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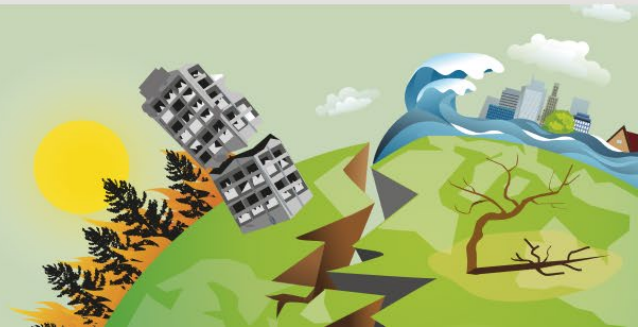
GFDRR Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery

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TAFF

Technical Assistance Financing Facility for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness

Component 1: Country-specific technical assistance



Last update: September 2026

Croatia:

Evidence for modernising the firefighting system in the Republic of Croatia

Overview

Grant Size	€550,000
Duration	June 2025 – June 2027
Key hazard(s)	Multi-hazard, wildfire
Key word(s)	Prioritisation of measures, risk prevention, preparedness, response capacities, awareness and risk communication, capacity building

Context

Croatia faces significant disaster risks, including earthquakes, as well as floods, extreme heat, droughts, and wildfires, many of which are projected to be exacerbated by climate change. Over the past decade, disasters have resulted in significant physical, social, and financial impacts, affecting people's well-being. For example, the 2014 floods affected over 13000 people and caused over €300 million direct damage costs, while wildfires in 2017 burnt 86,576 ha (some 1.53 percent of the area of the Republic of Croatia) causing €109 million in losses.[1] Croatia also faces significant seismic risks due to its location and vulnerable infrastructure and buildings, much of which was built prior to modern building codes. The 2020 earthquakes in Zagreb and Petrinja, which struck during the COVID-19 pandemic, brought an estimated €16.1 billion in damage and economic losses.[2]

Firefighting services play a critical role for ensuring Croatia's resilience to disaster and climate risks. The Croatian Firefighting Association (HVZ) provide emergency response services in response to all hazards. Recent events and evolving risks highlight the need to strengthen preparedness and response capacities, including relevant policy and operational gaps, and prioritise actions and investments in firefighting services in line with data and analysis of the overarching gaps and opportunities as well as broader priorities for disaster and climate resilience.

Objective

The objective is to provide technical assistance to the HVZ to identify and plan future actions and investments to modernise the firefighting system in Croatia. The project aims at generating technical and practical information and evidence that can underpin future prevention and preparedness reforms, actions, and investment decisions. The project helps fill existing information and knowledge gaps related to (1) operational capability of firefighting organisations (equipment, infrastructure, guidelines) to respond to natural hazards and emergencies; (2) conditions for education and

[1] Posavec et al. 2023.

[2] The March 2020 earthquake (M5.5) damaged and destroyed €10.7 billion worth of assets in the city of Zagreb, Zagreb and Krapina-Zagorje counties (Government of Croatia. 2020. *Croatia Earthquake Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment 2020.* Link.) The December 2020 earthquake[2] (M6.2) damaged and destroyed €4.1 billion in physical assets in Sisak-Moslavina, Zagreb, Karlovac, and Krapina-Zagorje Counties and the City of Zagreb (Government of Croatia. 2021. Croatia December 2020 Earthquake *Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment*. Link.)

training of firefighters; (3) fire prevention and supervising the implementation of prescribed fire protection measures, among others through pre-defined priority actions on high risk (pilot) areas; (4) public awareness; and (5) advocacy.

Key Activities and Expected Results

The Activity is structured around five key areas.

First focuses on a diagnostic review of the operational capabilities of firefighting organisations, generating information to inform future guidelines, as well as actions and investments to upgrade and modernise facilities, equipment, vehicles, human resources, and strategic investment planning.

Second assesses the training capabilities of firefighting organisations, guiding improvements in education programs, facilities, and the recruitment of professional and volunteer forces.

Third evaluates fire prevention and preparedness measures, identifying opportunities to strengthen regulatory frameworks, spatial planning, and policy reforms. This will be conducted through the lens of a pilot area.

Fourth includes public perception surveys, review of ongoing communication and public awareness efforts, with recommendations and select pilots to further raise public awareness to forest fires.

Fifth focuses on dissemination of knowledge and partnerships, ensuring that project outcomes and good practices are shared within Croatia as well as with other EU Member States, UCPM members, and the broader international community of firefighters.

In terms of expected results, the findings and recommendations from each focus areas provide the HVZ and relevant authorities with a comprehensive evidence base to inform strategic investment, training, regulatory reforms, and public engagement. The process fosters collaboration among stakeholders, builds consensus on modernisation priorities, and facilitates knowledge transfer within Croatia and across borders. Ultimately, the project contributes to the modernisation of Croatia's firefighting system, enhances disaster prevention and preparedness, and strengthens national and local resilience.

Sustainability and Coordination

The findings and outputs of the project will be disseminated among Croatian stakeholders and shared more broadly, deepening the knowledge base on firefighting modernisation and disaster risk management in Croatia. This supports the ongoing refinement of national strategies and facilitates the adoption of modern and innovative practices across the country. By focusing on operational capabilities, training, prevention, public awareness, and partnerships, the project helps embed sustainable improvements within the HVZ and relevant authorities, ensuring that the benefits of the project endure beyond its completion.

Given the alignment with EU and regional standards, the approaches, good practices, and lessons learned through this project are also relevant to other EU Member States and countries participating in the UCPM. Documented experiences and knowledge products can inform similar modernisation efforts in neighbouring countries such as Albania and North Macedonia, as well as the broader UCPM community. In this way, the project's outputs can contribute to the global knowledge base on disaster risk management and foster improved coordination and resilience in line with the national priorities as set out by the National DRM Strategy (2023) and its Action Plan, as well as the European Union's Disaster Resilience Goals and the EU Preparedness Strategy, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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