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From:	Presidency
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
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Subject:	Report of the Netherlands Presidency on the main achievements at EU level in the field of civil protection

1. Delegations will find attached a Presidency Report on the main achievements at EU level in the field of civil protection.
2. COREPER is advised to invite the Council to take note of the report.

REPORT of the NETHERLANDS PRESIDENCY
on the main achievements at EU level in the field of civil protection

This report outlines the main achievements of the EU in the field of civil protection during the Netherlands Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The central theme of the Working Party on Civil Protection (PROCIV) during the Netherlands Presidency was the raising of awareness of disaster prevention, which is of key importance to achieve a higher level of protection against, and resilience to, disasters. Disaster prevention plays an important part in a holistic approach to resilience building by addressing the protection of people, property and the environment against all kinds of natural and man-made disasters.

Civil Protection was also very much involved in the response to the ongoing migration and refugee crisis, both at national and EU levels, including through the activation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism by several participating states.

1. Resilient infrastructures

The main objective of the Presidency was to reach a better understanding of possible cascading effects of disasters on critical infrastructure and the role of the civil protection authorities in strengthening the resilience of such critical infrastructure. In recent years, new and complex threats have emerged, highlighting the need for further synergies and closer cooperation at all levels. There has also been a significant increase in the number and severity of natural and man-made disasters. Major steps have been taken at national and European levels across different policy fields¹²³ to build resilience to natural and man-made events. Addressing the need to enhance the resilience of all vital and critical infrastructures is paramount to reduce both the exposure and vulnerability of these infrastructures to natural and man-made disasters. This can be achieved through closer cooperation between the civil protection and critical infrastructure protection communities.

The Presidency organised a workshop for the civil protection and critical infrastructure protection communities entitled 'Building Bridges to enhance resilient infrastructures'. The workshop took place in The Hague, the Netherlands from 12 to 13 January 2016. The following steps which Member States could take in order to minimise the risk of disruption of critical infrastructure were identified:

- the importance of sharing information and building knowledge;
- interlinking risk assessments;
- the need for a public warning system (crisis communication) in addition to risk awareness;
- cooperation with all relevant partners (including the private sector), mainly in sharing good practices;
- training and exercises.

¹ Union Civil Protection Mechanism - Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

² European Programme Critical Infrastructure Protection - the Communication from the Commission on a European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection (COM(2006) 786 final).

³ EU Regulation on Trans-European Transport Networks - Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network.

These steps were further discussed during the three meetings of PROCIV. The Working Party came to the following common understanding:

Sharing information and building knowledge

- further cooperation between various (levels of) databases and platforms is needed to enable information sharing and knowledge building;
- creating links between science and policy making could be further explored;
- good practices on sharing (sensitive) information with operators of infrastructures before and during crises could be shared;
- interlinking of different web portals and European databases in order to create more synergy is an important challenge.

Interlinking risk assessments

- the importance of interlinking the domains by risk assessments (taking into account cascading effects within National Risk Assessments);
- the dilemma between public and confidential information within the various risk assessments could be a challenge;
- regionalised risk assessments could be helpful to assess cross-border infrastructures. Building on this, development towards a Pan-European Network Risk Assessment (PEN-RA) may be desirable in future.

Crisis communication and risk awareness

- risk awareness is a central dimension of efficient disaster risk management;
- it is the basic responsibility of authorities (central and local) to notify the public of major hazards and threats to which the population is exposed;
- the assessment of risks requires effective information and communication systems;
- understanding the required administrative capacity to communicate the results of risk assessments and its relevance to an overall risk communication strategy can help improve information sharing, data sharing and communication with relevant stakeholders.

Training and exercises

- conducting exercises and training should be a link in a larger chain, connecting prior education and training to subsequent testing, evaluating and learning, thus bringing the system full cycle;
- a proper evaluation and lessons learned should be implemented after each incident, disaster or exercise;
- education and training, and awareness of a risk can increase the resilience of society if explicitly linked to policy.

Cooperation with relevant partners, inter alia by sharing good practices

- incorporating good practices and continuously learning from experience and knowledge within the Member States can enhance resilience;
- the findings from events and research could be incorporated into improved preparedness and resilience planning, guarding against unintended adverse impacts, such as the creation of additional risks or the failure to recognise changes in risk characteristics;
- identifying the lessons learned as a first step in a process that includes adapting critical systems, recurrent monitoring of capability levels, evaluating the performance of response and recovery actions, and undertaking peer reviews to share insights across Member States.

Based on the discussion in PROCIV, the Presidency concludes that resilience building in the prevention phase could be considered as a crucial element in order to mitigate risks in a sustainable manner. The Presidency proposes the following:

- organising (through existing fora) a gathering of the Civil Protection and Critical Infrastructure Protection communities, in policy making and in training or exercise, in order to raise mutual awareness and discuss concrete ways of fostering synergies.

For example: by inviting the CIP Points of Contacts to the disaster prevention expert group meetings, and by considering the inclusion of a learning cycle (education and training) in the exercise aspect of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism;

- promoting and exploring cooperation on cascading effects in national risk assessments by the European Commission, through the Prevention and Preparedness projects funded by the Civil Protection funding instrument, as well as the activities of the Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre support system;
- exploring the development of a regional risk assessment methodology, which may develop towards a Pan European approach, in order to support the Member States in identifying, analysing and evaluating risks: Member States and the European Commission should continue cooperating through the EU Disaster Prevention Expert Group and the Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre;
- enhancing a comprehensive approach to risk management by the Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre (DRMKC), as a main point of reference for a strengthened science-policy interface, which could include the domain of resilient infrastructures in its activities.

For example: by collecting and facilitating good practices and lessons learned from incidents or exercises which can help to identify prevention options and further foster a culture of prevention. Furthermore, by exploring ways to interlink the various existing databases, platforms and web portals at a European level in order to further the exchange of knowledge and information, as well as to create more synergy between the various fields;

- Cooperation between EU civil protection and EU resilient infrastructure protection could also be better reflected in the legal texts.

On basis of the discussions in the Working Party, the Presidency compiled a Manual of Good Practice at EU level in the field of civil protection and critical infrastructure protection (9930/1/16 REV 1).

2. Prevention of floods

Due to the effects of climate change, population growth, rapid urbanisation and ecosystem degradation, floods are among the main risks across the EU with a high probability and a large impact on society. Consequently, it is important to consider the roles of various stakeholders in preventing and minimising the consequences of social disruption. The Presidency therefore initiated a discussion on flood prevention from the perspective of civil protection, with the aim of understanding flood risks through the exchange of good ideas and best practices, the identification of possible gaps and potential buffer capacities, and a focus on common action and synergies. The Presidency presented three layers of limitation of both the probability and impact of floods: prevention, spatial adaptation, and effective disaster and crisis management. The Working Party discussed the following:

Culture of prevention

- Risk assessment and plans to manage flood risks and capabilities are considered to be the main components of the implementation of the 2007 EU Floods Directive, which aims to reduce the adverse consequences for human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity at pan-European level.
- There are differences in the roles and responsibilities of both national and local civil protection and crisis management authorities during the protective and preventive phases of the flood risk management cycle.

- An effective holistic multi-level governance is considered essential to the expansion of the approach from protection to prevention and awareness.
- The internalisation of the cross-border nature of flood risk in its preventive management through transboundary cooperation is considered highly important.

Spatial adaptation

- Spatial adaptation could be considered as a proactive approach to flood risk management in order to support the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of preventive measures.
- A long-term vision, cooperation with private partners, the role of local authorities, and the involvement of actors from different levels are considered necessary for effective spatial planning.
- For the successful implementation of spatial adaptation in Member States, it should be incorporated into different policy areas.
- Sharing knowledge and good practices could be of vital importance for the Member States.

Public awareness and mass evacuation

- The context of disaster and crisis management is characterised by the general public's perception of a low risk and, consequently, limited focus on preparation for floods.
- Since the impact of floods often goes beyond the capacities of individual organisations (and even countries) it is important to integrate all the different levels (local, regional, interregional, and national) in scenarios, evacuation and communication strategies.
- There are differences in the roles and responsibilities of local and national civil protection authorities in response planning and coordination of evacuation activities among Member States.

- Visualisation, simplicity and availability of information as well as the cooperation between public and private stakeholders are crucial to good communication.
- There are various initiatives (e.g. education in schools, various campaigns etc.) aiming to increase risk awareness in the Member States.
- The evacuation possibilities depend on the difference in risks (coastal or river floods), geographical setting (mainland versus islands) and the impact of floods on public health.

Based on the discussion in PROCIV the Presidency proposes the following:

- Improving interaction between the Civil Protection and Flood Risk Management communities in order to raise mutual awareness and discuss concrete ways of fostering synergies;
- Making use of the Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre to exchange knowledge and good practices on flood risk prevention;
- Promoting cross-border projects on flood risk management, through the Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness projects;

3. Refugee and migration crisis

The Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) was activated in 2015 by Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece and Serbia. Overall, 25 participating states have offered assistance in order to respond to UCPM activations linked to the refugee crisis⁴. Contributions have been significant in number and volume with more than 800 000 basic relief items being dispatched, including: shelter, sanitation, emergency kits, protective equipment and minivans. However, the overall financial value of the UCPM assistance remains modest compared to the overall EU response and some gaps still remain, notably in terms of accommodation containers, blankets, heaters, emergency first aid kits, mattresses, tents and toilets.

⁴ AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FI, FR, HU, IE, LV, LT, LU, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SK, ES, SE, SI, UK.

It should also be noted that, in the framework of the activation of the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) arrangements, the ERCC is acting as the IPCR central 24/7 point of contact. A lessons learned process was initiated by the Presidency in the framework of the Friends of the Presidency Group (IPCR/SCI), which will involve the relevant working parties, including PROCIV.

Following the conclusions of the European Council of 19 February, in which the European Council stated that it considered it necessary to put in place the capacity for the EU to provide humanitarian assistance internally, the Council Regulation on the provision of emergency support within the Union was adopted on 15 March⁵. On this basis, on 19 April 2016, the EU allocated EUR 83 million to address the most urgent needs of refugees in Greece. Working via eight humanitarian partners (UNHCR, IFRC and six international NGOs: OXFAM, IRC, DRC⁶, ASB⁷, Save the Children and Mdm⁸), the Commission has prioritised support for the needs of stranded refugees and migrants in reception centres and camps in Greece (mostly mainland). The assistance provided includes health and protection activities, psychosocial support, water sanitation, hygiene, shelter and food. Support for relocation, resettlement and return schemes is not planned.

4. Participation in the Union Civil Protection Mechanism

On 4 April 2016 Turkey formally became the 34th participating state of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Participation in the UCPM comes following ratification by the Turkish authorities of the Agreement with the European Union 'on the participation of Turkey in the Union Civil Protection Mechanism'. The agreement was signed in Brussels on 6 May 2015 by Christos Stylianides, EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, and Dr. Fuat Oktay, President of the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority of Turkey.

⁵ OJ L 70 of 16.3.2016, p. 1.

⁶ Danish Refugee Council.

⁷ German Worker's Samaritan Federation.

⁸ Doctors of the World.

5. Activations of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism

The UCPM was activated 12 times in the period January – June 2016. The following activations marked this period:

- Migration crisis – as stated above, five countries activated the UCPM in 2015 due to the overwhelming influx of refugees. On 29 February 2016 Greece activated the UCPM for the second time. The activations have been closed by Hungary (11 September 2015), Slovenia (4 April 2016) and Croatia (30 May 2016). The needs of Croatia have been fully met, however the activation has been maintained as a precaution. Both Serbia and particularly Greece still face challenges concerning a number of accommodation or hygiene items.
- Ebola - WHO activated the UCPM in 2014 after the Ebola virus struck, mostly in Liberia, Ghana and Mali. Since then various capacities and expertise have been deployed to these and other Western African countries. On 29 March 2016, the Emergency Committee convened by the WHO noted that Ebola transmission in West Africa no longer constituted an extraordinary event and that the effected countries had enough capacity to respond rapidly to new virus emergencies. The European Commission continues to monitor the situation closely.
- Fiji – following the tropical typhoon Winston, Fiji activated the UCPM on 22 February 2016 for transport capacity. Following assistance from France the activation was closed on 31 March 2016.
- Ecuador - following an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8 Ecuador activated the UCPM on 17 April 2016. Over 660 people died and over 1.2 million people were severely affected by the earthquake. An EUCP team, teams of different experts and relief items were deployed.

- Angola – in response to the ongoing outbreak of yellow fever in the country, the EU has deployed a team of medical experts under the European Medical Corps. Public health and medical experts from three Member States, and representatives from the European Commission and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control conducted an assessment mission to develop a better understanding of the epidemiological characteristics of the outbreak, assess the risks for regional and international spread, implications for Europe and for Europeans travelling in the region, and examine ways to provide further expertise to the country in its mitigation efforts.
- Sri Lanka – floods and landslides. Following the consequences of tropical cyclone Roanu affecting Sri Lanka as of 14 May 2016, the government of Sri Lanka requested international assistance, essentially non-food items (tents, blankets, mattresses, electrical power generators, water pumps, water purification plants and tablets, boats, etc.). In response to the request, and through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, Denmark offered four water purification units accompanied by a technical team which has been deployed on the ground since 30 May 2016. According to the national authorities (the Disaster Management Centre - DMC) the official death toll from tropical cyclone Roanu was 105, with 1 16 still missing and more than 288 680 affected. More than 120 000 people who had been accommodated in temporary encampments across the country have started to return to their homes.
- Ukraine – Cooperation with UCPM (since October 2014).

- Following the UCPM request from the Ukrainian authorities in 2014, a UCPM Capacity Development Advisory mission was deployed in spring 2015. In total, 13 recommendations on various topics were made. A follow-up mission was deployed from 1 to 16 April 2016 with the aim of exploring how the Ukrainian State Emergency Service had taken the recommendations provided by the advisory mission in 2015 into account, and to help to identify and set priorities for the implementation of these recommendations. This mission thus closed the loop of the advisory mission cycle - scoping, advising and follow-up. The mission report is currently being finalised.

6. European Emergency Response Capacity and European Medical Corps

The European Emergency Response Capacity (also known as the voluntary pool) is gradually shaping up under the UCPM, but important work remains on achieving the capacity goals, developing/revising the quality and interoperability criteria for the various modules and other response capacities, and establishing the certification process.

As of June 2016, nine Member States (France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Poland and the Czech Republic) have registered a total of 32 response capacities in the voluntary pool. Another 18 response capacities are pending registration. Additional countries have signalled an interest in participating and bilateral discussions are ongoing.

As part of the voluntary pool, the European Medical Corps was officially launched on 15 February 2016, with strong support from several participating states and from the World Health Organisation (WHO). The assets committed to the European Medical Corps include: the Spanish Medical Team, Luxembourg's Medevac, the Belgian mobile laboratory, the Czech Advanced Medical Post, the German Standing Engineering Capacity, as well as three Technical Assistance and Support Teams (TASTs) from Finland, Sweden and Germany. Some assets are still in the process of being formally committed.

Capacities from the voluntary pool were deployed on three occasions: 1) during the Ebola crisis, the Belgian mobile laboratory was deployed to Guinea and Medevac planes from Luxembourg performed medical evacuations from Sierra Leone; 2) during the forest fires in Greece in summer 2015, the French forest fire-fighting module with planes and an investigation plane were mobilised; and 3) during the response to the Ecuador earthquake, France sent its water purification module.

Work is ongoing at EU level on the development and/or revision of quality and interoperability criteria for response capacities in the voluntary pool and the European Medical Corps. Further work will also be carried out in the expert groups on the development of quality requirements for other response capacities and TASTs and for the inclusion of experts with relevant profiles in the voluntary pool.

7. Risk assessments

The Decision on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism provides that all participating states draw up a National Risk Assessment and submit a summary thereof by 22 December 2015 to the European Commission (Article 6(a)). 30 national contributions were received by the deadline – up from 18 NRAs submitted, on a voluntary basis, between 2011 and 2014.

National Risk Assessments identify major risks, which are addressed at national (or sub-national) level using sets of clear methods and processes, often within country-specific legislative contexts. Information gathered from the various National Risk Assessments contributes to building a clearer picture of the risk landscape across the European Union.

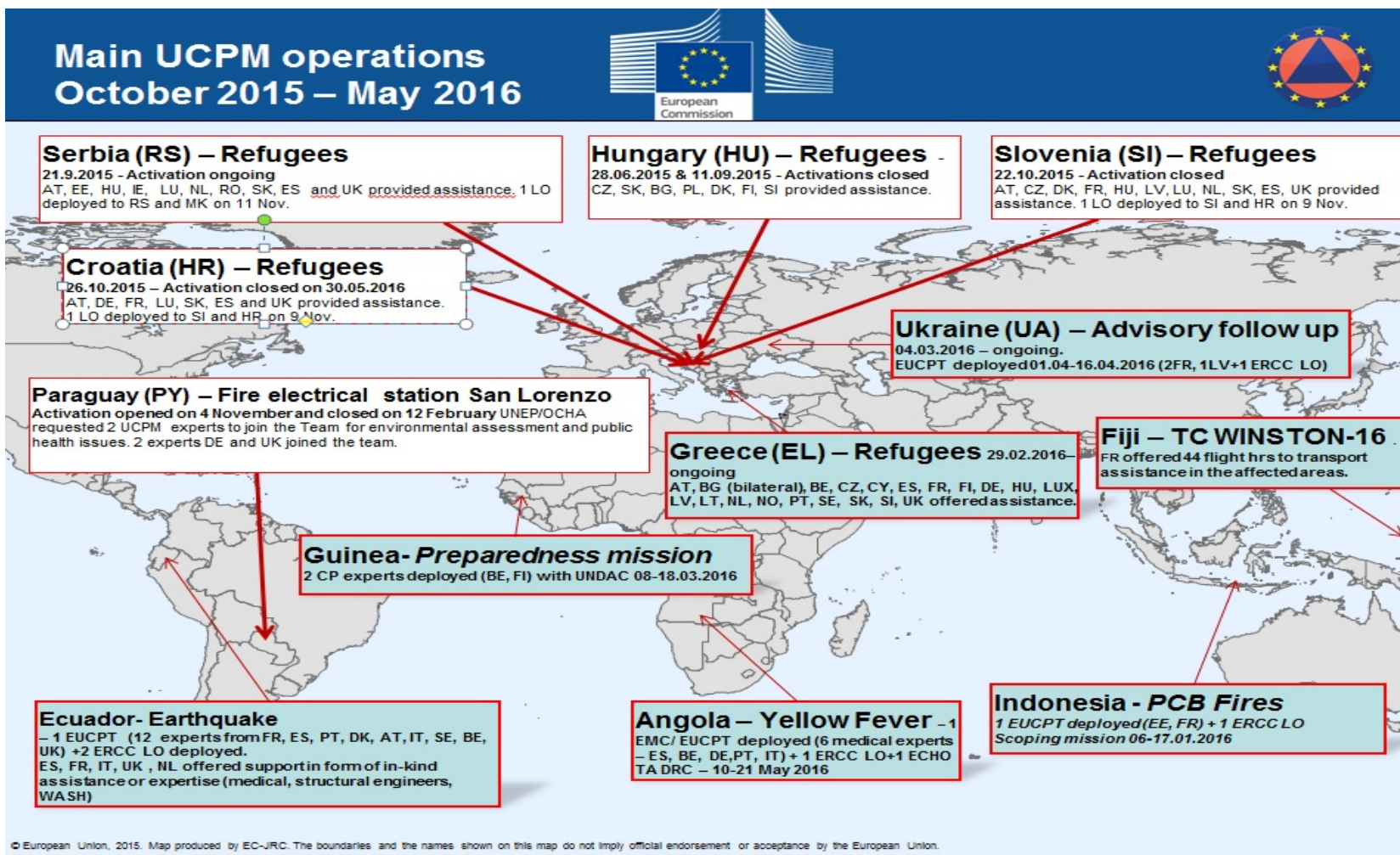
A first reading of the summaries has revealed that flooding remains the key risk (cited in 24 NRAs) assessed in EU countries. Loss of critical infrastructure including power outage (20) is a high-ranking risk and considered to be both a risk trigger and an impact – or cascade effect – of other hazards. Other key risks assessed include, among others: extreme temperatures (19) and industrial accidents (18), radiation releases (18), wildfires (18), terrorist attacks (16), pandemics (15), earthquakes (13) and cyber threats (12).

The legislation also calls on the Commission to prepare an Overview of Risks covering the major disaster risks faced by EU Member States based on national contributions from NRAs. This would in part update the 2014 Overview that, for each disaster risk, examined key components of the hazard and risk assessment outcomes extracted from national contributions. The assessment of risks varies across EU countries according to the assessment scenario chosen, the probability/likelihood of occurrence, the magnitude of impact, the cross-border dimension of risks, as well as the policy context in which these assessments are carried out.

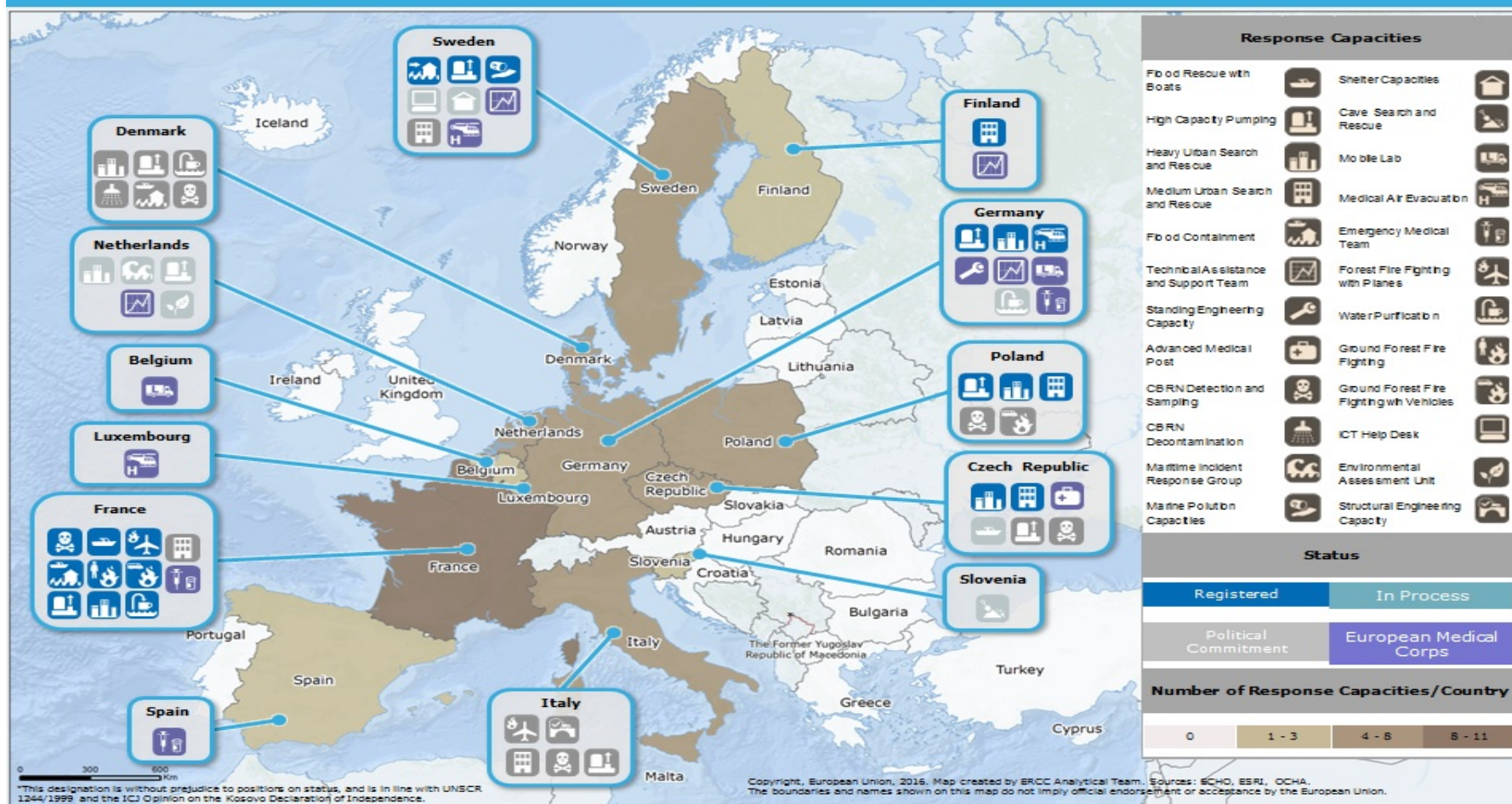
A preliminary assessment of the national contributions points to a number of key areas in which the European Commission and EU Member States could work together, in addition to cooperation in preparing the Overview. These include: understanding the process of hazard identification ('taxonomy'); comparing different methodologies and terminologies; assessing risks of regional and European scale; addressing cascade effects between disaster risks.

8. 36th meeting of the Directors-General for Civil Protection of the European Union, of the European Economic Area and of the candidate countries (Amsterdam, 2-3 June 2016)

Directors-General for Civil Protection gathered in Amsterdam on 2 and 3 June to discuss, *inter alia*, the refugee crisis, national risk assessments, the voluntary pool and the European Medical Corps, partnerships with neighbouring countries, funding opportunities to support disaster risk prevention through the Cohesion Policy, as well as the two above-mentioned Presidency priorities of resilient infrastructures and flood prevention. Finally, a report on the peer review of its disaster management system was handed over to Bulgaria during the meeting.



Source : DG ECHO



Source : DG ECHO