



PROGRAMME OF EXCHANGE OF CIVIL PROTECTION EXPERTS

GUIDELINES

Introduction

The **Union Civil Protection Mechanism** was established in 2001, fostering cooperation among national civil protection authorities across Europe. The Mechanism aims to facilitate coordination in the field of civil protection, in order to improve the effectiveness of the system for prevention, preparedness and response to natural and man-made disasters in Europe and elsewhere.

The Exchange of Experts in Civil Protection programme allows civil protection experts to gain experience and knowledge through exchanges in other EU Member States and UCPM Participating States. Exchanges can also take place for civil protection experts from certain other countries.

Through exchanges, experts can see first-hand how different national systems operate; familiarize themselves with techniques used; study the approaches taken by other emergency services; and, if necessary, to attend or provide courses requiring specific expert knowledge not available in their home country.

The programme is funded by the European Union and implemented by CN APELL-RO (APELL National Centre for Disaster Management Foundation) in consortium with IGSU (General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations).

1. SELECTION CRITERIA

1.1. Participating Countries

The Exchange of Experts programme is open to professional experts from various organisations, governmental departments, emergency services and scientific institutes having a recognised role in civil protection, disaster management and environmental emergencies. The Exchange of Experts Programme is a tool for responding to knowledge and experience gaps and needs in EU Member States and UCPM Participating States.

The Exchange of Experts Programme is also open to the following eligible third countries¹:

Potential EU candidate countries: Kosovo² and Georgia;

Eastern Neighbourhood countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, (Belarus³);

Southern Neighbourhood countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

¹ Experts from eligible third countries are, in principle, expected to visit their counterparts in EU Member States and UCPM Participating States in order to gain knowledge and experience with relevant civil protection authorities. However, in exceptional cases and if duly justified, the exchange may take place in eligible third countries.

² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

³ Due to the Belarus involvement in the unprovoked and unjustified military aggression of the Russian Federation on Ukraine, the participation of Belarus has been suspended.

1.2 Exchanges

An exchange would typically be a study visit to a host country and host organisation to observe the operational structures, learn different techniques and study the approaches taken by other emergency services, but could also additionally comprise attendance or training to gain expert knowledge not available in your country.

Experts may be exchanged individually or in a small group. The maximum number of experts per group is 10, for exchanges with participation of experts from multiple eligible countries. The length of the exchange may vary from a minimum of a few days (three to five days) up to three months. The typical length is generally up to **five days** (including travel). The actual time period and length of an exchange will depend upon type of exchange proposed and the resources available to the respective host organisation. Long term exchanges are exchanges lasting more than one month.

The exchange of experts' programme is open to professional experts from various organisations, governmental departments, emergency services and scientific institutes having a recognised role in civil protection, disaster management and environmental emergencies. Exchanges with the ERCC are eligible. Experts may visit specific centre for its expertise or visit several centres/ departments/ services in a country or several countries.

The sole participation in workshops, seminars, conferences in EU Member States, UCPM Participating States or third countries **does not fall under the scope of the exchange of experts' programme.**

1.3. Target groups for participation

The following categories of experts or personnel are expected to apply:

- Experts who can be deployed under the UCPM;
- Experts working in the field of CBRN(E), forest fire fighting, flood, search and rescue;
- Medical experts (including psychological aftercare);
- Technical experts;
- Environmental experts;
- Experts working in prevention and preparedness;
- Experts working in disaster risk assessment;
- Experts involved in policy making on disaster management;
- Experts from training centres in the field of civil protection and disaster management;
- Experts working as first aid responders including in humanitarian aid;
- Members of modules, ORC and TAST;
- Members of modules and ORC and TAST undertaking their certification for the European Civil Protection Pool or rescEU or re-the certification for the INSARAG External Re-classification (IER) or the World Health Organisation (WHO) classification;
- National civil protection contact/focal points;
- National Training Coordinators (NTCs);
- Personnel working in operation centres (management and staff responsible for receiving and handling emergency calls);
- Teaching staff from national or regional civil protection and/or firefighting schools and academies;
- Experienced volunteers in the field of civil protection and disaster management.



1.4. Important considerations

- Special measures in case of COVID or similar sanitary crisis - safety measures will be in place by the Host organization depending on the national situation and need to be strictly followed throughout the duration of the exchange. The costs related to the safe implementation of the exchange will be reimbursed to the host organisation by the Consortium.
- The expert shall have an appropriate level of English (minimum B1 Intermediate, according to the CEFR levels) or the language of the host country to optimize the effectiveness of the exchange⁴.
- Equal opportunities will be given to men and women.
- Special needs will be taken into account for experts with disabilities, covering possible additional costs related to travel and transport, as well as accommodation.

2. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

- Each candidate for an exchange is **required to individually complete the online application form** on the website: www.exchangeofexperts.eu. **We strongly recommend you contact your National Training Coordinator for guidance before submitting the application.** Please refer to the list of NTCs available at <https://www.exchangeofexperts.eu/participation/programme-guidelines.php>
- A valid email address is required to register on the EoE platform and to access the account.
- The application should contain a **clear and focused motivation statement**. The motivation statement should include a **list of the subject areas** which are to be covered during the exchange.
- The **expected results** and the benefit for the host organisation have to be defined.
- The application should include a proposal for **further steps which will be carried out at the national level** to distribute/publicise the knowledge and experience gained in the exchange.
- The **reasons for choosing a specific country or organisation** should be closely linked to the objective of the exchange.
- The Programme Team will assist, if necessary, in selecting a host organisation for the expert and /or assist a host organisation in selecting experts. However, you are encouraged to liaise with your preferred host organisations/experts in advance.
- In cooperation, the host organisation and expert(s) develop an agenda and a suitable timeframe for the exchange.
- Before submitting the application, the expert can edit the content and save the progress before logging out from the EoE platform.
- Before submitting the application, you will be requested to confirm that all the details completed in the form are correct, to agree with the conditions from the programme guidelines, to confirm holding the appropriate language skills and to give your consent for the processing your personal data as explained in the programme privacy statement.
- Upon **submitting the application**, the expert and the National Training Coordinator (NTC) will receive by email the application in PDF format. NTC will **validate/request for clarifications or deny** the application. If the case, the expert will have to update/modify the application and submit it again (the application is marked as **new**). In case of denying, there will be a justification provided.

⁴ In exceptional cases, an interpreter may be provided if necessary for the successful completion of the exchange



- The Programme Team will verify the eligibility of the exchange and send the proposal, consisting of the NTC-validated application(s) and the draft agenda to the European Commission for review and approval (the application is marked as **under review**).
- European Commission can approve, request for clarifications or deny the application. In case more details are needed, the application will be marked as new and follow the procedure steps again.
- When your application is **approved**, the expert, NTC and EoE Programme Team will receive by email the updated application in PDF format.
- For **host organisations** the registration and submitting the application form will follow the same procedure as for experts.
- In addition, the host will be in charge to draft out the agenda of the exchange. A template of an agenda is available on the EoE platform and after filling it in, the host will receive by email a PDF copy of the agenda.
- The expert will use the same credentials to access the account on the EoE platform and fill in the **evaluation and field report form** upon completion of the exchange.

3. PLACEMENT PROCEDURE

Following approval of the exchange by the European Commission, the Programme Team will notify all parties, and begin the logistical organisation of the exchange. The exchange comes under consideration when an organisation has consented to host the candidate(s).

Please note: An exchange can only be initiated with the approval of the European Commission. Experts are responsible for obtaining the consent of their employer / employing organisation / institution for participation in the exchange. As a good practice, preliminary correspondence between the host and the approved experts is encouraged to clarify in advance the expectations and other concerns for a fruitful exchange.

The candidates will be given information about:

- The Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and the role of the Exchange of Experts programme within the UCPM
- Responsibilities and requirements of the exchange (documentation, financial matters etc.).

4. LOGISTICAL ORGANISATION OF THE EXCHANGE

4.1. Travel and accommodation arrangements

All travel documents and information relevant to the exchange will be sent out in a timely manner prior to the exchange.

Outward/Return Journey & Transfers

- The Programme Team will reserve and purchase the necessary **airline return tickets** and/or **train tickets**.
- In case of **traveling by car**, the cost will be reimbursed at the rate of one first class rail ticket for the same journey and on the same day.
- **Transfer** of experts from the airport or train station **in the arrival country** to the place of accommodation/exchange venue and back is covered by the Programme. This will be made with public transportation (when not available, taxis may be considered). The transfer can be organized by the Host organisation, in which case the Programme can reimburse the transfer costs by request.
- **Other daily transfers** required for the activity such as in-country trips to visit specific sites/institutions **are not covered by the Programme** and the Host organisation is invited to



make proper arrangements in this respect.

- The Programme team will not make any arrangements to/from the airport/train station in the departure country. The costs of local arrangements in the departure country are not eligible to be covered by the Programme.

Accommodation and meals

- Based on the host proposal, the Programme Team will select, book and procure the necessary accommodations for the duration of the exchange⁵.
- The Host organisation is requested to assist the Programme team in identifying and making appropriate arrangements for lodging of the experts for which the Programme will cover the expenses.
- In cases when it is not possible for the Programme team to pay in advance certain expenses in the host country (e.g. meals, bus/train tickets, etc), the experts may need to cover by themselves these costs within a budget-limit communicated in advance by the Programme team and will be reimbursed after the end of the exchange, based on duly submission of invoices and the submission of the reporting documents of the activity.

Please note that the Programme Team needs sufficient time to make the mentioned arrangements (min. 2 months) **starting from the date of receiving the Commission's approval of the exchange.**

4.2. Unforeseen events and cancellations If an expert should be prevented from attending an organised exchange, it is the responsibility of the expert to:

- Inform the Programme Team immediately by phone or email.
- Send a written justification to the Programme Team for each cancellation (a supervisor's/ National Training Coordinator statement/a physician's certificate proving the expert's illness), which is mandatory and will be forwarded to the European Commission for review.

Please note: In cases of inadequate justification for cancellation or unaccountable absence, the Exchange of Experts Programme will claim the reimbursement of costs. If the case, there could be the following possibilities:

- invoice the expert or the expert's organisation for unrecoverable expenses that have been paid from EoE Programme budget on behalf of the cancelling expert;
- subject to time and budget restraints, the expert's sending institution/organisation will provide a substitute, in order to ensure that the exchange will take place, by covering the expenses from own funds for the replacement expert. In this situation, the reimbursement will not be claimed by the EoE Programme for the cancelling expert.

The substitute expert will be required to complete the online application form and follow the approval procedure.

5. EXCHANGE AUTHENTICATION PROCEDURE

Evaluation **Experts are required to complete an evaluation form after the exchange.** The evaluation must be completed by the expert using the Expert Evaluation Form on the website within one week after the completion of the exchange. The evaluation is a prerequisite for the issuance of a certificate and will be used as a basis for quality assessment of the exchange.

Attendance List As proof of involvement in an exchange, the host organisation will maintain a

⁵ This will generally be a standard single room with breakfast. Whenever possible, a half-board arrangement (breakfast and dinner) will be made in the lodgings in which the expert is staying.



list of participants. The **Attendance List must be filled in during the exchange and signed by all exchanged experts and the host organisation**. The host organisation must send the list of participants to the Programme Team within one week after the end of the exchange.

Field Reports

The Exchange of Experts Programme **requires participants (experts and host country) to prepare a report within 15 days after the exchange is completed** (a template will be provided in advance). This report should describe the activities under-taken, the lessons learned, the results achieved and benefits of the exchange. In case of group exchanges the experts coming from the same organization are required to **develop a joint Field report**. The experts and host must fill-in the template of the Field report and be approved by the National Training Coordinator (NTC). The EC approval of the reporting documents is the last step for a successful completion of the exchange.

Certificate

Upon the successful completion of the exchange, the experts and host organisations will receive a certificate of participation in the Exchange of Experts Programme. A certificate will be issued when all relevant exchange documents have been submitted to and validated by the Programme Team (attendance list, evaluation form, field report endorsed by the NTC, etc.). An online certificate for the experts and the host will be generated and accessible for the participants from their accounts.

6. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Exchange of Experts in civil protection programme is funded by the European Union. The eligible expenses will be funded through the programme budget according to EU regulations.

7. LIABILITY AND INSURANCE

- During the exchange activities, the host organisation is responsible for the overall safety and security measures. However, experts participating in the programme are responsible for their own safety and insurance coverage (e.g. health insurance, accident insurance, liability insurance). In this regard, the experts must be in possession of an adequate health insurance valid for the duration of the exchange, if they are not covered by the sending organisation and do not possess a European Health Insurance Card.
- The CN APELL-RO shall be liable only in the event of damages arising from wilful misconduct or gross negligence caused by its members (Members defined as Programme team employees) actions. Damage to life, limb and health remain subject to the statutory provisions governing liability.
- If a privately-owned motor vehicle or rental car is used in the course of an exchange, neither the European Commission nor the CN APELL-RO will be held liable for damages to vehicle, driver or third parties.
- In instances whereby a privately-owned motor vehicle or rental vehicle is used, the driver/owner must be in possession of a valid driver licence and insurance policy that covers all liability under civil law.

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