

II

(Non-legislative acts)

DECISIONS

COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION (EU) 2021/1956**of 10 November 2021****on the establishment and organisation of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network***(notified under document C(2021) 7939)***(Text with EEA relevance)**

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism ⁽¹⁾, and in particular Article 32(1), point (h) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) The Union Civil Protection Mechanism ('the Union Mechanism') set out in Decision No 1313/2013/EU aims to strengthen cooperation between the Union and the Member States and facilitates coordination in the field of civil protection in order to improve the Union's response to natural and man-made disasters.
- (2) In accordance with Article 13 of Decision No 1313/2013/EU, a Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network ('Knowledge Network') should be established with the aim to aggregate, process, and disseminate knowledge and information relevant to the Union Mechanism by including relevant civil protection and disaster management actors, centres of excellence, universities, and researchers and following a multi-hazard approach.
- (3) In line with Article 13(1) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU, the Commission, through the Knowledge Network, supports the coherence of planning and decision-making processes by facilitating the continuous exchange of knowledge and information involving all areas of activity under the Union Mechanism. When facilitating the continuous exchange of knowledge and information, the Commission, through the Knowledge Network, should prepare strategic plans, which will lay out the strategic orientation of the Knowledge Network for the upcoming years.
- (4) In order to create synergies with other relevant groups and networks, the Knowledge Network should work closely with the committee referred to in Article 33(1) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU, as well as with Commission expert groups in the field of civil protection and disaster management registered in the Commission Register of expert groups and other similar entities. The Knowledge Network and the Emergency Response Coordination Centre ('ERCC') are to cooperate closely to ensure complementarity and mutual support in their respective activities.
- (5) The Knowledge Network should not duplicate but make use of the outcomes of other Commission initiatives relevant to the scope of the Network.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 924.

- (6) In order to formally establish the Knowledge Network it is necessary to adopt rules setting out the organisational structure and the operation of the Knowledge Network.
- (7) The organisational structure of the Knowledge Network should be composed of advisory bodies and a secretariat. The advisory bodies of the Knowledge Network are the board and working groups for each pillar of the Knowledge Network.
- (8) The Board should primarily act as the strategic forum by providing strategic orientation to the Commission and have advisory oversight functions over the Knowledge Network.
- (9) With a view to ensuring an effective and efficient organisation of the activity of the Knowledge Network, it is necessary to set up a secretariat of the Knowledge Network. The secretariat should be provided by the Commission and should notably be managing, administering and coordinating the Knowledge Network. The primary function of the secretariat is to ensure coherence, synergies and smooth information flow within the Knowledge Network, as well as to coordinate activities of the Knowledge Network in line with strategic planning.
- (10) The Knowledge Network and its activities should be structured along two main pillars that should provide a framework for key Knowledge Network activities and foster network-based exchanges under their scope: the Capacity Development pillar and the Science pillar. The Capacity Development pillar should aim to bring together, promote and strengthen capacity development initiatives of relevance to civil protection and disaster management stakeholders, with a special focus towards the Union Mechanism. The Science pillar should aim to bring together academia, practitioners, and decision-makers for multi-disciplinary, cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation to apply scientific knowledge to disaster risk management, and in particular, to prevention and preparedness activities more efficiently.
- (11) The Capacity Development pillar should focus on well-known existing programmes and projects, such as the Union Mechanism Training and Exercises Programme, the Exchange of Civil Protection Experts, the Knowledge Network Partnerships and the Union Mechanism Prevention and Preparedness Programme. These programmes should be consolidated through a gradual and continuous process, and complemented by other capacity development activities. The Science pillar should build on and integrate existing scientific structures and networks supporting the Union Mechanism, in particular the Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre, managed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, as well as relevant Horizon Europe programmes that are funding Research and Innovation Actions and related networking initiatives in the area of disaster risk management.
- (12) Rules on disclosure of information by members of the Knowledge Network should comply with the obligations of professional secrecy.
- (13) In order to be transparent on the activities carried out by the bodies of the Knowledge Network, the Commission should publish the relevant meeting documents on the online platform referred to in Article 13(1)(d) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU.
- (14) Personal data should be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁾.
- (15) The measures provided for in this Decision are in accordance with the opinion of the committee referred to in Article 33(1) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU,

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 39).

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

Subject matter

This Decision sets out the organisational structure and operation of the Knowledge Network, setting up a Board, a secretariat, and Pillars' working groups, providing for their composition and their tasks, and laying down rules for their operation.

Article 2

Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network

The Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network is established.

It shall aim at achieving the objectives and carrying out the tasks laid down in Article 13 of Decision No 1313/2013/EU.

Article 3

Knowledge Network composition

The Knowledge Network's organisational structure shall be composed of the following advisory bodies:

- (a) the Board;
- (b) the Pillars' working groups.

Article 4

The Board

The Board shall advise the Commission in the management of the Knowledge Network, ensuring that the overall purpose of the Knowledge Network is fulfilled together with its main objectives, in accordance with Article 13 of Decision No 1313/2013/EU.

Article 5

Membership of the Board

1. The Board shall be composed of a representative of the Commission and a representative of each of the Member States. The Commission and Member States shall nominate a representative and a deputy representative to the Board. Gender-balanced participation shall be promoted.
2. Members of the Board representing Member States shall be considered as 'Type D members' within the meaning of point (d) of Article 7(2) of Commission Decision C(2016) 3301 final of 30.5.2016 establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups.

Article 6

Board's Tasks

1. The tasks of the Board shall be in particular:
 - (1) advising on the strategic orientation of the Knowledge Network set by the Commission;
 - (2) reviewing, monitoring and ensuring compliance with the rules of procedure, membership and governance policies of the Knowledge Network;

- (3) endorsing the Knowledge Network's annual report;
- (4) reporting its activities to the committee referred to in Article 33(1) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU.

2. The Commission shall ensure that the work of the Board is conducted in close coordination with the committee referred to in Article 33(1) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU, as well as with Commission expert groups in the field of civil protection and disaster management registered in the Commission Register of expert groups and other similar entities.

Article 7

Operation of the Board

1. The Board shall be chaired by a representative of the Commission and co-chaired by a representative of the Member State holding the preceding rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union at the time of the meeting. The representative of the Commission shall convene a meeting in consultation with the Co-chair at least once a year. The meetings of the Board shall be held in person or remotely.
2. The Chair and the Co-Chair, assisted by the secretariat, shall draw up the agenda and distribute it to the members of the Board. The members of the Board may, on their own initiative, suggest items to be included in the agenda at the latest at the start of the meeting. The agenda shall be adopted by the Board at the start of each meeting.
3. The Board shall adopt its rules of procedure on the basis of the standard rules of procedure for expert groups adopted by the Commission ⁽³⁾.
4. The Board shall adopt non-binding recommendations and reports by consensus. In the event that consensus is not reached, non-binding recommendations or reports are put to a vote, a simple majority of the members present shall be required.

Non-binding recommendations and reports adopted by the Board shall be of a preparatory nature for the purpose of assisting the work of the committee referred to in Article 33(1) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU.

Article 8

Reimbursement of expenses incurred by members of the Board

1. Members of the Board shall not be remunerated for their services.
2. Travel and accommodation expenses incurred by the members of the Board for their participation in the Boards' meetings shall be reimbursed by the Commission in accordance with the provisions ⁽⁴⁾ in force within the Commission.
3. The expenses referred to in paragraph 2 shall be reimbursed within the limits of the available appropriations allocated under the annual procedure for the allocation of resources.

Article 9

Knowledge Network Pillars

1. The Knowledge Network pillars shall be the fora where activities are initiated, planned, designed and implemented with the overall aim to contribute to the Knowledge Network's objectives in accordance with Article 13(1) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU.

⁽³⁾ Annex 3 of Commission Decision C(2016) 3301 final of 30.5.2016 establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups.

⁽⁴⁾ Commission Decision C(2007) 5858 of 5 December 2007 'Rules on the reimbursement of expenses incurred by people from outside the Commission invited to attend meetings in an expert capacity'.

2. The Capacity Development pillar shall aim to bring together, promote and strengthen capacity development initiatives of relevance to civil protection and disaster management stakeholders, with a special focus on the Union Mechanism.

3. The Science pillar shall aim to bring together academia, practitioners, and decision-makers for multi-disciplinary cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation to apply scientific knowledge to disaster risk management, and in particular, to prevention and preparedness activities more efficiently.

Article 10

Membership and operations of the pillars' working groups

1. The pillars' working groups shall be composed of a representative of the Commission, a representative of each of the Member States and each of the Participating States to the Union Mechanism.

2. Members of the pillars' working groups representing Member States shall be considered as 'Type D members' within the meaning of point (d) of Article 7(2) of Commission Decision C(2016) 3301 final of 30.5.2016 establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups.

Members of the pillars' working groups representing Participating States to the Union Mechanism shall be considered as 'Type E members' within the meaning of point (e) of Article 7(2) of Commission Decision C(2016) 3301 final of 30.5.2016 establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups.

3. The working groups shall be chaired by a representative of the Commission.

4. Operations of the pillars' working groups shall be defined by the Rules of Procedures of the Knowledge Network adopted by the Board in accordance with Article 7.

5. No recommendations or reports are adopted by the pillars' working groups.

Article 11

Pillars Working Groups' Tasks

1. The working groups of the Capacity Development pillar and of the Science pillar shall support the work of the Knowledge Network.

2. The tasks of the pillars' working groups shall be in particular:

- (a) assessing the needs of the Union Mechanism and Member States and Participating States to the Union Mechanism, channelling relevant bottom-up initiatives to the Knowledge Network, and proposing activities within strategic orientations of the Knowledge Network;
- (b) implementing, and promoting the activities of the pillars with the support of the secretariat and seeking synergies between both pillars' initiatives;
- (c) reporting to the Board about their activities.

3. The working groups may set up sub-groups on specific topics based on the needs of their members, and/or risk or scenario-based priorities on its own initiative.

4. The working groups shall ensure appropriate information flows and coordination between the two pillars' and their respective activities.

Article 12

Reimbursement of expenses incurred by members of the pillars' working groups

Article 8 shall apply to the travel and accommodation expenses incurred by members of the pillars' working groups.

*Article 13***Observers**

1. Participating States to the Union Mechanism shall have observer status in the Board. Each of the Participating States shall nominate a representative and a deputy representative to the Board as an observer. Gender-balanced participation shall be promoted.
2. Observers shall take part in the discussions and provide expertise. However, they shall not have voting rights.
3. Observers shall be considered as 'Type E members' within the meaning of point (e) of Article 7(2) of Commission Decision C(2016) 3301 final of 30.5.2016 establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups.

*Article 14***Secretariat**

1. The secretariat shall support the work of the bodies of the Knowledge Network to ensure their coordination, coherence and information sharing.
2. The secretariat shall be provided by the Commission.
3. The tasks of the secretariat shall be:
 - (a) preparing and ensuring the implementation of the strategic plans, as well as activities adopted in the annual or multi-annual work programme of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism;
 - (b) managing, administering, and coordinating the activities of the Knowledge Network;
 - (c) undertaking the reporting of the activities of the Knowledge Network.
4. The secretariat shall assist, where necessary, in the meetings of the advisory bodies of the Knowledge Network.

*Article 15***Confidentiality**

Members of the Board, the secretariat and the pillars' working groups shall comply with the obligations of professional secrecy laid down in the Treaties and their implementing rules, as well as with the Commission's rules on security regarding the protection of Union classified information, laid down in the Annex to Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 ⁽⁷⁾. Should they fail to respect these obligations, the Commission shall take appropriate measures.

*Article 16***Transparency**

1. As concerns the Knowledge Network composition, the following data shall be published on the Commission Register of expert groups and other similar entities and on the online platform that shall support and facilitate the implementation of the different tasks referred to in Article 13(1), point (d) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU:
 - (a) the names of the Member States represented by the authorities that are members of the Board and the pillars' working groups;
 - (b) the names of the authorities representing the Participating States to the Union Mechanism in the pillars' working groups;
 - (c) the names of the authorities representing the Participating States to the Union Mechanism to which observer status to the Board is granted.

⁽⁷⁾ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53).

2. All documents of the meetings of the Knowledge Network's bodies, including agendas, minutes, participants' submissions shall be made available in the Commission Register of expert groups and published on the same online platform referred to in Article 13(1), point (d) of Decision No 1313/2013/EU. In particular, the agenda and other relevant background documents shall be published in due time ahead of the meeting, followed by the timely publication of minutes. Exceptions to publication shall be restricted to cases where the disclosure of a document would undermine the protection of a public or private interest as defined in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 ⁽⁶⁾.

Article 17

Protection of personal data

All processing of personal data for the purposes of these rules of procedure shall be in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725.

Article 18

Addressees

This Decision is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels, 10 November 2021.

For the Commission

Janez LENARČIČ

Member of the Commission

⁽⁶⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43).