European Commission - Press release

Commission takes new steps to prepare Europeans for growing crisis risks

Brussels, 3 November 2026

As Europe faces increasingly frequent and complex crises, the European Commission is stepping up efforts to strengthen preparedness across the EU. From helping citizens protect themselves during emergencies to ensuring that national civil protection systems can keep operating when disaster strikes, the EU is delivering concrete measures to make Europe more resilient.

Today, at the European Civil Protection Forum, Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management Hadja **Lahbib** presented new guidelines to help people and communities prepare for emergencies, including during the first 72 hours of a crisis. She also announced plans for an annual EU Preparedness Day, with the first edition planned in October 2027. These initiatives build on a recently adopted Commission **Recommendation on operational continuity and stress-testing** to strengthen the resilience of national civil protection contact points across Europe.

Together, they mark further progress in delivering the EU Preparedness Union Strategy, turning Europe's preparedness ambitions into practical action.

New guidelines to strengthen population preparedness

From packing essentials in an emergency bag to knowing how to react when disaster strikes, preparedness starts with practical steps. The Commission's new guidelines will help authorities give people the knowledge and tools they need to protect themselves and others in a crisis.

They cover four key areas:

- **72-hour self-sufficiency**: helping people meet their essential needs during the first three days of an emergency, while public assistance is being mobilised, including through essential emergency supplies and emergency grab bags.
- **Preparedness education**: integrating preparedness into early childhood and primary education curricula and providing training for educators, helping children develop preparedness skills from an early age through accessible, age-appropriate activities, without creating fear or anxiety.
- **Disability-inclusive preparedness:** making preparedness measures more inclusive and accessible, taking into account the needs of persons with disabilities and encouraging their participation in preparedness planning, so nobody is left behind.
- **Communicating risks and threats**: helping authorities communicate risks and threats more effectively, ensuring that citizens receive timely, accessible and reliable information before, during and after emergencies.

Together, these non-binding guidelines aim to foster a culture of preparedness across Europe, ensuring that individuals and communities are better informed, equipped and able to anticipate and respond to crises.

EU Preparedness Day

To help making preparedness a shared priority across Europe, the Commission is proposing to establish an annual EU Preparedness Day, to be held every 23 October, starting in 2027. It will encourage citizens and communities to take an active role in preparing for emergencies to protect themselves and others.

The annual event will also recognise the efforts and work of national, regional and local authorities, civil protection organisations and communities in strengthening preparedness across Europe.

The date marks the anniversary of the establishment of the Civil Protection Mechanism on 23 October

2001, recognising its role in fostering European solidarity and coordinating disaster response within and beyond the EU over the past 25 years.

The initiative reflects the importance of citizen engagement, also highlighted by the European Citizens' Panel on Preparedness. Bringing together 150 citizens from across the EU in March-May 2026, the Panel recommended, among other measures, the organisation of an annual EU Preparedness Week.

The Commission will work with the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions on a joint declaration supporting the initiative.

Strengthening operational continuity and stress-testing

The recently adopted Recommendation on operational continuity and stress-testing aims to help EU Member States and UCPM Participating States ensure that their national civil protection contact points under the Civil Protection Mechanism remain operational at all times, even during disruptive events.

Drawing on lessons from recent crises and disruptions, the non-binding Recommendation provides practical guidance on developing operational continuity plans and regularly testing continuity arrangements. By strengthening the resilience of these national contact points, it aims to ensure that the Mechanism can continue operating around the clock and respond effectively when emergencies occur.

Background

The **EU Preparedness Union Strategy**, adopted in March 2025, sets out a comprehensive approach to strengthening Europe's capacity to anticipate, prevent and respond to crises and threats.

Building on the recommendations of the Niinistö Report, the Strategy promotes a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach, recognising that preparedness is a shared responsibility involving public authorities, businesses, civil society and citizens.

The Strategy includes concrete actions to strengthen population preparedness, improve risk awareness and reinforce the EU's capacity to respond to emergencies.

The Population Preparedness Guidelines are published with four accompanying guidance documents, including examples of good practice from Member States and worldwide. As part of an ongoing collaborative process, the guidance may be reviewed at a later stage, taking into account feedback and lessons learnt.

For more information

EU Preparedness Union Strategy

European Civil Protection Forum 2026

25 years - EU Civil Protection Mechanism

Population Preparedness Guidelines

Commission recommendation on operational continuity stress testing

EU Civil Protection Mechanism

IP/26/2324

Quote(s):

"When disaster strikes, the first hours can make all the difference. Every European should know what to do, how to protect their family, and how to help others. Preparedness starts in our homes, in our schools, in our communities. That is why we are giving people practical tools to prepare for crises, while strengthening the systems they rely on when emergencies hit."
Hadja Lahbib, Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management

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