



BACKGROUND PAPER

PREVENTION, PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO LONG-TERM EMERGENCIES

PRESIDENCY WORKSHOP CZ PRES 2022

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INTRODUCTION



The main priority of the Czech Republic is to collectively continue working on strengthening of civil protection within and around the EU. The Czech Republic recognizes that the primary responsibility for civil protection lies with the Member States, but joint activities within the EU framework provide added complementarity and support. We would like to further expand on work done by preceding Presidencies that strived for more effective exchange of experiences and lessons learned e.g. through the creation of the EU Civil Protection Knowledge Network. Noteworthy is also FR PRES endeavour that focused on better connecting climate change and disaster risk management systems, as well as the work carried out in the framework of the RO PRES on capacities aimed to respond to low probability risks with high impact (HILP).

The CZ PRES would like to reflect lessons learned during emergencies like forest fires in Portugal and Greece, the COVID-19 pandemic, tornado in the Czech Republic, blackout in Slovenia or the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Severity and frequency of long-term emergencies is on the rise and its consequences pay little regard to national borders. The CZ PRES would therefore like to bring forward discussions how to strengthen prevention, preparedness and response to long-term emergencies and explore ways on how to bolster the resilience of Member States through an efficient use of the UCPM as part of an integrated approach to the management of long-term emergencies. The CZ PRES would also like to highlight the importance of prepared citizens and their role in successful management of long-term emergencies and national resilience.

PRIORITY **FRAMEWORK**

A. TIME FRAMEWORK

Due to the fact that long-term emergencies are more and more common, the CZ PRES wants to analyse and assess in close cooperation with other Member States, what could be the suitable definition and time framework for the duration of long-term emergencies. The aim of the CZ PRES is to share individual lessons and opinions and explore what types of emergencies could be assessed as long-term. This should then lead to the identification of potential differences between emergency and consequence management, emergency recovery and reconstruction in the case of long-term emergencies. It should also emphasise the nexus between civil protection and recovery approaches with the need to integrate disaster risk reduction into recovery to make nations and communities also resilient to potential future long-term emergencies.

B. THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

To frame the thematic discussion on long-term emergencies both the CZ national risk analysis and EU's Overview of natural and man-made disaster risks the European Union may face are used as important starting points. Both documents indicate that floods, extreme weather events, forest fires, epidemics, epizootics, industrial accidents (including radiation incidents), severe oil or food supply disruption can cause long-term effects. These risks can be multiplied by increasing impacts of the climate change and potential cascading effects. Extensive outages of infrastructure can be expected, such as electricity, communication technologies, transport and supply systems, massive level destruction of the affected area, loss of life and the corresponding necessity for long-term deployment of the civil protection authorities. Both the COVID-19 pandemics and the implications of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine further highlight this trend.

C. CZ PRES WORKSHOP'S WORKING GROUPS CONCEPT

During the plenary session of the CZ PRES seminar, the proposed definition and time framework of long-term emergencies will be presented. In order to streamline the discussions and in pursuit of tangible outcomes, three working groups (WGs) will be created, each consisting of two specific blocks. The three WG's will be each tasked to address proposed priority from specific vantage point:

1. prevention and preparedness for long-term emergencies, including population preparedness, communicating in emergencies and informing citizens,
2. response to long-term emergencies related to climate change,
3. response to HILP emergencies with the support from various types of actors.

WORKING GROUPS

1.

PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS FOR LONG-TERM EMERGENCIES, INCLUDING POPULATION PREPAREDNESS, COMMUNICATING IN EMERGENCIES AND INFORMING CITIZENS

Protection of lives, public health, the environment and properties is one of the main obligations to which the state is committed. Until the arrival of professional emergency response teams, citizens depend mainly on their own capacities, abilities and skills, which can significantly affect the resulting impacts of emergency situations. In addition, within the extreme circumstances of long-term emergencies more demands will be placed on citizens' ability to help themselves and others.

In connection with the FR PRES, which has dealt with the climate change impacts, the Czech Republic intends to focus comprehensively on the issue of preparedness for those impacts. This will focus especially on the climate change preparation and education of the population, including volunteers, communities, youth, children and/or people with disabilities. We recognise and respond to the close connection between prevention and preparedness. Therefore sharing experiences and good practices in preparing the European population to respond to climate change adverse effects is an absolutely key part of finding a way to adapt successfully and, as a result, to improve preparedness and to strengthen people and communities state resilience to future long-term emergencies.

Some of the challenges for the Member States are, for example, information management and communication in emergencies, including national risk and crisis communication, or performing civil protection tasks in the form of transitional and emergency shelter provision, as experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

BLOCK I: POPULATION PREPAREDNESS

Given the growing extremity of events, it will be crucial to increase self-sufficiency of the population in such a way that rescue services can provide rapid and effective assistance in those situations. Therefore, a self-sufficient and prepared citizen is vital for the effective functioning of the population protection system. At the same time, however, it is necessary to change and improve the methods of citizen's education and focusing mainly on experiential education and the use of modern technologies, especially virtual or augmented reality. In the Czech Republic, such form of education is presented through the Centre for Health and Safety (informally called "World of Rescuers") – a complex realistic model of a small town with complete infrastructure and equipment enabling the implementation of specifically targeted programs. Individual sites and buildings offer facilities for theoretical and practical training in risk prevention.



Virtual reality



World of Rescuers - Carlsbad

BLOCK II: COMMUNICATING IN EMERGENCIES AND INFORMING CITIZENS

The speed of technological development has brought significant changes in some aspects of society's lifestyle and information processing in general. The demands of the population to receive verified information and to be continuously informed about the ongoing events are on the increase. Ahead, during and after an emergency, timely and transparent production and communication of information generates trust and credibility. In case citizens are not provided with precise, relevant and up to date information, the risk of losing information monopoly and authority arises. At the same time, this can result in an uncontrollable dissemination of false and unverified information, which in turn can lead to the incorrect behaviour of the population (e.g. clogging emergency lines, distributing alarming messages) and thus make it overly difficult or frustrating for first responders to perform their rescue and recovery work.

A necessary condition for informing all population groups is the ability to communicate the topics that are key to increasing societal resilience in an acceptable and consumer-friendly way. To increase the attractiveness and interest in the preparedness of the population and communication with them, it is necessary to choose appropriate tools, such as mobile applications or a web portal. Another aspect that should be considered regards the issue of emergency communication of sensitive topics such as CBRN, given the complexity of informing citizens of these risks and the worries and unrest that might be generated by the lack of knowledge.

WORKING GROUPS

2.

RESPONSE TO LONG-TERM EMERGENCIES RELATED TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Long-term natural emergencies can be associated with climate change and manifest themselves mainly in extreme weather events (e.g. floods, forest fires, windstorms, tornadoes, snowstorms, black ice, etc.). By their nature, they cause impacts associated with long-term emergency and consequence management. These events are often associated with large-scale infrastructure outages, such as electricity, communication technologies, and transmission and supply systems. Very often it is a series of less serious but consecutive events which require prioritization of the deployment of national capacities. Good examples for further analysis could be the impact of extreme weather in Slovenia in 2014, where there was a large-scale “blackout”, large-scale floods in Germany or a tornado in the Czech Republic in 2021. Extreme weather events are the second most common risk across EU Member States according to the risk analyses. In that sense there should be discussion between Member States about “an energy provision” under rescEU and / or other types of capacities under ECPP that would be able to address other types of critical infrastructure failures.

Slowly evolving effects of climate change, such as long-term droughts, can be problematic. The resulting problem may be a lack of drinking / fire / technical water. The provision of drinking water (including emergency supply of mobile drinking water treatment plants) is crucial for the population. Securing fire-fighting water both through appropriate fire water sources and technical means for long-distance fire-water transport (also suitable for emergency water supply for critical infrastructure entities) is key for fire-fighting.

BLOCK I: RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE RELATED NATURAL EMERGENCIES

With their increasing frequency and/or intensity natural emergencies (especially extreme weather events such as floods, forest fires, windstorms, tornadoes, snowstorms, black ice), which occur suddenly, can have an extreme and long-term impacts. The initial phase of response to sudden natural emergencies is always problematic and ensuring the coordination of rescue and consequence management activities is very challenging in the first hours to days.

The most common consequences of these events include:

- congestion of emergency calls,
- exhaustion of intervening forces and resources,
- lack or, conversely, too much conflicting information,
- lack of specialized forces and resources,
- the need to prioritize the deployment of forces and resources,
- destruction of infrastructure and related outages of energy and basic raw materials,
- lack of funds to ensure the basic emergency needs of the population, especially emergency accommodation,
- overload of the health care system and hospitals,
- media and political interest.

To support the increasing response needs to climate change related emergencies, it is appropriate to assess weaknesses from the perspective of the Member States capacities and response systems (e.g. lack of resources for emergency accommodation, emergency drinking water supply and electricity, etc.). As the current migration wave in the context of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has shown, emergency accommodation capabilities, irrespective of its cause, could be strengthened at the level of the UCPM.



BLOCK II: RESPONSE TO OTHER CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

Long-term drought already causes a lack of natural water resources. It can also cause a greater incidence of forest fires in the natural environment, even in areas that were not previously prone to forest fires. The period of higher incidence of forest fires has been also extending.

The lack of water - drinking / fire / technical may be a problem in the future. The provision of drinking water is crucial for the population (emergency water supplies, mobile water treatment plants). Another important area is to assure fire-fighting water sources such as natural water sources or long-distance fire-water transport. Both lack of drinking water and wild fires and their cascading effects may become an increasing problem in the future.



Floods Elbe, 2013

WORKING GROUPS

3.

RESPONSE TO HELP EMERGENCIES WITH THE SUPPORT FROM VARIOUS TYPES OF ACTORS

Various industrial and technological accidents or CBRN incidents, the COVID-19 pandemic or Russian war of aggression against Ukraine may necessitate long-term deployment of civil protection forces and assets including the activation of UCPM instruments, in conjunction with other EU financial and diplomatic instruments (e.g. sanctions).

Events such as SEVESO, Chernobyl or Fukushima incidents remind us that we should not neglect preparedness for such major incidents including their cross-border impacts. The COVID-19 pandemic had paralyzed countries, their economies, supply chains and health systems, but it has also led to an unprecedented deployment of emergency services wherever services and structures have been overwhelmed. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine once again points to the need to focus on threats that so far seemed unlikely, but have the potential to impact on society as a whole.

Long-term emergencies put the classical civil protection response model at its limits. This also raises the question of new or additional actors becoming relevant to support civil protection or crisis management as large as most recently experienced during response operations in and around the Ukraine with additional support being mobilised through NGOs, private sector companies and/or third countries. The objective of this working group will be to reflect on the best use of these new and additional support options.

BLOCK I: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE MILITARY AGGRESSION IN EUROPE

Based on the most recent UCPM deployments, this block aims to focus on sharing current experience in dealing with the effects of armed conflict in Europe, and the related activities to address the Ukrainian refugee crisis. The discussion should also focus on the cooperation mechanisms between nations and international organizations (UN, EU, NATO).

This emergency is by far the largest and most complex for Member States and the UCPM. The UCPM has coordinated the EU's emergency response and established a lifeline of support to Ukraine that addressed the needs identified in numerous sectors. Operations conducted so far, which highlighted many challenges and opportunities to learn for future operations.



KACPU Regional Assistance Help Center - Ostrava



Humanitarian aid - face masks and respirators

BLOCK II: STRENGTHENING CIVIL PROTECTION TASKS THROUGH THE SUPPORT FROM VARIOUS TYPES OF ACTORS

This block will address the execution of civil protection tasks during HILP emergencies. An exemplary focus is set on evacuation and emergency accommodation/sheltering in view of the current urgency to deal with long-term population displacements.

These types of emergencies require a particularly high quantity and sometimes very specific quality of resources and hence the involvement of additional and/or new actors in their emergency management, including during prevention and recovery measures. Ways to mobilise additional resources and expertise via the integration of NGO sector and citizens into civil protection systems should be assessed in connection to the activities of the WG 1. Above mentioned events have also shown the need to systematically address the potentially scarce resources demanded by Member States that could be provided by a limited number of producers. In the context of the current civil protection operations in and around Ukraine and the emergencies related to the presence of CBRN agents, it is also necessary to focus on the use of civil protection capacities for detection, monitoring and decontamination.



Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic
Kloknerova 26
Prague
Czech republic



czpres2022.hzscr.cz