Common Standard Operational Procedures for the Union Civil Protection Mechanism Modules and Teams (UCPM SOPs)
783255—UCPM SOPs—UCPM-2017-PP-AG

UCPM SOPs Pilot Training
9.4.-11.4.2019, Vantaa, Finland
Report

1 Background

In international disasters involving a wide array of international teams and experts, the standard operating procedures (SOP) of modules and teams play an important role and should be comparable, coordinated and of adequate quality. The goal of the project Common Standard Operational Procedures for the Union Civil Protection Mechanism Modules and Teams (UCPM SOPs) (783255 – UCPM SOPs – UCPM-2017-PP-AG) is to give recommendations to and improve SOPs of modules and teams registered in the UCPM Communication and Information System (CECIS). The project aims at harmonizing the existing SOPs by improving the already existing SOP guidance document, promoting it, and creating a common SOP template that enables the introduction of consistent, relevant and appropriate SOPs for all UCPM modules and teams. The development work is based on a thorough review of the existing SOPs, guidelines and practices, as well as a comprehensive needs analysis. The outcome of the project, a common template that facilitates the writing of SOPs, will lead to coordinated and higher quality SOPs. Consistent SOPs improve cooperation in exercises and missions. The project thus contributes to the improved functioning of the Mechanism and the Union's ability to efficiently respond to future disasters.

The project is implemented by a consortium consisting of Pelastusopisto – PeO (Emergency Services Academy Finland) (Coordinator), German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW) and Humanitarian Association of Volunteer Firefighters of Peniche (BVP), Portugal and co-financed by the European Commission Civil Protection Financial Instrument.

The project started on 1 January 2018. Since then, the project has prepared a draft of a generic and easily accessible common electronic SOP template to guide UCPM modules and teams in writing their SOPs. The starting point for the development work was a Questionnaire regarding SOPs to UCPM countries followed by an Assessment Workshop in Germany on 11 - 13 June 2018. The work continued in an Expert Workshop that took place in Portugal on 28 - 30 November 2018. After the Expert Workshop, the technical development of the SOP template proceeded by PeO together with the service provider SST. The Pilot Training presented in this report focused on assessing and testing the template.

Based on the outcomes of the Assessment and Expert workshops, the aim is to make use of the existing guidelines and terminology to put it into a conceptual framework, which is applicable for different kinds of modules/ teams. In the SOP template, there will be a clear distinction between the the two parts which refer to different mission phases and target groups: Part A – Preparedness (target group: sending organization/ headquarters) and Part B – Response (target group: Team Management). Further requirements of the template include use of Annexes for checklists, templates, and detailed Information (Part C). It should also be adaptable (integration of previous SOP).

The aim is to develop a template that partly integrates the content of given SOP and provides assistance and guidance in developing the SOP for EU CP modules. The SOP format must anticipate the need of its end users (operational staff in the field) and is thereby restrictive on content (what) and format (how). This will be done by the respective headquarters. However, the project aims at providing not only a common standards with regard to the structure but also a clear guidance document on the "How".

2 Objectives

The objectives of the Pilot SOP Training were:
- the increased understanding of SOPs among experts of UCPM countries,

- increased awareness of the SOP template developed in the project, and
- assessment and testing of the template.

As the expected outcome, 20 experts from UCPM countries have attended the 3 day (lunch to lunch) pilot SOP training in Finland. As a result, the SOP awareness of the experts has enhanced, SOPs have been updated, cooperation has improved and exchange of best practices and lessons learned has taken place.

The main content of the workshop was the assessment and testing of the template and collecting feedback on the template (as well as on the training) from the participants.

3 Implementation

3.1 Planning and preparation

The content and schedule of the Pilot Training was planned by Pelastusopisto with the support of project partners THW and BVP in accordance with the project plan approved by the European Commission.

The invitation to nominate participants was sent to the National Training Coordinators by PeO on 1 February 2019. The final selection was made by PeO and communicated to the selected participants on 8 March. PeO also made the travel arrangements.

On 26 March 2019, the participants were sent an email with a pre-assignment of testing the current version of the SOP e-template by writing their team's / module's / other capacity's SOP by using the template. They were asked to take notes on their perception of creating a SOP with the template and any problems or deviations noticed. Credentials to access the template and a brief introduction on its use were sent to the participants. A time slot of 90 minutes was allocated for guided finalizing of the SOPs during the first day of the training.

3.2 Conduction of the training

The Pilot Training took place in RISE and Sokos Hotel Vantaa, Finland, on 9 to 11 April 2019. This location was chose due to its proximity to the international airport of Helsinki Vantaa.

The three day (lunch to lunch) course consisted of plenary sessions, group work, a half day Table Top Exercise, and a feedback and evaluation session. Please see Annex 1 for the Agenda of the Training.

The first day of the training focused on using the electronic SOP template.
The second day started with a group work focusing on the usability of the electronic template and other findings that the participants have from using the template. This was discussed in three groups. The groups discussed issues such as

- what was easy regarding using the template,
- any difficulties encountered using the template,
- was there something unnecessary/ not applicable in the template,
- was there something missing, and
- how could the template be improved.

The afternoon of the second day was dedicated to a Table Top Exercise. The TTX was a discussion based exercise. The participants were divided into three groups which were given different situations that may occur before, during or after a deployment. (See Annex 2). The cases presented in Annex 3 were given to the groups one at a time. The idea is that each participant should be able to find procedures to handle these situations from their recently written SOPs and describe them to others.

The TTX was conducted in three separate rooms:
- Room 1: Operations I - with operations related cases
- Room 2: Operations II - with operations related cases
- Room 3: Preparedness - cases related to deployment

Each group spent one hour per room. The trainers stayed put and went through their cases with each group. In the final round, the final case was conducted so that the teams switch their SOPs. This will give an opportunity to check whether they can find an answer on a certain procedure from another teams' SOP. After the TTX, a hot wash up was done in groups. The groups discussed what went well, what would need improvements, and how did their SOPs support them in the situations encountered.

The third day of the SOP Pilot Training focused on evaluation and feedback. The participants discussed their findings from the TTX together with the whole group, aiming to extract final improvement points for the template.

The training was conducted by the following trainers and facilitators:
- Laura Hokkanen, PeO
- Tero Lähdesmäki, PeO
- Nina Ruuhivirta, PeO
- José Rodriques, BVP
- Henri Schwaiger, THW

The training team was supported by Project Manager Johanna Malmelin, Assistant Kirsi Haapalainen, and Student Affairs Officer Tapani Lintula from PeO.

3.3 Participants

Please see below the final list of participants.

First name	Last name	Nationality
Burkhard	Aehlich	Germany
Arnaud	Cambe	France
Julien	Chevance	France
Augusto	Cotterchio	Italy
Pavol	Dubaj	Slovakia
André	Fernandes	Portugal
Admir	Gorenca	North Macedonia
Matti	Inkeroinen	Finland

Dimić	Jelena	Serbia
Pieter	Jongejan	Netherlands
Juraj	Jurdík	Slovakia
Kristaps	Kolbergs	Latvia
Vladimir	Kubinyecz	Romania
Paolo	Maritano	Italy
Matthias	Müller	Germany
Bernd	Noggler	Austria
Philippe	Perret	France
Rute	Ricardo	Portugal
Paul	Rock	Ireland
Andre	Samberg	Finland
Ricardo	Stauder	Austria
Dirk Adrianus	Vandonselaar	Netherlands

4 Main Findings

Based on the outcomes of the SOP Pilot Training, as well as the outcomes of the Assessment and Expert Workshops, the aim of the SOP is to give guidance to key functions and their respective tasks and responsibilities. The SOP is a tool to improve the knowledge management of modules and teams. The objective of the template developed in this project is to achieve a higher level of standardization and improved understanding amongst the teams and modules. The stakeholders that benefit from the high quality SOPs include Team Management of modules and teams, head quarters/ sending organizations, indirect "beneficiaries" and DG ECHO. The SOP is a framework for the deployment in international missions, and a toolkit with check lists, templates and standard procedures.

The idea of developing a common, electronic SOP template was warmly welcomed by training the participants, and it seems clear that there has been a need for this project. However, there was still a lot of general discussion on what is a SOP, who is it for, and what is its function. It can be concluded, that more guidance and definition that is more specific may be needed from the Commission.

The training mainly confirmed the good usability of the SOP template. It was considered fast to use, easily accessible and user friendly. The participants agreed on the interface, structure and platform of the template. One template for all teams and modules was appreciated, as well as the simplicity of the template. Adding documents as Annexes to the SOP was considered an important feature.

Several needs for improvements were also identified. The training provided relevant feedback to each chapter of the template. Thorough the workshop, one pending question was the availability to third parties and publication on a public platform did hinder some discussion and feedback on an "operation" SOP template. Another relevant point marks the impact of wording and terminology, e.g. using RDC as synonym for any kind of first contact. It was suggested that some more direction and context to the template to guide the users could be added. Furthermore, some functionalities of the template should be added or improved. It was agreed, for example, that the user of the template should be able to add pictures among the texts, and

that offline use of the template should be possible. A possibility to have the printed version in a small format to put it in the pocket to have in the field was also wished for.

In the discussions the need to integrate the template to the UCPM training/exercise system and ERCC was brought up. The participants agreed that the template will give the users an opportunity to enhance interoperability and cooperation between teams in the field. It is still unclear, however, who will host the platform after the end of the project, and some concerns were expressed on the application of the platform in the future and the role of ERCC.

PeO has forwarded the findings of the workshop to the technical developer of the template, who has made the amendments accordingly whenever possible. The final version of the template will be published by the end of August 2019.

5 Evaluation

The training was considered successful by both the organizers (Project Consortium) and the participants. The group was strong and diverse, and the participation to the discussions and group work was active. The discussions were fruitful and the objectives of the training were reached, if not exceeded. As and outcome, 22 experts from UCPM countries attended the training and enhanced heir understanding of SOPs in general and the SOP template in particular. The training provided a good platform for testing and further developing the SOP template. Furthermore, the SOPs of the participants were updated using the template, cooperation improved, and exchange of best practices and lessons learned took plave.

At the end of the training, the participants were asked to fill in a feedback survey on the training. According to the participant feedback, the training met their expectations. They enjoyed the possibility to discuss with wide range of participants and sharing experience with professionals from other Mechanism Countries. The training methods and the learning environment of the training as well as the practical arrangements of the event received positive feedback. However, according to some participants, a clearer definition of the SOP target group would have been needed, as well as more information before the training to prepare oneself better.

On the scale of 1 - 5 (1 = not good … 5 = good), the overall grade given to the training by the participants was 4,52.

6 Final remarks and next steps

The next steps after the Pilot Training were assessment and reporting of the training based on feedback. This included incorporating the lessons learned to the development work of the template and making the necessary amendments to it. However, at this point it will not be possible to take all feedback into account, since the development builds on the results of all three main project activities (Assessment Workshops, Expert Workshop and Pilot SOP Training), and many decisions have already been made and agreed on at these previous stages.

The final SOP template and guidelines on its use will be published by the end of August 2019. The final Work Package of the UCPM SOPs project will be all about putting the template into practice. The template will be published on a separate web page, and distributed among the Mechanism Countries. The aim is to present the results of the project in main civil protection forums such as Modules Working Group, Civil Protection Committee, etc. The project and its

results will be actively communicated via different channels (trainings, exercises, online) by the Consortium members.

PeO will be responsible for maintaining and updating the template online until the end of the project (31.12.2019). The template is expected to be utilized after the end of the project. As stated in the project proposal, after the financial support to this project has ended, the Commission can consider appointing a person to take over this responsibility. The Consortium proposes that the Commission considers recommending the use of the template for all modules and teams registered in CECIS.

7 Annexes

ANNEX 1 - Training Agenda
ANNEX 2 - TTX
ANNEX 3 - Summary of Training Feedback