool when needed and with great success.

The earthquake in Türkiye and Syria is the most recent example, where the UCPM deployed 32 search and rescue and six emergency medical teams, many of which are part of the ECPP. This significant EU response also showed that our emphasis in quality is paying off: the statistics show that our EU teams performed significantly better than other international teams, both in terms of lives saved and in terms of patients treated.

The European: But is this sufficient? Shouldn’t the EU rather create baseline commitments, eg the stockpiling of equipment similar to medical stockpiling?

Hans Das: We have indeed witnessed crisis situations in which the ECPP did not suffice or could not provide the right type of response capacity. For this reason, in 2020, DG ECHO started to develop rescEU, the EU’s strategic safety net of its own response capacities. Under rescEU, DG ECHO has contracted the development of large medical and CBRN stockpiles, CBRN decontamination modules, emergency shelter, generator stockpiles, MEDEVAC planes, multi-purpose planes, field hospitals and firefighting aircraft. Well over €2bn are gradually being made available to develop rescEU. Together

→ Continued on page 16



Hartmut Bühl (middle) meeting with Julia Stewart-David and Hans Das in Brussels, May 2023

photo: ©European Commission

with the ECPP, rescEU builds a unique and additional layer of protection against large-scale emergencies.

The European: *A year ago, in March 2022, the EU Council adopted conclusions calling for the adaptation of civil protection to extreme weather events resulting from climate change. What are the implications for DG ECHO's work?*

Julia Stewart-David: Climate change is and will be the main driver of emergencies in Europe and worldwide. As a result of the Council Conclusions, DG ECHO has launched a study to assess how to transform the UCPM into a greener instrument. The study is at its inception phase, but its aim would be to give us further concrete steps to make sure European civil protection's own impact on climate and the environment will be reduced.

“The role of civil protection and emergency management is fundamentally changing.”

Hans Das

We also regularly support Member States with prevention activities aiming at reducing the risks and impact of extreme weather events such as floods, wildfires and heatwaves. Our support is also translated into several prevention and preparedness projects¹ being financed through our calls.

The European: *On the practical on-site situation, Mr Das, while the needs for humanitarian aid are immense and still growing, budgets are limited. This leads to the problem of prioritisation for on-site help. In other words: who on the ground will receive help, who will not and who decides?*

Hans Das: The decision-making process for prioritising who receives humanitarian aid on the ground can be complex and varies depending on the specific situation. Under the UCPM, we deliver in-kind assistance, deploy modules and teams and provide expertise based on a clear request for assistance

from the national authorities or the UN. The ERCC is in 24/7 contact with the affected countries and reviews their needs assessment on a constant basis. This ensures that emergency assistance is always tailor-made to the crisis and reflects real priorities.

The European: *But what happens when different countries request the same type of assistance and there is a general lack of capacity in Member States and the ECPP?*

Hans Das: In this case, we mobilise rescEU and apply a methodology that takes into account factors such as the severity of need, the vulnerability of the affected population, the availability of other resources, and the capacity of local authorities and communities to respond. In terms of humanitarian funding, similar comprehensive needs assessments and methodologies for rapid and anticipatory financing in the context of on-set disaster are used.

The European: *I have the impression that since the Russian attack on Ukraine, the EU crisis management players have accelerated the decision-making process. What are the implications for your work at the operational level?*

Hans Das: The EU crisis management activities of the EU for Ukraine are very much cross-sectorial and are coordinated in large part by the Emergency Response Coordination Centre, which is also the operational heart of the UCPM. We are conducting the longest and most complex emergency response operation in the EU's history, covering not only traditional civil protection needs but also needs in areas as diverse as energy, agriculture, transport and digital.

The European: *Ms Stewart-David, I see that you want comment?*

Julia Stewart-David: In the past 10 years, each big emergency Europe has faced has reformed the role of the UCPM. This is reflected in the recent legislative changes of the UCPM Regulation 1313/2013. I want to give you some examples: in 2017, the wildfire crisis in Portugal led to the origin to the rescEU stockpile, the ECPP and the UCPM Knowledge Network;

¹ <https://tinyurl.com/yc7jfytu>

in 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic brought us a rescEU reinforcement and the commitment to identify disaster resilience goals and disaster scenarios as well as making our system more flexible by enabling the Commission to directly procure rescEU capacities. With Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine we have deepened our cooperation with the private, energy and security sectors but not only. The instability in Europe has also strengthened our conviction that cooperation with our partner countries is central and this is why since 2022 we have welcomed three new Participating States to the mechanism: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine.

The European: *Mr Das, in the area of emergency management in humanitarian aid, what are some of ECHO's innovative approaches to face the increase of needs across the world?*

Hans Das: Today, humanitarian needs are at an all-time high. According to the UN, in 2023, 339 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection. This is a significant increase from the 274 million people in need in 2022, which was already the highest figure in decades. As needs soar, humanitarian actors are called to step up to the challenge. They must adapt to fast-changing scenarios where even the shortest delay in the field response might cost lives and further deteriorate the situation. To increase the EU's own response capacity in humanitarian aid, in 2022, DG ECHO has, for example, created the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC), which is a set of operational tools designed to fill gaps in the humanitarian response to sudden-onset natural hazards and human-induced disasters (*see box below*). Finally, we have proposed a new humanitarian logistics policy, encouraging the international humanitarian community to develop more joined up and innovative approaches to logistics in humanitarian



The European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC)

Since its inception, the EHRC has responded to 12 humanitarian crises worldwide. For Ukraine, since April 2022, the EHRC has provided common logistics and transportation services to over 60 humanitarian partners. It carried out over 940 transport operations and facilitated the delivery of over 13,000 tonnes to "hard to reach" destinations. For Syria, the EHRC has mobilised its EU Humanitarian Air Bridge and Stockpiles capacities to deliver emergency supplies to the people affected by the earthquakes of February 2023. Since the beginning of 2022, the EU has organised 40 Humanitarian Air Bridge operations worldwide in aid of Afghanistan, Madagascar, Moldova, Somalia, Burkina Faso, and Syria. The EHRC is managed by the same European Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) that also coordinates UCPM operations, ensuring full synergies and complementarities between EU instruments.

“Climate change is and will be the main driver of emergencies in Europe and worldwide.”

Julia Stewart-David

operations, which I believe can be a game changer in a context of increasing needs.

The European: *This leads me to my last question to you both. Crisis responders and humanitarian aid workers intervening in emergency areas run a high risk of being killed, kidnapped, wounded or arrested. How can their protection be ameliorated?*

Julia Stewart-David: Indeed, first responders are frequently exposed to dangerous situations and my deep and sincere recognition goes to all Member States experts and volunteers being the real representation of European solidarity. From our side, we are committed to improving the knowledge and the competences of the civil protection experts deployed as well as their national civil protection authorities through dedicated capacity-building projects and UCPM exercises aiming at testing capacities and systems to be better prepared for and during crises. Under the umbrella of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network, we are constantly striving for up-to-date and realistic scenarios to exercise and test knowledge and skills not normally exercised. Recently we have included new scenarios such as epidemics, CBRN incidents, marine pollution and much more.

Hans Das: I agree with Julia. Another element of protection around emergency management concerns the sufficiently adapted and right type of equipment for UCPM emergency response intervention. This holds true for disasters, such as forest fires, but also for new or re-emerging type of risks, such as CBRN. In the area of wildfires, we could see that personal protective equipment plays a major role in keeping firefighters safe. This is something that needs to be considered when, for example, deploying firefighting teams from northern Europe to the south where the fire hazard has different dimensions than in the north. Modules need to adapt to these different circumstances for the safety of their staff. The same holds true for CBRN risks. Search and rescue, medical care and other teams need to be adapted and protected when responding to large-scale CBRN emergencies. Via the ECPP the UCPM finances, among other things, the adaptation of existing modules to such scenarios, for example.

The European: *I thank you both for this conversation and wish you success for your important engagement.*

Web: <https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu>

Building on over a decade of EU support on civil protection

European neighbourhood solidarity and crisis management activities

Emergency situation crisis room in Yerevan, Armenia, October 2022

photo: Tristan Simonart

by **Tristan Simonart**, Team Leader, International Cooperation, DG ECHO, European Commission, Brussels

Due to their immediate geographic proximity, the European Union (EU) and its eastern and southern neighbouring regions and countries face similar cross-border disaster risks. Some of them are further exacerbated by the severe and increasing impact of climate change, as already seen this year with pre-summer forest fires and devastating flash floods in Algeria, Jordan, Tunisia and Italy, following months of severe and unprecedented drought.

In times of sudden crisis and major disasters, European neighbours know that they can rely on European solidarity coordinated by the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and its Emergency Response Crisis Centre (ERCC). This solidarity has been reinforced year after year and reached an unprecedented level of response during the global Covid-19 health crisis, the February 2023 quakes in Türkiye and Syria,

recent floods in Italy's Emilia-Romagna region, as well as since the start of the war of aggression against Ukraine in early 2022.

A model for southern and eastern countries

From that perspective the European civil protection solidarity system, building on over a decade of EU support on civil protection, became a real model that inspires many other countries and regions worldwide. Beside the 24/7 response provided by the ERCC, there is also an increasing readiness and willingness from these eastern and southern countries to invest much more in prevention and preparedness against future upcoming crises.

Furthermore, most of them aim to step up their longstanding or "historical" status of international assistance recipient countries towards the status of contributing countries, in the limits of their resources and capabilities. They want to become part of the game and to play a role by offering assistance to others, as it was confirmed by the Director General of Palestinian Civil

Tristan Simonart



Photo: National authorities of Uzbekistan

has been since December 2020 Team Leader International Cooperation at the European Commission DG ECHO (Unit B1 – civil protection horizontal issues) Previously, he was serving the Commission in the implementation of the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence programme (2013-2020) and led the EU CBRN-E security research programme (FP7-H2020) as liaison officer.

Before 2008 he headed the water and environment service of the Pasteur Institute in Lille, coordinated EU and NATO funded activities on water quality and bioterrorism in Central Asia, Russia, Lebanon and Türkiye.

“The European civil protection solidarity system, building on over a decade of EU support on civil protection, became a real model that today inspires many other countries and regions worldwide.”



*Tsunami evacuation route
in Arabic and Hebrew,
Tel Aviv, March 2023*

photo: Tristan Simonart

Defence, Major General Alabed I A Khalil, in March 2023: “We deployed a Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team to Türkiye in February 2023 after the earthquakes and, as the Palestinian Civil Defence Authority, we stand ready to do the same or more with the EU and any of our neighbours in the future, would a new crisis hit them at any time.”

Principles and strategies for regional cooperation

As contribution to these developments, the European Commission Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) has developed in the last two years a more acute and bottom-up regional cooperation and partnership strategy in its neighbourhood, under the umbrella of the UCPM. This year, DG ECHO is launching a series of new regional initiatives and actions aimed at reinforcing cross-border cooperation on prevention, preparedness and operational interactions needed for a quicker, more efficient and less expensive response in case of a crisis.

The renewed civil protection cooperation strategy is anchored in the European neighbourhood under several core principles, being progressively implemented in three geographic regions:

- Enlargement countries: Western Balkans and Türkiye
- Eastern partnership: Armenia, Azerbaijan, (Belarus), Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine
- Southern neighbourhood: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, (Syria).

Principle 1: Reinforcing the EU civil protection cooperation diplomacy by anchoring and boosting the UCPM cooperation into the existing regional policy and technical frameworks, in close cooperation.

In the Mediterranean this translates into cooperation with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). In southeastern Europe, while almost all the Western Balkans became participating states to the UCPM,¹ this approach aims at close regional cooperation with the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI SEE) at a technical level, with the Regional Cooperation Council for Southeastern Europe (RCC SEE) at a policy level, as well as with the UNDRR Europe office.²

Principle 2: Leveraging capacity-building regional cooperation with concrete new civil protection programmes and presence on the ground of senior regional experts allowing DG ECHO to leverage its engagement with countries on civil protection.

In the Western Balkans and Türkiye, a new regional flagship action (the IPA CARE 2023-2027) has been recently launched and a permanent senior technical on-site advisor, Sergej Anagnosti, has been deployed in Belgrade.

In the Mediterranean a new programme on Prevention, Preparedness, Response to natural & man-made Disasters (PPRD 2023-2025) was launched during the climate change and civil protection high level event in Rome on 5-7 June. The region can also rely on the full-time presence of the senior regional expert in Tunis, Colonel Major Mohamed Ataknit.

Principle 3: Scaling up the use of available UCPM services to the benefit of the partnership and cooperation between DG ECHO, the EU and the countries from the region. These UCPM benefits may include a variety of tools like the access to calls for proposals for prevention and preparedness projects (bilateral and regional projects); peer reviews; the participation in training programmes; exchanges of experts; table top, module or full scale exercises; as well as the UCPM knowledge network.



Newly appointed senior regional experts

Sergej Anagnosti, Serbia

is currently a permanent EU senior technical on-site advisor for the Western Balkans and Türkiye, based in Belgrade. He has been working since 2005 as international expert on disaster risk management and civil protection issues in the EU, Balkans, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and South Caucasus. From 2013 to 2019 he was the Team Leader of the EU Flagship Initiative – Program for the Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and Man-made Disasters in the Eastern Partnership Region.



photo: © private

Colonel Major Mohamed Ataknit, Tunisia

is currently working as an EU long-term on-site advisor for southern neighbourhood countries, based in Tunis. As a former Colonel Major, he was the Director of the Tunisian National School of Civil Protection from 2012 to 2020. He held the primary duties of Regional Director of Civil Protection in 3 governorates of Tunisia, National Director of Crisis Management and National Director of training in the Tunisian National Office for Civil Protection.



photo: © private

¹ With the exception of Kosovo (This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence”).

² United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Regional Office for Europe & Central Asia (ROECA)

Whole-of-society resilience and Swedish total defence

Alone is not strong!

by Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, Director General,
Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB)

Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine, now in its second year, has had devastating effects on the Ukrainian people, with serious spillover effects both in Europe and globally. In laying bare some of Europe's strategic vulnerabilities, the war reinforces our collective need to build up truly resilient societies, both at the level of the individual and systemically, capable of withstanding all manner of inevitable shocks. This war in Europe is a stark reminder that the current risk landscape is truly multifaceted, increasingly complex and constantly shifting. Indeed, in the last year alone, Europe has witnessed severe physical and cyber-enabled attacks on critical infrastructure and services, on- and offline disinformation campaigns, terrorist attacks, continued large-scale migration, and strained global supply chains. All the while, the continent was confronted with different natural disaster risks, including earthquakes, floods, and wildfires (their effects exacerbated in one way or another by climate change, urbanisation and other megatrends), but also different "normal" accidents and "run-of-the-mill" emergencies, which, while hugely disruptive to people, rarely make the headlines. Given the challenges societies face today, an inclusive and nimble approach accounting for all manner of risks, from the mundane to the extraordinary, including war, is essential.

Sweden's dual approach

Sweden's approach in confronting these challenges is centred on a whole-of-society "total defence" concept consisting of two parts. Firstly, the **military component**, which involves not least the Swedish Armed Forces and Home Guard, is responsible

“The logic is simple – in preparing for the worst, Sweden should be ready to deal with the rest.”

for defending Sweden's territorial borders. Secondly, the **civil defence component** is intended to guarantee that there is a strong and resilient civilian society capable of enabling the military defence to function for an extended period, but also to ensure that vital societal functions (eg healthcare, child and elderly care, emergency services, food and water supply, heating, financial services, transportation, telecommunications, etc) are up and running at all times, even during times of war.¹

A wide range of actors in society, including central government authorities, municipalities, regions, companies, voluntary organisations, religious groups, and individual citizens, are integral parts of Swedish civil defence, which, while ultimately focused on preparing Sweden for a worst-case scenario, war, seeks to strengthen the country's collective ability to manage other peace-time challenges as well. The logic here is simple – in preparing for the worst, Sweden should be ready to deal with the rest.

The need to reinforce citizen-level preparedness as part of whole-of-society resilience is also one of the priorities of the Swedish EU Presidency, which reflects current EU civil protection policy embodied by the European Commission's recently published Disaster Resilience Goals² that emphasise the need for greater public risk awareness. Under the leadership of the Swedish Presidency, a new EU-wide concept, "preparEU", was developed, to take forward Union work in this important area.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency Strengthening the population's resilience

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) plays a leading role in Sweden's civil defence in strengthening the population's overall resilience and willingness to support the nation's total defence objectives. Inherent in this work is the need to show the citizens that they are both key players in but also core beneficiaries of a total defence. To this end, MSB is working through different on- and offline campaigns targeting different segments of society, including young children and teenagers, to explain what this new system of total defence is and what obligations citizens have in it.³

Crucially, these public information campaigns are also intended to highlight all the "little things" that individuals can do in their daily lives to enhance their preparedness and make

1 As of 1 October 2022, the Swedish civil defence system is centred on a new structure organised both in sectors (ten sectors identified) and geographically (six regional areas with specific civil defence responsibilities).

2 The European Commission's Disaster Resilience Goals: <https://bit.ly/3if4JtC>

3 Sweden's "total defence duty" entails that anyone between the ages of 16 and 70 living in Sweden (including non-citizens) can be called up to support different total defence-related activities.



Charlotte Petri Gornitzka discussing with Commissioner Janez Lenarčič at the EU's Emergency Response Coordination Centre in Brussels

© EU/ERCC

themselves less vulnerable, for instance by getting to know their neighbours better, joining a volunteer organisation, being more cyber-aware, being more informed media consumers in an era marked by widespread disinformation, and always keeping a seven-day supply of essential supplies at home. The better prepared and informed members of the public are, the more likely they face crises.

Securing supply chains

Besides involving the public, a robust civil defence relies on deep engagement with but also buy-in from the private sector, which provides essential services to both government authorities and individuals alike. To this end, the MSB plays an integral role in the newly established national public-private council on crisis preparedness and total defence, chaired by the Swedish minister for civil defence. This council provides an opportunity to discuss issues related to supply chain security. In addition, the MSB is working with a wide range of public and private actors to make sure that the country's public shelters are fit-for-purpose, easy to locate and accessible.

Fostering cyberdefence

The MSB, together with other key government authorities, is working to further build out the country's cyberdefences, and, in parallel, to implement key cybersecurity legislation to strengthen the resilience of Sweden's physical infrastructure. This is in close cooperation with a wide range of actors both in Europe and around the world on the basis of the EU Directive on Network and Information Security (NIS2) and the EU's new Critical Entities Resilience (CER) Directive.

Investing in partnerships

Sweden will continue to invest in relations with our Nordic and Baltic partners, as well as with the EU, including through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and NATO as well as various UN agencies, NGOs, the US, other third countries

and the private sector, with pragmatism and determination, building stronger bridges between communities. In this regard, the MSB strongly supports the development of rescEU under the UCPM, including EU-financed shelter capacities hosted by Sweden, which have been deployed to support different operations with a clear humanitarian component, first in Ukraine and most recently in Türkiye. Sweden has also long been an active partner of NATO and looks forward to joining the alliance, contributing even more as a fully-fledged member.

The way ahead

Sweden is working hard at home and together with partners in Europe and around the world to strengthen our collective ability to respond to and quickly recover from the many risks and threats that our societies face today. As the geopolitical landscape shifts, so too must shift our approach. For Sweden it is the return to total defence thinking, of which whole-of-society resilience is a foundational element. Our challenge is to effectively make best use of existing domestic and international arrangements to ensure that Swedish total defence capacities provide added value to partners as well.

Charlotte Petri Gornitzka

has been the Director General of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency since December 2021. With over 20 years of experience in international development cooperation, she has, among many other positions, been the Assistant Secretary-General for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Chair of the Development Assistance Committee at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In addition, she served as the Director General for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) for six years.

Tangible impacts on the region's citizens

Union for the Mediterranean, a close cooperation in civil protection

Interview with Ambassador Dr John Paul Grech,
Deputy Secretary General, Social & Civil Affairs,
Union for the Mediterranean, Barcelona

Hartmut Bühl: *Ambassador Grech, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an intergovernmental Euro-Mediterranean organisation aimed at contributing to regional stability, human development and integration: what is the added value of the UfM to security and stability?*

John Paul Grech: The UfM was created in 2008. It is a unique inter-governmental organisation, bringing together 43 countries on an equal footing. These consist of the EU Member States and 16 countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (see box). The main added value of the UfM lies in the interrelation created between the policy dimension and its operational translation into concrete activities, projects and initiatives, with tangible impacts on the region's citizens.

Nannette Cazaubon: *You are the Deputy Secretary General of the UfM in charge of Social and Civil Affairs, which includes civil protection. How is your work linked to the European Union's efforts in managing disasters and crises?*

John Paul Grech: We cooperate closely with the European Commission, in particular with the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). The UfM's engagement with DG ECHO serves as a link and relay to promote, amplify and support the EU's cooperation strategy towards the countries of the south and vice versa.

Nannette Cazaubon: *Is there any common programme?*

John Paul Grech: The EU-funded flagship programme for civil protection in the Euro-Mediterranean region is the PPRD South (Prevention, Preparedness and Response to natural and man-made Disasters in EU Southern Neighbourhood countries). Since January 2023, it has entered its fourth phase since its creation in 2009. In this new variation, it is called PPRD Med (2022-2025).



photo: UfM

“I remain impressed by the strong convening power which the organisation has developed over the years.”

Ambassador John Paul Grech

Hartmut Bühl: *What are the priorities and the countries involved, and how does the UfM contribute to PPRD Med?*

John Paul Grech: This new phase will focus on new technology as well as the strengthening of regional and sub-regional cooperation. It concerns ten partner countries in the South (Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and Palestine). The UfM brings visibility and expertise, as well as political support to the project.

Nannette Cazaubon: *Let me ask you for more details about the organisation of the UfM. How is the political dimension structured and the regional cooperation organised?*

John Paul Grech: The specific instrument behind the whole UfM rationale are the regional dialogue platforms. These aim to establish exchange networks between countries, institutions and civil society, through thematic activities emanating from the mandate of the organisation. These dialogue platforms meet periodically, in stages, supported by working groups which feed into their reflections. The platforms give life to new ideas, initiatives and projects that are taken up by countries or

other entities, with a view to developing and conducting roadmaps that fit into the UfM's established priorities and which meet the expectations of its different partners.

Hartmut Bühl: *Bringing so many countries around the table is not easy to deal with. What are the challenges of this cooperation, and what are the areas where tangible progress has been made so far?*

John Paul Grech: The UfM works on the principle of consensus, meaning that projects and initiatives are only agreed once all member states have indicated their acceptance, via the adoption procedures provided by the UfM Senior Officials structure which meets on a regular basis. All business is conducted following approval through an agreed system involving a co-presidency, composed of the EU and representatives of the non-EU Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, a role currently undertaken by Jordan. I remain impressed by the strong convening power that the organisation has developed over the years and of the sense of ownership that all member states demonstrate in our day-to-day work. Today the UfM is an indispensable inter-governmental organisation to which the EU and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries alike refer within the context of implementing the New Agenda for the Mediterranean.

Nannette Cazaubon: *We have heard that the EU is launching several civil protection programmes in the Mediterranean this year. Can you tell us more about these programmes and how they will be linked to the objectives of the UfM?*

John Paul Grech: Indeed, the European Commission will launch several programmes this year:

1. As I already mentioned, a flagship programme entitled "Prevention, Preparedness and Response to natural and man-made disasters in the Mediterranean" (PPRD Med 2022-2025) led by the International Science & Technology Center (ISTC);
2. A multi-country study aiming at assessing major risks at national and regional levels 2023-2025 led by the Italian Civil Protection (DPC), and;
3. The deployment of technical On-Site Assistance (OSA 2023-2026), for which Colonel Major Mohamed Ataknit from the Tunisian Civil Protection has been appointed as senior regional expert. He is based in Tunis and will be supporting our cooperation for the next 3 years.

These actions will complement existing initiatives and tools from the European Union Civil Protection Mechanisms (UCPM). They aim at further supporting the regional cooperation and long-term partnership between the EU, Southern countries and the UfM.

Nannette Cazaubon: *From 5-7 June, a high-level event will be hosted by the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Dipartimento de Protezione Civile in Rome, co-organised by DG ECHO and supported by the UfM General Secretariat. What is the focus of this meeting?*

John Paul Grech: This event will focus on three segments:

1. A high-level panel to exchange and share views on "Climate change, Civil protection and Human Security – Towards an efficient Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation".
2. The launch of the PPRD Med – which should provide information about the several civil protection regional programmes planned to take place in the Mediterranean.
3. The holding of the UfM 2nd Meeting of the Regional Dialogue Platform on Civil Protection which should provide an early assessment of the outcome of the three UfM Working Groups on Preparedness, Prevention and Response, which have taken place online over the past few months.

Hartmut Bühl: *What are your personnel expectations for this meeting and, more generally, for the future of EU-UfM collaboration?*

John Paul Grech: As a start, the high-level event should put a political spotlight on the nexus between climate change, human security and civil protection, particularly in the light of the increasing meteorological and climate catastrophes which the Euro-Mediterranean region is currently, and increasingly, experiencing, like the recent events in Emilia Romagna, Northern Algeria and Jordan among others, but whose incidence in the future, according to indications, is bound to increase. This should encourage countries in the region to start thinking seriously about regional initiatives concerning prevention and response, given that in the face of such experiences, it is now abundantly clear that no country can deal with them on its own. The two other segments of the three-tiered event are expected to propose possible solutions on how such challenges can be tackled through regional cooperation and mutual support.

Hartmut Bühl: *Ambassador Grech, we thank you for your openness and wish you success.*



The Union for the Mediterranean

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), created in 2008 (Barcelona Process) is an intergovernmental Euro-Mediterranean organisation bringing together the 27 EU Member States and 16 countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean*. The UfM

provides a forum to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue, as well as the implementation of concrete projects and initiatives with tangible impact on the citizens of its member states. The permanent secretariat of the UfM was established in 2010 in Barcelona.

Web: <https://ufmsecretariat.org/>

*Albania, Algeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Syria (suspended in 2011), Tunisia, Türkiye; Libya has observer status in the UfM.



Humanitarian aid in Africa

The International Rescue Committee's work on the ground

Interview with Babatunde Anthony Ojei, Country Director for Nigeria, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Abuja

The European: *Mr Ojei, you have been the Country Director for Nigeria of the non-governmental organisation International Rescue Committee (IRC) since February 2021. Could you briefly explain the mission of the IRC?*

Babatunde Ojei: The IRC helps people affected by humanitarian crises – including the climate crisis – to survive, recover and rebuild their lives. The IRC started humanitarian programmes in Nigeria in October 2012 in response to severe flooding in Kogi state, which affected over seven million people. Just over 10 years later, we are now a critical partner in addressing the humanitarian crises in the northeast and northwest of the country – offering programmes in camps for internally displaced people (IDP) and host communities that reached more than 1.6 million people in 2022.

The European: *What are the most challenging problems in Nigeria?*

Babatunde Ojei: Despite the efforts I mentioned, many humanitarian needs in Nigeria remain challenging due to multiple issues, ranging from insecurity to access and limited funding. Conflict has resulted in the destruction of infrastructure and the disruption of basic services across the Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), about 8.4 million people across this region require humanitarian assistance, and 2.2 million people are displaced from their homes.

The European: *When the IRC is engaging in a country, how is its work organised? And how is the coordination with the country's authorities and with other humanitarian actors managed?*

Babatunde Ojei: When the IRC responds to a humanitarian crisis caused either by conflict or climate change, acceptance by local stakeholders is critical to success – this includes the communities we serve, the authorities and, in the case of Nigeria, relevant actors in the conflict. To make sure this happens, we follow the humanitarian principles of neutrality, humanity, and impartiality. In case of an armed conflict, like in north-east Nigeria, each party is obliged to meet the needs of the

population under its control. If they cannot do so, they can consent to the support of impartial humanitarian actors, in which case, they must facilitate these organisations' rapid and unimpeded access.

In these cases, the IRC works with local staff to increase our understanding of the context, ensure accountability to our clients, and include them in the design of our response. Ideally, we also engage with accessible parties to the conflict. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, this is not possible, largely due to insecurity and lack of acceptance by certain actors on the field. This has dramatic consequences on our capacity to operate, but most importantly, on the access to basic social services for the population we serve.

The European: *To what extent are these conflicts hampering the much-needed healthcare services in the country?*

Babatunde Ojei: As the Country Director for the IRC, I see the impact of attacks on healthcare every day, including on health facilities that we support. One of our health facilities in Yobe was attacked four times between 2020 and 2022, with armed groups shooting with the aim to kill and carting away supplies. During one of the attacks last year, our ambulance was set on fire. Fortunately, no lives were lost but the very visible bullet holes on the building are a stark reminder that we are not out of the woods yet. After the attacks, we had to suspend the



In 2022, Nigeria experienced the worst

Babatunde Anthony Ojei



photo: International Rescue Committee EU

is the IRC's Country Director for Nigeria. He has over 25 years of experience, both in the non-profit and private sectors (environment, development, civilian protection, and humanitarian). He has worked at leadership and management levels for numerous INGOs in Nigeria, including Oxfam Great Britain, Save the Children and Center for Civilians in Conflict. Mr Ojei holds a BSc in Agriculture and an MBA in global business. He is an alumnus of the prestigious GELI Harvard and GELI London School of Economics courses.



floods in decades

photo: ©Tolu Owoeye, shutterstock

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International Rescue Committee (IRC)

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) helps people affected by humanitarian crises, including the climate crisis, to survive, recover and rebuild their lives. The non-governmental organisation (NGO) was founded at the call of Albert Einstein in 1933. The IRC is at work in over 40 crisis-affected countries and communities throughout the world. The NGO delivers lasting impact by providing healthcare, education for children, and empowering individuals and communities to become self-reliant, always seeking to address the inequalities facing women and girls. In 2022, the IRC and its partners reached over 32.9 million people in countries affected by crises.

The IRC compiles an annual "Emergency Watchlist" report to assess the 20 countries at the greatest risk of new humanitarian emergencies each year.

 Web: www.rescue.org

health facility's services for two months until the situation was stable enough to cautiously resume. With the support of the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), we conducted research finding that a combined 2,356 working days, or 6.6 years, were missed by health staff following the incidents, resulting in communities' reduced access to health services. Therefore, reinforcing the dialogue with all actors is essential wherever possible. When a newly elected president and federal authorities take office, it is vital to engage them if we are to implement sustainable responses for the populations.

The European: *In 2022, Nigeria experienced the worst floods in decades, killing more than 600 people and displacing some 1.4 million. Could you give us a concrete picture of the assistance delivered by the IRC to help people and stabilise the situation?*

Babatunde Ojei: Indeed, last year my country experienced its worst flooding in a decade and the city of Lokoja was at the epicentre. Men, women and children did their best to brave the waters, but they needed extra support. The IRC provided basic household items (Non-Food Items – NFIs) such as blankets, jerrycans and soap to uprooted households. We provided dignity kits with basic products for personal hygiene, including feminine hygiene products for women and girls. To address the lack of healthcare services, the IRC conducted mobile health and nutrition interventions services. We also provided emergency water as a short-term, life-saving intervention to meet the survival needs of people forced from their homes.

The European: *It seems indeed that Nigeria is increasingly bearing the brunt of a climate crisis it did not cause.*

Babatunde Ojei: Exactly! Nigeria has contributed less than 1% of the world's global emissions, yet it is ranked among the 20% of countries least equipped to deal with their impact.

“When the IRC responds to a humanitarian crisis caused either by conflict or climate change, acceptance by local stakeholders is critical to success.”

These natural disasters have a considerable impact on households and people's physical and financial security. Therefore, we are focused on working towards solutions that prepare communities to withstand such climatic shocks.

The European: *Can you name a few of these solutions?*

Babatunde Ojei: One of the IRC's solutions is to invest in innovations that use early warning systems and anticipatory cash to protect agricultural and pastoral livelihoods in the northeast of Nigeria that are threatened by increased flooding. We have seen evidence that this cash support helps people to bring their loved ones to safety, stock up on food ahead of floods, protect their homes, and invest in agricultural assets that increase their financial security over the longer-term. Another key solution is for donors to increase the availability of flexible funding which enables a more effective and timely humanitarian response, and provides us greater access to vulnerable people in hard-to-reach areas.

The European: *Mister Ojei, let me thank you for this conversation and wish you success in your humanitarian engagement.*

The interview was led by Hartmut Bühl.



Copernicus satellite image showing the devastating floods in northern Italy at the beginning of May 2023

© European Union, Copernicus Sentinel-3 imagery

by Sabine Henzler, Director for Strategy and Impact, Directorate-General Joint Research Centre, European Commission, Brussels

No one can predict when disaster will strike, but science can help us prepare for the worst and to recover quickly and better. With ever more wildfires, droughts and floods in the EU and around the world, the victims of these disasters often rely on the EU's humanitarian aid. As the European Commission's in-house science service, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) provides independent science and know-how to help the EU act quickly when disaster is about to strike or has struck.

Supporting the EU's disaster response

When we are in emergency mode, the priority is to save as many lives as possible and protect critical infrastructure like energy plants, transport and communication systems, defence bases and healthcare facilities. Providing needs-based humanitarian assistance to victims of disasters is at the core of European values. The EU's response to disasters draws on JRC science to devise its civil protection and humanitarian actions. The JRC's geologists, meteorologists, hydrologists, among other scientists, have been trying to answer questions like: what can we do to anticipate damage and minimise its impact? Where is help (most) needed? How do we get it there? What must we prioritise? Our work is wide-ranging and encompasses disaster risk management and security as

well as related areas such as migration and demography. The sections below illustrate a few resources and tools managed by the JRC specifically in support of disaster risk management, in the EU and beyond.

The important role of Copernicus tools

Copernicus is the Earth observation component of the EU's space programme. It offers information services that combine satellite data with data collected on the ground. The Copernicus Emergency Management Service (CEMS) is one of Copernicus' six operational services and it is implemented by the JRC. It continuously monitors the state of the environment to anticipate crises and, when emergencies hit, it provides fast, reliable data and cutting-edge geospatial information to inform emergency responses.

Copernicus tools for emergency response

For over 10 years, CEMS has supported the EU's humanitarian and civil protection response to disasters by providing fast geospatial imagery from satellites, planes and drones, using this data to monitor the situation on the ground. This information is essential in prioritising response actions that ensure human safety and protect infrastructure. For instance, the data and the products delivered by CEMS guided the reconstruction of Beng-

hazi in Libya after the civil war (2017), tracked the impact of the explosion in the port of Beirut in Lebanon (2020), and created maps to monitor and help the authorities respond to the impacts of the wildfires in Chile (2022). In Europe,

“Providing needs-based humanitarian assistance to victims of disasters is at the core of European values.”

recent examples include helping to identify Covid-19 facilities in Italy in 2020 and analysing the volume and thickness of lava flows, soil erosion and landslide risk in areas affected by the volcanic eruption in La Palma, Spain, in 2022. And in 2023, CEMS has monitored wildfire activity across the continent and the extent of the recent floods and landslides in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy.

In any situation, users may call on one or more CEMS tools and capabilities to support their emergency response. For instance, in the aftermath of the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria earlier this year, CEMS delivered analyses of existing and potential damage to infrastructure such as buildings, dams, and oil and gas pipelines, identified locations for humanitarian camps at low risk of flooding, and monitored migration.

Thanks to its Global Human Settlements Layer¹, which combines satellite observations with census information, CEMS is also able to map exposure to disasters. In the earthquake's aftermath, CEMS used this capability to calculate building heights and the resulting volumes of debris to inform clean-up operations. Further, CEMS teams, in collaboration with other JRC teams, analysed misinformation, monitored the health situation, and deployed artificial intelligence to process more than a million messages on social media to identify and geolocate those in need.²

Finally, the EU's Emergency Response Coordination Centre, alongside JRC scientists, drew on CEMS data to produce daily maps³ of the impact of and response to the earthquake, regularly used to guide operations on the ground.

Copernicus tools to anticipate and monitor crises

The other main line of CEMS work is looking out for floods, forest fires and droughts at European and global level. This is done through several entities: the European (EFAS) and the Global Flood Awareness Systems (GloFAS) support flood risk management at national, regional and global levels. Further, the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) monitors forest fire activity in near-real time for wildfire management at the national and regional level in the EU, the Middle East and north Africa. EFFIS also publishes assessments such as the recent report on forest fires in Europe, the Middle East and Africa 2022,⁴ which offers lessons learned and other information to help affected regions prepare for this year's wildfire season. Finally, the Drought Observatory supplies information and early warnings for Europe and beyond (eg East Africa, South America, China), and analytical and assessment reports⁵ to help the EU anticipate and plan for droughts.

The Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre

The Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre (DRMKC) is a forum that brings together practitioners from the EU Civil Protection Mechanism's members and participating states, as

¹ Global Human Settlements Layer <https://ghsl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

² Social Media for Disaster Risk Management <https://bit.ly/42MF0AG>

³ European Response Coordination Centre daily maps <https://bit.ly/42SyrfU>

⁴ Forest Fires in Europe, the Middle East and Africa 2022 <https://bit.ly/44YsKyR>

⁵ Drought assessment reports <https://bit.ly/43e7vYn>



More information on the JRC

Visit our websites:

JRC: <https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu>

CEMS: <https://emergency.copernicus.eu>

DRMKC: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu>

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JRC newsletter: <https://bit.ly/30bcc00>

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Find upcoming events on disaster risk management:

Copernicus events: <https://bit.ly/30960Go>

DRMKC events: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu>

JRC events: <https://bit.ly/304wzww>

Watch the events pages above to find out more our upcoming public events:

CEMS General Assembly (October 2023)

DRMKC Annual Event (November 2023)

well as from the wider disaster risk management community. It works to break barriers between disciplines, to connect science, operations and policy needs, and to foster dialogue across policy areas and emergency institutions. Its goal is to promote evidence-based decision-making and operations. The DRMKC delivers the scientific activities of the EU Civil Protection Knowledge Network, a tool first created to promote innovation and dialogue and to enhance cooperation between Member States' national civil protection authorities. In this regard, the DRMKC develops products and tools to support evidence-based EU policies on disaster risk management. Examples include the Risk Data Hub,⁶ the Global Conflict Risk Index,⁷ and INFORM.⁸ EU policies that drew on DRMKC resources include the recently adopted European Union Disaster Resilience Goals.

Prepared for the future

Effective disaster management depends on reliable data that will help the EU and its partners anticipate and monitor crises and respond to them effectively. The JRC is a key contributor of the cutting-edge science behind this. By hosting data, services, and other capabilities, and fostering dialogue, the JRC substantially strengthens the robustness and evidence-base of the EU's humanitarian aid and civil protection.



Sabine Henzler, Director for Strategy and Impact, Directorate-General Joint Research Centre, European Commission, Brussels

⁶ Risk Data Hub <https://bit.ly/3l1ayoEr>

⁷ Global Conflict Risk Index <https://bit.ly/3Mrvs8F>

⁸ INFORM <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index>

Where European crisis management starts

The European Union Emergency Response Coordination Centre

A report by Hartmut Bühl, Paris

Eager to know how the European Union Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) functions, I was very glad to be invited by Antoine Lemasson, who heads up the ERCC, for a walk through the centre. Visiting, amongst others, the operations and the crisis room, I learned operational details and how countries participating in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) coordinate their work with the help of the centre.

Hartmut Bühl: *Mr Lemasson, thank you for receiving me for an information walk through the ERCC, which you are leading as head of Unit within the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). This DG is notably responsible for the UCPM which celebrated its 10th anniversary this year.*

Antoine Lemasson: The ERCC was inaugurated in May 2013, indeed exactly 10 years ago. The project and idea of a civil protection mechanism in the EU, however, started much earlier, with a Council decision in 2001. The UCPM and the ERCC have both grown exponentially since then. To give you some figures, up to now, we have received a total of over 800 requests for assistance from countries all around the world, including over 140 requests from Ukraine. Mr Bühl, let's start our walk through the ERCC.

Mr Lemasson invites me to start our walk through the ERCC. At the entrance, he shows me an information table.

Hartmut Bühl: *This table shows the whole infrastructure of the ERCC and this leads me to my first observation: everything seems centred around the operations centre, but decisions aren't taken there, are they?*

Antoine Lemasson: Yes, indeed, we speak of our Operations Room which is at the centre of our work and the UCPM's decision making process when it comes to engaging in a disaster. We are supported, as you can see, by colleagues around in offices, briefing rooms and, when needed, in our auditorium. I will show you later our crisis room, where high-level meetings are conducted and strategic decisions are taken. But let's step first into the operations room.

In the operations room, I see most recent analytical maps and products on the latest developments both globally and inside Europe. On four screens there are live pictures and news from crisis regions.

Hartmut Bühl: *On the screens, we can see migrants in a fishing boat with problems docking in Italy, demonstrations in Israel, a land shift in South America. I see also urban fighting in Soudan, climate demonstrations in Berlin, bombings on towns in Ukraine, fire in Spain. What hell! Could you explain how the ERCC is monitoring all this information and what are your means to react?*

Antoine Lemasson: We need this information, because the situation officers' main work here is to prepare decisions, by evaluating situations and making proposals for the coordination of delivery of assistance to disaster-stricken countries, such as relief items, expertise (environment, cultural heritage...), civil protection teams and specialised equipment. The pictures from satellites are most useful.

The European: *Countries other than EU Member States participate on a voluntary basis in the assistance sent in response to emergencies. Can you tell us more about this "spirit of solidarity" which seems to me to be the soul of the UCPM?*

Antoine Lemasson: We are 36 UCPM countries, 27 EU Member States (MS) plus 9 Participating States (PS): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye and very recently Ukraine. All members have generously taken up the immense challenges we have faced with the increasing numbers of forest fires, Covid-19 and Russia's war on Ukraine.

The European: *Do you have figures for last year?*

Antoine Lemasson: In 2022, the UCPM responded to 132 requests for assistance, compared to an average of 20 prior to the pandemic. The treatment has been made possible by the engagement of people working here and the assistance from UCPM member states.





Antoine Lemasson (left) and Hartmut Bühl looking at a map in the ERCC's operations room

photo: ©ERCC

The European: *The EU helps worldwide when a disaster strikes. What are the conditions for EU support? Is the Union's engagement unconditional or are there assumptions?*

Antoine Lemasson: Our mechanism can be activated by any country, or international organisation. We cannot guarantee a response to all requests for assistance – this depends on offers received from UCPM member states. There is no geographical limit to our work, however.

The European: *Can you give some examples for countries of extreme distances to Europe?*

Antoine Lemasson: The UCPM has responded to the forest fires in Chile, to the consequences of a devastating cyclone in Vanuatu, and not to forget that in 2023 it provided a significant response to the people of Türkiye and Syria affected by the massive earthquakes of February.

The European: *To make it easy for our readers to understand the procedures: when the EU is called for help, how is this help organised, from the incoming call to the ERCC to the decision to support and then implementation?*

Antoine Lemasson: Once a country or organisation requests support for a disaster and transmits us an overview of their needs, we assess the request, sometimes revert to the requester for clarification, and we then communicate the request with the EU Member States and the participating states

through a secured information system. They are then able to make offers of in-kind assistance or expertise on our internal system and see what other offers have already been placed. We then liaise with the requesting state or organisation and organise logistics. The ERCC can also mobilise in-kind assistance from the rescEU stockpiles of medical and energy equipment for example.

The European: *And direct EU support on the ground?*

Antoine Lemasson: At DG ECHO, we benefit from a large network of field offices with experienced humanitarian staff on the ground, who help us monitor upcoming and ongoing situations. If needed, the ERCC also can support the affected country by sending EU Civil Protection Teams composed of experts and ERCC liaison officers whose role is to facilitate the coordination of the UCPM response on the ground.

Mr Lemasson takes me to the secured crisis room where the decisions are made.

Antoine Lemasson: Here in our crisis room, you see the screens liaising with all the information sources of the EU but also countries concerned and specialists around the world. Have a look around!

→ Continued on page 32

The European: *Very professional with the highest technological standards. On the way up here, I saw small working rooms for every UCPM MS/PS. Are they permanently present in Brussels or do they join the ERCC only in special situations?*

Antoine Lemasson: They join in situation of disasters, before being deployed and upon their return, and we, for sure, also have the most modern equipped situation rooms for delegations from the countries receiving help for handling their crisis or disaster, helping us to better understand situations and to be most efficient.

The European: *I want to come back to the UCPM capacities. You mentioned rescEU, the extra layer of citizen protection in Europe, integrated into the UCPM.*

Antoine Lemasson: In 2019 the EU reinforced the UCPM by creating rescEU, enabling the Commission to act as a last-resort support stakeholder and mobilise assistance when Member States are unable to help. The Covid-19 pandemic has proved just how crucial such a stockpiling system is. We now have 10 operational reserves, focused on medical and energy equipment. Another four CBRN stockpiles are being developed as we speak. rescEU, along with the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP), gives the EU some flexibility and margin of manoeuvre in its response capacity. An example of this is our forest fire fighting capacity – we are doubling our fleet of air response capacity for this forest fire season, to be able to fight against simultaneous fires, as we have seen it often since 2017.

The European: *What about the cost for UCPM states or donors?*

Antoine Lemasson: In terms of financial support, the Commission supports donating MS/PS with at least 75% of transport and/or operational costs.

The European: *A crisis here is not a crisis there. The ERCC closely monitors natural and technological disasters, as well as crisis and conflict situations. What about political crises?*

Antoine Lemasson: We are not involved in all crises. Purely political crises, such as demonstrations or riots, are not for us. Although the UCPM can be and has been activated to respond to migration crises, we are not monitoring day-to-day migration flows like FRONTEX.

The European: *The Copernicus Emergency Management Service supports you with timely and precise geospatial information as I learned. Who is the owner?*

Antoine Lemasson: The ERCC is an authorised user of the service, which is managed by the EU's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and our colleagues from the Directorate General Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS). Together with them, we are able to get satellite imagery via the EU Satellite system Copernicus and produce analytical maps of areas of interest.

The European: *What about DG ECHO's engagement in environmental disasters, eg maritime pollution?*

Antoine Lemasson: The support offered to countries under the UCPM covers the environment and property and it can be activated against marine pollution occurring inside or outside the Union. The UCPM facilitates the coordination and transportation of assistance to countries affected by maritime incidents, and we are supported in these cases by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)

The European: *Your Centre is directed to be quick in decision and in implementing help. To be able to act in such a way there must be stocks of material and reserves on human beings?*

Antoine Lemasson: EU MS and UCPM PS may commit national resources for emergency response to the ECPP. This pool allows for better planning and coordination of response activities at European and national levels which means a faster and reliable EU response to disasters. These are resources that are pre-committed, enabling better visibility and coordination; the final decision on mobilisation remains with the MS. The rescEU reserve¹, on the other hand, consists of resources established by the EU and hosted in various locations across the EU. The ERCC can take the decision to mobilise items or capacities from the rescEU reserve to an affected country. The ECPP and rescEU, together, provide the EU with a more comprehensive and efficient response capacity, on top of the assistance provided directly by the UCPM members.

The European: *This is the hard bone of the UCPM. But when the Commission does not directly procure, what is the financial system? Does the EU bear the cost for stockpiling in nations or for other issues?*

Antoine Lemasson: The Commission does indeed not directly procure but cooperates with willing Member States by signing direct grants. But there is a system:

- For direct donations from UCPM members to an emergency, the UCPM will cover 75% of the transport costs.
- Under the ECPP, in return for their commitment of assets, UCPM members benefit from financial support from the European Commission to develop and transport the capacities where they are needed: in this case up to 85% of transport and operational costs.
- For rescEU donations, the UCPM funds 100% of the transport and operational costs linked to the mobilisation, linked to conditions: the Member State hosting a rescEU capacity on behalf of the Commission is responsible for the procurement of the capacity, its storage and its maintenance.

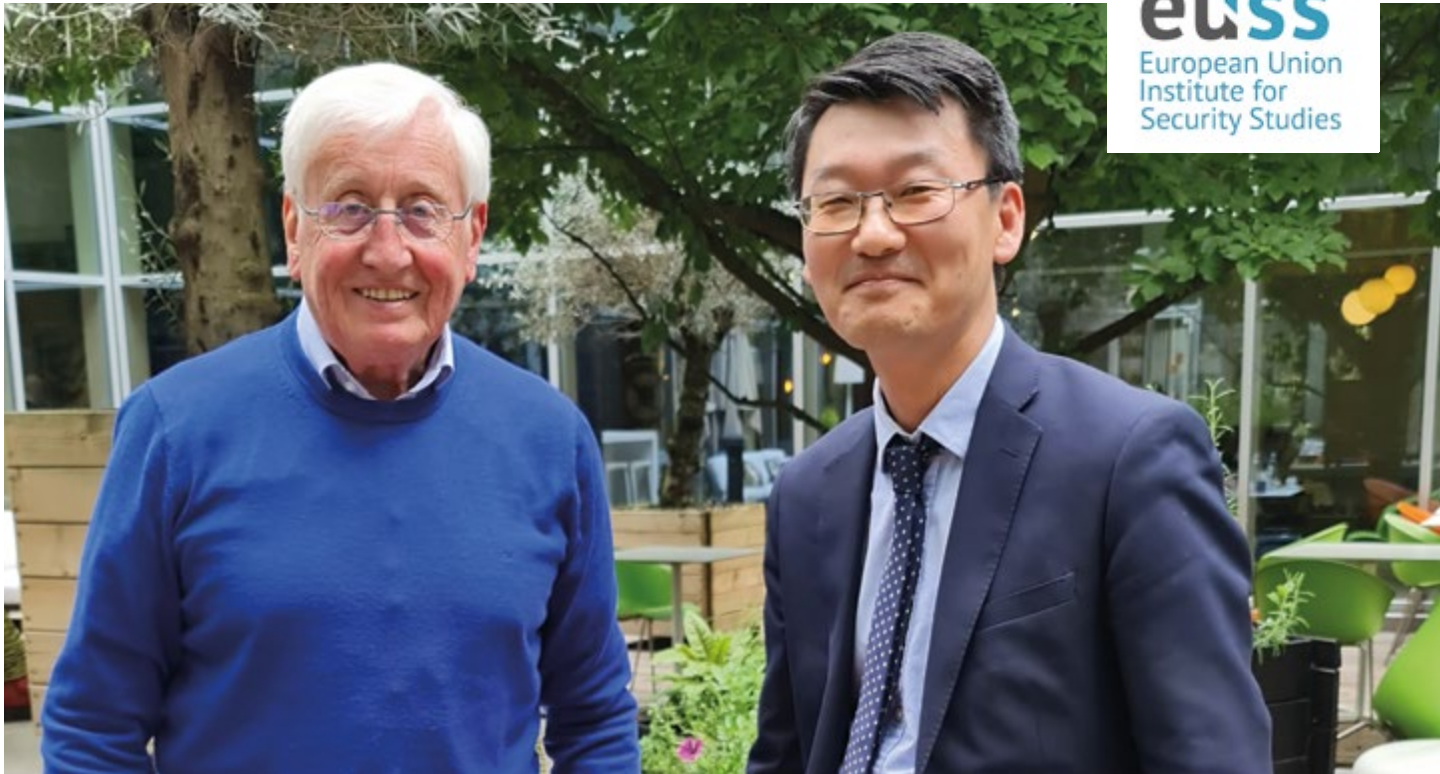
The European: *And we are ending here in the Commissioner's plenary room, thank you, Mr Lemasson, for this insightful information walk. I wish you and your team all the best in your mission to save people.*

¹ <https://tinyurl.com/bdhmuxj5>



Security and Defence

Russia's invasion of Ukraine was the alarming signal for Europe to focus on one of its most important tasks: being able to protect its citizens, including against armed attacks. Armament cooperation has wind in its sails in Europe, however, this raises some questions. Is buying together always cheaper? And to what extent can credible armed forces be compatible with the obligations laid down in the Green Deal that also applies to the armament industry?



Dr Jan Joel Andersson (right) and Hartmut Bühl during their meeting in Paris, May 2023

photo: ESDU

Buying together can be cheaper, but not always

Rearming together – a new challenge for the European Union

Interview with Dr Jan Joel Andersson, Senior Analyst, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), Paris

The European: *Mr Andersson, as a Senior Analyst at the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) in Paris, you have been working on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) over many years and you have analysed the European armament and defence industrial cooperation. The full-scale invasion of Russian forces into Ukraine was a turning point, where the common rearmament of European military forces, after two decades of underinvestment, has become a political wish and necessity. What are the arguments for buying weapons together and are there valid arguments against?*

Jan Joel Andersson: The most common arguments for buying together are lower costs due to shared Research and Development (R&D) and economies of scale in production but there also arguments for increased operational efficiency by having the same types of equipment. However, defence is a

national responsibility and there are many reasons for national acquisition.

The European: *What are those other reasons?*

Jan Joel Andersson: There can be different geographic imperatives (eg arctic, desert, tropical), strategic cultures and war fighting doctrines that all play a role in setting national requirements for defence equipment, as do domestic defence industry policies and international security alliances.

The European: *Often cost is mentioned as a relevant argument in cooperation. Is it really cheaper to produce or buy armament together?*

Jan Joel Andersson: Costs and prices are notoriously difficult to compare since they depend on what is included, such as R&D, sustainment, and time of delivery. There is a long history of joint defence acquisition and arms procurement in Europe. Many studies show that such collaboration has indeed delivered capabilities individual countries could not have acquired on their own, but there are also plenty of studies showing how

“Any collaboration will be greatly facilitated by early agreement on clearly defined military requirements and how those should be delivered by industry.”

armament collaboration can lead to capabilities many years late and above cost. In fact, there is no guarantee that buying together will always be cheaper as history is full of failed arms cooperation.

The European: *Why do prestigious common projects fail, even when they are supported politically?*

Jan Joel Andersson: Armament collaboration involves sensitive military and industrial interests. Balancing between them is difficult and if you then add different budget cycles, political issues, and cultural perspectives, small problems can in some cases create larger ones. In fact, the transaction costs associated with international armament cooperation should not be underestimated.

The European: *Do I understand correctly that collaborative defence acquisitions should only be envisaged when they are politically supported and industrial arguments are based on a consensus with clearly defined military requirements?*

Jan Joel Andersson: Some armament collaborations are politically motivated and will take place no matter what, but any collaboration will be greatly facilitated by early agreement on clearly defined military requirements and how those should be delivered by industry. Collaboration when done right can then lead to both cost savings and increased interoperability.

The European: *The European Defence Agency (EDA) is the institution responsible in the field of defence capabilities development, research, acquisition and armament, internally, but also outside of the EU. People speak of the EDA as the hub for joint procurement. How do you see the role of the EDA in the future?*

Jan Joel Andersson: The EDA can support Member States' acquisition and procurement in several ways. For example, the agency can assist Member States in harmonising requirements, develop defence technology research, and create joint military capabilities. There are a lot of things the EDA can do but it is up to Member States to use it.

A very recent one: on 20 March 2023, EU Member States and Norway signed an EDA agreement for the collaborative procurement of ammunition to replenish Member States' national stockpiles and support Ukraine. The

agreement provides a seven-year framework for EU Member States and Norway to jointly procure ammunition of various kinds by aggregating, coordinating and agreeing on contracts with European industry through the EDA. And indeed, there are other areas for joint procurement being prepared by the EDA for soldier systems, and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear equipment.

The European: *Let us say a word on the external cooperation of the EDA with the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation (OCCAR) and the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA). While the Agency's high level steering board of EU defence ministers is a strength of the EDA, what are the strong points of the two other agencies?*

Jan Joel Andersson: OCCAR has extensive knowledge of the procurement of large armament programmes, while the NSPA brings the transatlantic dimension and lots of experience in managing and supporting diverse programmes.

The European: *How can joint European defence acquisition work in practice?*

Jan Joel Andersson: An example of successful cooperation is the Multinational Multi Role Tanker and Transport Fleet (MMF), a fleet of air-to-air refuelling and transport aircraft which was initiated as a project in the EDA to harmonise national requirements in 2012. The project was then transferred 'downstream' to OCCAR in 2016 for the procurement phase with the first aircraft delivered in 2020. A cooperation agreement between OCCAR and the NSPA in turn, set the framework and conditions for the operation of the fleet which is now operational with nine aircraft ordered and a tenth under contract.

Dr Jan Joel Andersson

is a Senior Analyst at the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), where he heads the analysis of security and defence, including CSDP, Capability Development, Defence Industry and Technology & Innovation issues. Between 2017-2022, he was a member of the Chief Executive's Policy Office (cabinet) at the European Defence Agency. Dr Andersson has also worked in the private sector for a world-leading crisis management consultancy and has held faculty appointments at universities and in think-tanks in the United States, Sweden, and France.

The European: *When you sum up what has been said, do you think the EU is on the right track when it comes to armament cooperation?*

Jan Joel Andersson: I think a lot of very good work has been done in the EU and there are many tools and instruments available to support European armament cooperation. Now it is up to Member States to use them.

The European: *Mr Andersson, I thank you for this conversation and wish you all the best.*



A troubled outlook for a troubled region

The European Union's southern neighbourhood

by Manuel de la Cámara Hermoso,
EuroDefense-Spain, Madrid

In 1995, the European Union (EU) launched the so-called “Barcelona process”, a comprehensive plan whose objective was to extend the area of stability, prosperity, and development to its southern neighbourhood. In 2004, the Mediterranean partners were included in the “European Neighbourhood Policy” (ENP), which included both the EU’s eastern and southern neighbours¹. In 2021, twenty-five years after Barcelona, the EU issued a Communication on “Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood. A new Agenda for the Mediterranean”, confirming that a strengthened Mediterranean partnership remains a strategic imperative for the EU. The Union has assigned a budget of €7bn for the 2021-2027 period.

The huge challenges in the region

The new agenda recognises that the Mediterranean region poses huge socio-economic, environmental and security challenges for Europe: long-standing conflicts, bad governance, corruption and authoritarian regimes, millions of people

suffering displacement that cause severe socio-economic consequences in countries hosting large numbers of refugees. This scenario is further darkened by exploding prices for basic staples, scarcity of water resources and desertification. Last but not least, foreign powers are interfering in the region.

Israel-Palestine: Political analysts warn that a third Palestinian intifada is possible², and that the peace process based on a “two-state solution” is no longer realistic. A new intifada could cause the collapse of the paralysed Palestinian Authority. Within Israel proper, the confrontation between Netanyahu’s government and a large proportion of Israeli citizens over the government’s legislative plans to control the judiciary may resume in the coming months.

Egypt: Mubarak’s dictatorship was replaced in 2013 by an even tougher authoritarian regime. The 2019 constitution gives considerable powers to the military that controls almost 60% of the economy, which is suffering from a big drop in foreign investment, the decline of tourism and gigantic infrastructure projects. The poverty rate currently stands at 33% and is increasing.

Syria: A 12-year-old civil war is largely frozen (and forgotten)

1 The eastern neighbours are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine. In 2022, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine were given a “European perspective” and the last two granted candidate status. The southern neighbours are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Palestine, and Tunisia. Mauritania participates in the Union for the Mediterranean and Syria has been suspended since the beginning of the civil war in 2011.

2 This could jeopardize the “Abraham Accords” signed in 2020 between Israel and several Arab countries, because the Arab public would not tolerate collective punishment of Palestinians.

with a death toll of 610,000 and the number of displaced persons reaching the huge figure of 14.6 million. These figures have been further aggravated by the big earthquakes of February 2023. 13 million people are in dire need of humanitarian aid, while Arab leaders (Egypt, UAE, Oman, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia) are moving to normalise relations with Assad. The return of Syria to the Arab League was confirmed at the Jeddah Summit in May 2023.

Lebanon: The delicate Muslim-Christian-Druze balance has been completely upended in recent years and the economy has entered into a free-fall, leaving 80% of the population below the poverty line. Lebanon has become a failed state.

Libya: Despite the appointment of a new UN SG's Special Representative³, there has been no progress in establishing the basis for a new constitution and conducting elections. Internal confrontation continues between the Government of National Unity (GNA) based in Tripoli, and the Tobruk-based House of Representatives, with the Prime Minister supported by Benghazi strongman, "Field Marshall" Khalifa Haftar. No political agreement is in sight, while foreign militias, among them Russia's "Wagner Group", continue to be active.

Algeria: Despite the increase of revenue from oil and gas exports, the government is unable to create enough jobs for young people, many of whom choose to migrate. The regime is playing a nationalistic card on foreign policy (breaking off diplomatic relations with Morocco, blocking imports from Spain) and is engaged in a dangerous arms race with Morocco.

Tunisia: The country in which the "Arab Spring" begun has entered a deep economic and political crisis. President Kais Saied's main efforts have been focused on consolidating his autocracy since he suspended, and later dissolved, the Parliament (March 2022) and forced through a new constitution that concentrates all powers on him. Tunisia is by far the largest sender of illegal migrants from North Africa towards Europe.

Morocco: The Western Sahara conflict dominates the country's domestic and foreign policy, especially since Washington recognised Morocco's sovereignty over the territory in the "Joint Declaration between Morocco, Israel and the United States" (2020). Rabat has become Washington's preferred ally in the region and its main arms buyer. Morocco is a crucial partner for the EU on trade, migration, and the fight against jihadism.

Türkiye: Economic difficulties have prompted President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to mend fences with the Gulf monarchies, Israel and Egypt. But he has fuelled tensions with the west due to his confrontation with Greece and Cyprus over the delimitation of territorial waters and air space in the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas and the blocking of Sweden's accession to NATO. On account of its special relationship with Moscow, Türkiye has not joined Western sanctions against Russia. Erdoğan was reelected in a tight vote last May for a new five-year term.

The Sahel: This region, due to the destabilising effects of uncontrolled migratory flows, the rise and expansion of jihadist

Manuel de la Cámara Hermoso



photo: private

is a member of the board of directors of EuroDefense-Spain and leads the Eurodefense Mediterranean and Migration Observatory. He was Ambassador of Spain to Türkiye and Azerbaijan (2000-2004), to Brazil (2012-2017), and to Finland (2017-2018). Amongst other positions, he was also General Director for Security and Disarmament, and North America in the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“The EU needs to undertake a thorough review of its Mediterranean policy.”

terrorism and the penetration of hostile foreign powers, mainly Russia, has become an area of great concern for the EU. Over the last two years, there have been military coups in Chad, Burkina Faso and Mali. The French troops have withdrawn from Mali and Burkina Faso.

For a revised southern neighbourhood policy

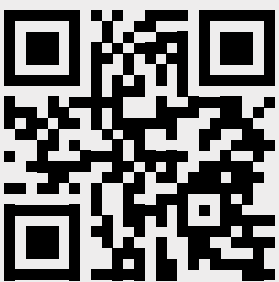
When the Barcelona Process was launched, the EU took the optimistic view that it could exert a significant transforming impact on its southern neighbours by extending to them the Union's area of human rights, prosperity, stability, development and democratisation and attracting them by access to the European Single Market, combined with substantial financial assistance. This policy, however, ignored the reality of the south: whereas most eastern partners had the real prospect of joining the EU, the southern partners – as they are geographically not in Europe – didn't see any chance of becoming EU members and therefore had low aspirations and ambitions. As democratisation and development there faltered, the EU and its Member States moved to preserve stability and protect their economic interests. The lofty Barcelona principles were set aside and the Union has been steadily losing influence. The penetration of foreign powers into the region – like China – financing big infrastructure projects without demanding societal reforms, has added to this erosion of European influence. In 2022, twenty-seven years after Barcelona, the results have been very disappointing. The EU needs to undertake a thorough review of its Mediterranean policy but should never abandon its ambition to be a "transforming power" as democracy and the rule of law are the essence of our Union, even if global trends seem to be moving in the opposite direction.

³ The Senegalese Abdoulaye Bathily.

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To what extent must military equipment be sustainable?

For an “Olive-Green Deal”

by Dr Hans Christoph Atzpodien, Managing Director of Bundesverband Deutscher Sicherheits- und Verteidigungsindustrie (BDSV), and Lucas Hirsch, Sustainability Analyst at BDSV, Berlin

It was in Paris in 2015 when 196 nations approved a joint commitment (Paris Agreement) to limit global warming to 1.5C and to reach carbon neutrality in the second half of this century at the latest. Among the EU Member States, this commitment took shape in the so-called “Green Deal”. The declared goals were to reduce emissions, create new jobs and improve the wellbeing of European citizens. Since then, this “green” grand strategy is gradually being implemented through an increasing number of EU directives, thereby establishing a vast number of tools to turn the intangible notion of sustainability into something tangible and measurable. The defence industry is treated like any other industry in Europe and consequently, manufacturers of defence equipment for governmental security branches will be measured and categorised according to the same Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria as every other industrial activity conducted inside the EU.

Defence vs sustainability?

We in no way intend to call for special treatment of the security and defence industry in the form of an exemption from upcoming directives on due diligence in the supply chain and the like. Nevertheless, we see a problem in the fact that, regardless of the sustainability performance of the companies in this industry, many in the financial markets often see these companies as incompatible with ESG criteria, simply because they produce armaments, even if it is for EU and NATO forces. Our following considerations are therefore a strong plea for an “Olive-Green Deal” to be attached to the “Green Deal”, in order

to create explicit EU standards for harmonising Green-Deal expectations with NATO and European defence policy objectives and requirements. The aim is to provide guidance to financial markets and eliminate the supposed contradiction between security and defence in Europe and sustainability.

ESG criteria have already gained considerable importance in financial markets and the trend is rapidly continuing. The fact that they have already reached the highest levels of financial market governance is demonstrated by the association of 114 central banks and supervisory authorities to form the Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS). In the context of the Green Deal, the European Central Bank (ECB) has also formulated specific expectations for banks on how to consider these risks within their business models and strategies, their governance and risk management models, as well as on disclosures. Simultaneously, the ECB is intending to give preferential treatment to green bonds. Rather unsurprisingly therefore, financial markets are not exactly characterised by their positive approach to the industry.

Lack of general regulatory guidance

While “controversial weapons”, banned by international treaties, are quite naturally to be excluded, the true problem begins where financial markets set general exclusions based on percentage thresholds of turnover in the armaments sector, regardless of the purpose for which these products are ultimately intended and who the customer is. Thresholds between 5% and 25% of revenue are most common and can be derived from either legislation or investor industry associations. The EU Ecolabel for Retail Financial Products, i.e. retail funds but also savings accounts, which is currently being drafted, provides for the exclusion of companies with more than 5% of their

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turnover in armaments. In the absence of general regulatory guidance on how different kinds of products and industries are to be handled in this era of sustainability disclosures, financial market actors tend to establish their own guidelines. Several German investment funds and banks for instance have jointly developed a market standard under the Level 2 amendments to MiFID, effectively excluding companies that derive more than 10% of their turnover from production or distribution of military hardware. The problem is that a definition of what precisely “military hardware” is, has not been proposed.

The Ukraine war – a turning point?

Ever since the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the idea has finally established itself among the governments of the EU Member States that efforts to arm the European component of NATO ought to be massively increased. This is especially true for Germany, which so far has failed to fulfil its NATO pledge to spend at least 2% of its annual GDP on defence. Moreover, it is now abundantly clear that war is, in essence, the absence of sustainability values as set out in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The brutal war unleashed on Ukraine by Russia deprives people of their fundamental social rights, including the right to adequate food, water, sanitation, clothing, housing and medical care. In addition, Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states unambiguously that every human being has the right to life, liberty and security of person. We see a broad consensus among NATO member states that armaments, under the NATO rules of engagement, are the prerequisite for our ability to maintain peace and security in our part of the world. The conclusion that must be drawn from this is bindingly obvious: NATO armaments and weapons are the very basis for sustainability in our countries, both from an environmental and a social point of view.

Therefore, in order to establish an understanding that can influence the decisions of private actors, especially on financial markets, a solid regulatory “bridge” is needed between the Green Deal on the one hand and the urgent need to increase armament expenditure for NATO’s European arm on the other. We call this bridge an “Olive-Green Deal” which we are proposing as a supplementary chapter to the Green Deal. The responsibility for building such a “bridge” rests with those EU Member States who are also NATO members, as it is NATO that

defines the concrete requirements for the military capabilities needed to fulfil NATO’s overall mission.

The pros and cons of “green” military equipment

The question is to what extent military equipment must be “green” in order to meet the overall societal goals set out in the Green Deal? At the same time, to what extent must exceptions be made so that armed forces are able to fulfil their tasks? Interestingly, the issue of “green defence” can be looked at from different perspectives. For instance, soldiers have an operational advantage if, for example, they can fight with a decentralised supply of renewable energy, such as a fuel cell, in their backpacks. In this case, green technology applications serve a dual purpose: they enhance capabilities and provide environmental benefits at the same time. In other cases, however, the application of green technologies impedes military capabilities. If, for example, all military vehicles were required to be electrified, in line with the planned civilian standards in the EU, this would significantly limit their range in most conflicts.

NATO has already carefully thought out and elaborated defence scenarios, on the basis of which its required military capabilities are to be conceived. This is exactly the kind of background into which both options and limitations of green technologies for NATO armed forces should be embedded. What is ultimately needed is a set of NATO-defined “green” technological requirements as well as exceptions. It follows therefore that there must be clear-cut parameters on the extent to which military technology ought to be green and the extent to which it cannot be green, to guarantee operational effectiveness. Such exemptions would need to be included in any EU directive that contains sustainability related obligations or requirements.



Dr Hans Christoph Atzpodien is Managing Director of Bundesverband Deutscher Sicherheits- und Verteidigungsindustrie (BDSV), Berlin



Lucas Hirsch is Sustainability Analyst at Bundesverband Deutscher Sicherheits- und Verteidigungsindustrie (BDSV), Berlin

photos: ©BDSV

“A solid regulatory bridge is needed between the Green Deal on the one hand and the urgent need to increase armament expenditure for NATO’s European arm on the other.”



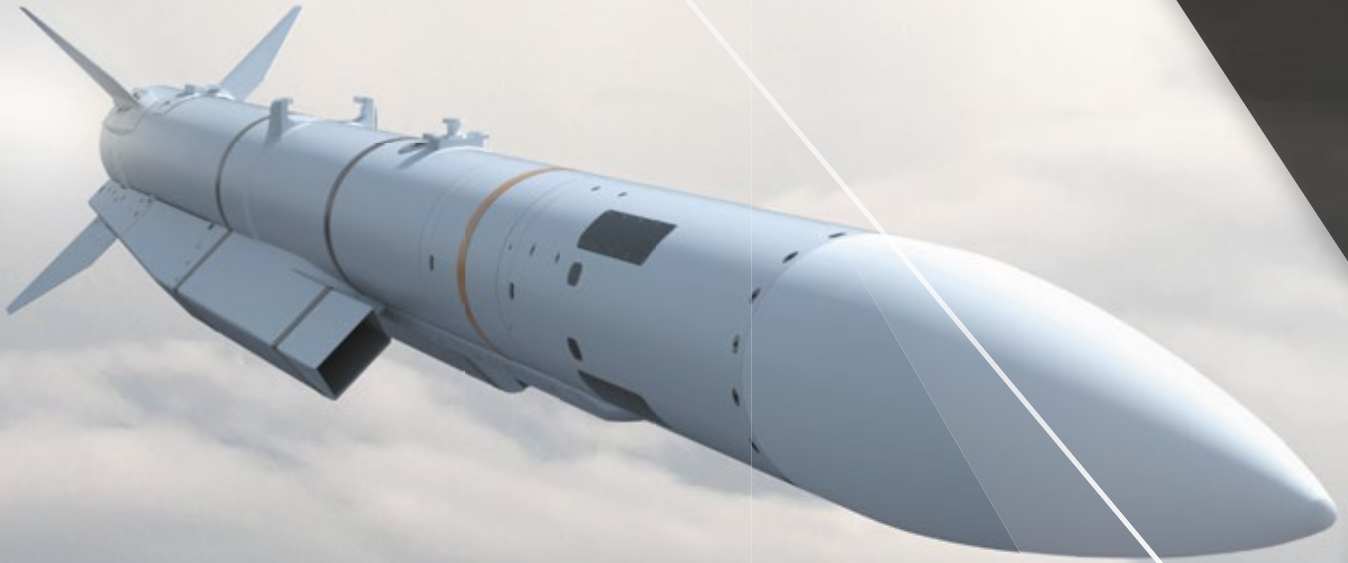
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