



# 2021 PORTUGAL.EU

## WORKSHOP

**Civil Protection in the COVID-19 era:  
Business continuity, adaptation  
and capacity development**

**13-14 April 2021**

## Workshop

# Civil Protection in the COVID-19 era: Business continuity, adaptation and capacity development

13-14 APRIL 2021

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### Document credits

Portuguese National Authority for Emergency and Civil Protection

## Concept note

The COVID-19 outbreak added extra challenges to Civil Protection Services. In addition to daily routine activities, including the management of emergencies, such as fires, hurricanes or earthquakes, Civil Protection Services also had to manage the impacts resulting from an overwhelming public health event.

In several Union Civil Protection Mechanism Participating States, Civil Protection Services played a vital role as a **coordination hub**, providing direct support to health authorities and streamlining the interconnection between different sectors of society, to quickly assess impacts and needs. However, it should be noted that protection and relief services were not, as a rule, technically qualified or legally mandated to manage pandemics – rather they were requested to make their structures and procedures available for this purpose.

To contribute to the overall effort of fighting COVID-19, **civil protection services had to adapt the way daily business was performed**. For example, pre-existing emergency plans had to be modified and activated, whilst guidelines for operational intervention in non-COVID emergencies had to be issued and personal protection equipment distributed to relief workers. On another hand, several **capacity building** and community-based activities normally performed by civil protection services (such as exercises, awareness activities or training actions) ended up being conditioned or even canceled, due to the need to maintain social distance.

At an internal level, civil protection services also faced challenges. The most complex one was **staff management**, as many professionals and volunteers dedicated to emergency operations become infected with COVID-19 or were obliged to a confinement situation as a way of preventing potential contaminations. In addition, physical spaces in civil protection facilities had to be rearranged, to increase distance between workers, and cleaning and disinfection procedures had to be reinforced.

As a result, civil protection services had to develop or update internal contingency plans, to continue ensuring its **business continuity** in a scenario of greater demands with less human resources. Moreover, the complexity of this task was amplified by uncertainty regarding the evolution of the situation and the need for workers to perform their daily tasks remotely, using communication technologies, thus increasing the exposure of critical systems to cyber-attacks.

This outbreak has shown that Civil Protection Services must be able to adapt to avoid disruption, and guarantee an appropriate response when simultaneously dealing with other types of emergencies on a daily basis.

## Goals

The overall objective of the Workshop is to **analyze the experiences and practices of Civil Protection Services in adapting** to this complex outbreak scenario, whilst maintaining high levels of operational response to multiple emergencies. Focus will be placed in the **lessons identified in relation to the business continuity plans for emergency services**. This will include the discussion on EU MS experiences in terms of staff management and international deployments on a pandemic context. This aspect is particularly important to improve resilience regarding possible future outbreaks that will most certainly occur at the same time as other emergencies the EU regularly faces.

Specific attention will also be given on how to strengthen and reinforce EU collective capacity to better prepare and respond to emergencies. In light of the development of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network, the workshop will discuss, particularly, on **how EU MS and the Commission can articulate solutions to continue promoting capacity development** (such as trainings, exercises, exchanges of experts, awareness-raising activities, etc.) whilst **taking into account that the “new normal”** will oblige a rethinking of ways to promote capacity development at EU level.

## Provisional Agenda (brussels time)

### 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021

<b>09h30</b>	Login on virtual platform
<b>10h00</b>	<p>Welcome and introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement from Portuguese Presidency of the Council of European Union</li> <li>• Statement from the European Commission</li> </ul> <p>Housekeeping rules</p>
<b>10h20</b>	<p>Setting the context (<i>initial presentations aiming to illustrate how disaster and risk management communities have introduced business continuity and adaption procedures in their routine activities</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building resilience during a pandemic</li> <li>• Lessons learned on business continuity and adaptation</li> <li>• Managing emergencies in a COVID-19 context</li> </ul>
<b>11h15</b>	Break
<b>11h35</b>	<p>Adapting to the COVID-19 impacts (<i>presentations aiming to trigger the discussion on how the COVID-19 pandemic affected preparedness and response activities</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and exercises</li> <li>• Deployments amidst the pandemic</li> <li>• Business continuity plans and staff management</li> </ul>
<b>12h30</b>	Lunch Break
<b>14h00</b>	Presentation of main survey results
<b>14h30</b>	<p>Break-out sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and exercises</li> <li>• Deployments / Assessment and coordination missions</li> <li>• Business continuity plans and staff management</li> </ul>
<b>15h20</b>	Break
<b>15h40</b>	Break-out sessions continue
<b>16h30</b>	Closure of Day 1
<b>16h45</b> <b>18h00</b>	Social Event

### 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021

<b>09h30</b>	Login on virtual platform
<b>10h00</b>	Welcome and wrap up of Day 1
<b>10h15</b>	Presentation and discussion on the outcomes of the break-out sessions
<b>11h15</b>	Break
<b>11h30</b>	Keynote speaker
<b>12h00</b>	Recommendations and way forward
<b>12h45</b>	Closing