

PROMEDHE Country Profile: Civil Protection and Cultural Heritage Safeguard in Emergency

CYPRUS



Civil Protection in Cyprus

Cyprus Civil Defence (CCD) is a department of the Ministry of Interior. All operations undertaken by the CCD Force are regulated by the Laws on Civil Defence of 1996 and 1998 and the Civil Defence (General) Regulations of 1997 until 2012.

The Minister of Interior, through CCD, is in charge of the overall supervision and control of the civil defence system, as well as the coordination of services and organizations prepared to respond to major disasters. CCD includes the General Civil Defence Administration (GEDPA), a national office which defines civil defence policies and is in charge of coordinating national activities and five District Administrations (PEDPA) located in Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, Paphos and Famagusta.

The Council of Ministers approves the General Civil Defence Plan, which outlines roles, duties and responsibilities of all parties involved in the civil defence system. According to these roles, duties and responsibilities, each party of the system must elaborate specific civil defence plans in order to deal with contingencies. The plans are submitted to the Central or District Civil Defence Councils, depending on the status of the organisation, for checking and coordination. The Central Civil Defence Council is a national body appointed by order of the Council of Ministers, while District Civil Defence Councils (one for each district) are established by the Minister of the Interior.

CCD is articulated in five divisions, e.g. the First Aid, the Telecommunications Section, the Welfare Section and the Fire-Fighting, Rescue and the Neighbourhood Watch Sections. With regard to disaster prevention, CCD is in charge of coordinating education and national information campaigns. Moreover, CCD has the responsibility of developing the national disaster preparedness plans elaborated by the Ministry of Interior. These plans include the Emergency Plans shared by all the Ministries involved in the national disaster management system.

Regarding response coordination in case of disasters, CCD is in charge of the overall management of national contingencies. In case of maritime incidents the responsible body is the National Centre for Coordination, Search and Rescue. While relief operations are in progress in the aftermath of disaster, each emergency response agency copes with the situation under the umbrella of CCD as support service. In case of major disasters such as earthquakes, CCD acts as

the overall coordinating body playing an operational role that also includes search and rescue activities.

As per emergency evacuation, the sole responsible body in charge of coordinating mass evacuation operations is CCD. CCD may be supported in fulfilling its tasks by the Police Force at a national level and by the municipality at a municipal level. In case of evacuation of tourists. CCD cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, even if there are no specific contingency plans available for tourist areas .

CCD is staffed by permanent personnel, volunteers and conscripts. All the volunteers are, basically, citizens of the Republic of Cyprus that after submitting a relevant request, are registered and classified, and then serve voluntarily in the units of CCD (Rescue, Welfare, First Aid, Neighbourhood Watch and Communications). Today, there are over 400 volunteers serving the Force. As per the compulsory service, all citizens of the Republic within the age of sixteen and above are subject to mandatory service, which does not exceed two years, in the Force. In general, training is provided in-house and through the European Mechanism of Civil Protection for permanent staff and volunteers. The volunteers, in turn, provide training to conscripts, while the permanent staff provides for the training of civil service members. In this framework, training exercises are planned at different levels (strategical, operational and tactical).

Cultural Heritage

All Cyprus CH sites and assets are listed on the Memory of the World registry of UNESCO, on which all departments dealing with cultural heritage rely upon. Among the other archives available are the national inventories and the catalogues of the Antiquities Department, that consist of 1300 sites divided in two categories: A (state owned antiquities) and B (non-government owned ones).

As per the safeguard during disaster events, the responsibility for the establishment of cultural heritage policy lies with four institutions: the Antiquities Department (in regard to antiquities), the State Archives (in relation to its own and other departments' archives), the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture (for national galleries) and the Town Planning Department (regarding traditional buildings). CCD is in charge of elaborating shared interinstitutional procedures for cultural heritage protection during emergencies. The provisions elaborated by the institutions above mentioned are the only national regulations on the subject. They cover, in principle, the safeguard of specific cultural heritage sites, as well as protection of the population and properties. The Antiquities Department and the State Archives also establish guidelines for safety and security issues on cultural heritage sites, that include an all-inclusive disaster plan and an earthquake plan. National galleries are not yet covered by specific provisions.

National statistics on activation of cultural heritage protection are available, although the number of incidents is very limited. However, lessons learned from previous disaster events (e.g. flooding in Larnaca Land Surveying Department) led the Antiquities Department to developing good practices, such as flood retention measures and warnings for museums (i.e. against storing cultural heritage assets below anticipated water line).

In case of severe situations, additional resources aiming at cultural heritage safeguard procedures are available to deploy. The State Archives can benefit from a consulting team for the assessment and European collaborators for advices on the subject; the state galleries profit from the contribution of external experts on a case to case basis, while the Antiquities Department has in-house experts.

The State Archives and the Antiquities Department have conservation laboratories, included in local emergency plans and equipped to respond to incidents, specific to cultural heritage storage and maintenance. However, neither centralized teams for cultural heritage safeguard activities nor special units under CCD or other emergency services are available.