



**Invitation Letter to BTSF National Contact Points seeking applications for BTSF training activities
on
Inter-sectoral simulation exercises
on crisis management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector
CONTRACT N° 2019 96 02
Phase 1**

Valid as of 04/04/2024

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1. Course objectives

General objective

The overall objective of this programme is to prepare, hold and evaluate inter-sectorial tabletop simulation exercises on a serious Plant Health outbreak coordination and crisis response involving agri-food chain authorities, and where needed, public health authorities, as well as crisis coordinators.

Specific objectives

- To assess the effectiveness of participating countries' protocols to deliver a harmonised and cross-border response to a serious multi-country plant health outbreak.
- To assess the effectiveness of the collaborative working arrangements both within and between participating countries and relevant EU bodies.
- To assess the degree to which there is a common and consistent understanding and application of contingency plans, key definitions and concepts, and of the existing alert systems and communication tools.
- To identify learning that can be shared and used to enhance participant's response capability, EU protocols and ways of working so as to inform future EU training and exercising initiatives.



2. Training dates and locations

The three 3-day Face-to-Face training course will be delivered in May, July and October 2024 as per the calendar below with approximately 35 participants.

An introductory session in the afternoon of the first day will be followed by 2 days of training. The course agenda is attached (Annex 3).

Table 1: Training dates and Location

Year	Training sessions	Course title	Locations*	Proposed dates**	Registration deadline
2024	1	Inter-sectoral simulation exercises on crisis management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector	Warsaw (Poland)	28 – 30 May 2024	30/04/2024
	2	Inter-sectoral simulation exercises on crisis management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector	Bratislava (Slovakia)	1 – 3 July 2024	30/05/2024
	3	Inter-sectoral simulation exercises on crisis management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector	Rome (Italy)	28 – 30 October 2024	30/07/2024

For organisational purposes, names of participants should be communicated at the latest 30 days before each workshop. A reminder will be sent to NCPs before each event.



3. Selection criteria for participants

Participant must:

1. Fulfil the eligibility criteria
2. Meet the minimum requirements
3. Be selected using the evaluation criteria

1. Eligibility criteria for Course on Inter-sectoral simulation exercises on crisis management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector
<p>Participants from the Competent Authority in the field of Plant Health Safety, Crisis Management in agriculture/horticulture and Crisis Management in forestry/environment/ quarantine species</p> <p>When possible, each country should provide the participant from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) 1 for plant health, b) 1 for forestry plant health c) 1 for crisis coordination <p>Only eligible participants should be further assessed against the minimum requirements below.</p>

Participants must meet the minimum requirements below to ensure they can follow and fully participate in this course. Participants who do not meet the minimum requirements should not be proposed for the training.

2. Minimum requirements for on Inter-sectoral simulation exercises on crisis management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector	Yes/No
<p>Participant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a Minimum of 3 years of professional experience in the public plant health sector or official control on Plant health; • Be part of the Competent Authority responsible for the investigation and/or management of agriculture/horticulture and forestry/environment/ quarantine species • Be Fluent in English. 	

The evaluation criteria should be used as a tool to prioritise participation (higher score indicates higher priority), but there is no minimum score necessary.

3. Evaluation criteria for Course on Inter-sectoral simulation exercises on crisis management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector		Enter Score
a)	Experience in outbreak management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector within a Competent Authority in areas of plant health safety, in particular in areas such as crisis management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector.	



	<p><u>Scoring</u> less than 3 years = 0 points; ≥ 3 years = 5 points; 5 - 10 years = 10 points; > 10 years = 12.5 points</p>	
b)	<p>Experience in implementing crisis management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector within a Competent Authority in areas of Plant Health safety, in particular in areas such as crisis management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector.</p> <p><u>Scoring</u> no experience = 0 points; < 2 years = 5 points; 2-5 years = 7.5 points; > 5 years = 10 points</p>	
c)	<p>Contribution towards crisis management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector advanced outcomes.</p> <p><u>Scoring</u> no experience = 0 points; < 2 years = 5 points; 2-4 years = 10 points; > 4 years = 12.5 points</p>	
d)	<p>During the course, participants will be provided with a training package to be used as support dissemination material. Commitment to disseminate the knowledge received is a prerequisite for course participation.</p> <p><u>Scoring</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Commitment to distribute the training material among their colleagues = 5 points;2. Point 1 plus preparing and giving presentations based on the training material for the staff of national Competent Authorities/uploading training material to national Competent Authorities' intranets/websites = 10 points3. Points 1, 2 plus preparing informative articles in the professional national journals = 15 points4. no commitment = NO INVITATION	
Maximum total score		50



4. Country allocations

A total of 35 seats will be allocated according to the tables below. Please note that the number of allocated seats for each country may vary.

Table 2: Suggested allocation for EU Member States and Candidate Countries

	Country / suggested seat allocation					
Member States	Austria	2	France	2	Malta	1
	Belgium	2	Germany	2	Netherlands	1
	Bulgaria	2	Greece	1	Poland	1
	Croatia	1	Hungary	1	Portugal	1
	Cyprus	1	Ireland	1	Romania	1
	Czechia	1	Italy	2	Slovakia	1
	Denmark	1	Latvia	1	Slovenia	1
	Estonia	1	Lithuania	2	Spain	2
	Finland	1	Luxembourg	1	Sweden	1
	Total Member States					35

You are welcome to nominate more participants for the reserve list than indicated in the table above. If seats will become available you will be informed in due time.



5. Face-to-face logistical arrangements

In the case of face-to-face training sessions, the European Commission will fund in full the visa, travel, accommodation, meals, and field visit costs for all training participants. No daily allowance will be paid on top of this. Any other costs are to be paid by the participants themselves.

Participants will arrive at the training venues on the morning of the first day and training will commence in the afternoon (depending on travel connections, participants may be requested to arrive at the training venues on the day before). Return travel will be on the last day after the end of the training or the day after in the morning according to flight connections.

The OPERA team will liaise further with the nominated participants for all logistics and practical aspects.

6. Virtual Classrooms N/A



Annex 1: Background and main topics covered in training

Background

Simulation exercises offer an opportunity to elevate preparedness levels by delving into contingency and action plans, assessing processes, communication strategies, and facilities.

The simulation exercise will be based on plant health incident scenario, which develops into cross-border outbreak management. The work will be organised in a tabletop format. Participants will be grouped according to their plant health profiles (decision-makers, chief inspectors, scientific staff, implementing/regional level). Up to five groups will be created, each of them composed of participants of several countries.

Before commencing the exercise, objectives and aims will be clearly presented, pointing out reference documents, summarised in simulation manual, which will be delivered to each participant. A mock contingency plan will be prepared to be used during simulation.

The exercise has been planned to simulate how an international plant health incident develops, step by step, and how different expertise can contribute to the assessment, management, and communication during a plant health emergency. In a multimedia facilitated exercise players will participate in the scenario modules addressing suspected infestation, confirmed presence, and multi-country outbreak mitigation. Each module begins with a multimedia update by coordinator that summarizes key events occurring within that time period.

A facilitator will assist each group of participants through a discussion period, using the developed scenario modules, to describe their actions, decisions and notifications as necessitated by the change in situation or resource status.

Players will be encouraged to ask questions of other players. Immediately following the discussion period, the coordinator will lead a “hot wash” session among participants to highlight key elements and develop a list of improvement action items.

At the end of the exercise, participants should have a clear understanding of the emergency preparedness by roles played, with the aim of training staff, identifying gaps in plans, strengthening collaboration and cooperation among the agencies/disciplines involved in the assessment, management, and communication during a major cross border plant health incident.

Participants will be provided with a series of subsequent injects, describing an evolving plant health incident. The same injects might be submitted to all the WGs. Each inject will include a number of questions that need to be discussed and answered within the group in the specified time period. Some injects will include a number of annexes that will provide information on the developing situation. To provide answers to those questions, participants are asked to work as a team. Multi-disciplinary group working will be required. A plenary session will follow, where spokespersons will be asked to present the outcome of the work done.



A note-taking template will be provided to each Working Table, in order to capture comments, observations, and remarks for a consistent reporting structure. Each Working Table is requested to take note, step by step, of the evolution of the incident, and at the end of the simulation exercise, they will be required to prepare a summary report on the basis of these notes.

Terminology for the purpose of simulation exercise:

Scenario (master scenario)	Pre-planned storyline that drives an exercise, as well as the stimuli used to achieve exercise objectives. The scenario is designed to stimulate exercise participants to respond to events.
Simulation manual	A document with concept note on specific pest or topic outlining the exercise purpose, scope and objectives; the exercise methodology; the composition of the exercise management team; and the evaluation strategy and format of exercise.
Inject	Scripted piece of information inserted into an exercise, aimed at one or more participants (players), which is designed to elicit a specific response and facilitate the flow of the exercise. Injects can be written, oral, televised or transmitted via other means (e.g. PowerPoint, fax, phone, e-mail, voice, radio, or sign) by one of the controllers/facilitators.
Exercise report (also “after action report”)	A report that records, describes and analyses the simulation exercise, drawing on the evaluation, including debriefs and observations. The report should include all relevant information, including exercise description; type; scenario; outcomes; participating organizations; and recommendations to assist in the design of future exercises.
Hot wash	Immediate feedback or debriefing event involving the participants and the exercise management team. Individuals share perspectives on strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. These contributions are subsequently incorporated in the exercise report.
Improvement plan	A plan identifying corrective action/activities to be undertaken following the recommendations of an exercise report. The plan should include timelines for implementation, the identities of the officers responsible, and often the associated costs. This will ultimately contribute to continual improvement in response capabilities, and hence to preparedness.
Participant (or player)	A person involved in the exercise and who is performing their function and tasks as they would during a real emergency response.
Tabletop exercise	TTX is a facilitated discussion of an emergency situation, generally in an informal, low-stress environment. It is designed to elicit constructive discussion between participants; to identify and resolve problems; and to refine existing operational plans. This is the only type of simulation exercise that does not require an existing contingency/response plan in place.



Annex 2: Legislation and guidance

- New Plant health regime legislation based on Regulation (EU) 2016/2031 of the European Parliament of the Council of 26 October 2016 on protective measures against pests of plants including
 - A delegated act on priority pest list: Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/1702 of 1 August 2019 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/2031 (restricted list of Union quarantine pests whose potential economic, environmental or social impact is the most severe for the Union territory);
 - implementing acts on surveys, reporting, action plans, simulation exercises;
- Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and the Council of 15 March 2017 on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection products (especially MANCP);
- Emergency measures, such as:
 - Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/1584 of 1 August 2023 on measures to prevent the establishment and spread of *Popillia japonica* Newman and on measures for the eradication and containment of that pest within certain demarcated areas of the Union territory
 - *Bursaphelenchus xylophilus* (since 1999, Decision 2012/535/EU rev. in 2018);
 - *Xylella fastidiosa* (since 2014; new Regulation (EU) 2020/1201);
 - *Anoplophora chinensis* (since 2008; new Regulation 2022/2095).
- International Plant Protection convention (especially Article VII.2(j) and Article VIII.1(a)&(c));
- FAO. 2011. Good Emergency Management Practices: The Essentials. Edited by N. Honhold, I. Douglas, W. Geering, A. Shimshoni and J. Lubroth. FAO Animal Production and Health Manual No. 11. Rome.
- IPPC Secretariat (2023) Emergency preparedness – A guide for developing contingency plans for outbreaks of quarantine pests. Rome, FAO on behalf of the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4820en>
- International standards for Phytosanitary measures, especially:
 - ISPM 9 Guidelines for pest eradication programmes;
 - ISPM 8 Determination of pest status in an area;
 - ISPM 6 Guidelines for surveillance;
 - ISPM 2 and ISPM 11 on Pest risk analysis for quarantine pests;
 - ISPM 13 Guidelines for the notification of non-compliance and emergency action (2001);
 - SPM 17 Pest reporting (2002);
- Experience of European Plant Protection Organisation on eradication, containment and contingency planning, especially:
 - EPPO standard PM 9/10 (1) National regulatory control systems: Generic elements for contingency plans (2009) ;
 - PM 9 National regulatory control systems for pest official control (*Bursaphelenchus xylophilus*, *Popillia japonica*, *Anoplophora glabripennis*, *Anoplophora chinensis*, etc.);
- Aragón, Carola, Vicente Dalmau, Carles Escrivà, Amparo Ferrer, Maria Àngeles Forner-Giner, Anaís Galvañ, Sara García-Figuera, Elena Lázaro, Joséphine Meyer, Rob Tanner, Antonio Vicent (2022) Being prepared for huanglongbing disease of citrus: a simulation exercise workshop for contingency planning held in Valencia, Spain, EPPO Bulletin. [wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/epp](https://www.wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/epp) 2022; 52:704–711, DOI: 10.1111/epp.12892
- EFSA (2023) Best practice for crisis communicators: How to communicate during food or feed safety incidents. <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-04/crisis-communication->



[guidelines-2023.pdf](#)

- Porta, Francesca, Rhydian Rolant Cleaver, Emma Lovatt, Mar Maestre2023. Preparatory working support of risk communication on plant health. EFSA supporting publication 2023:e210502. 94pp. doi:10.2903/sp.efsa.2023.e210502
- EFSA/BfR 2019 Joint simulation exercise/workshop to strengthen regional networks for crisis preparedness and communication in times of crisis (Berlin, 28-30 August 2019). <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/pub/en-1730>EFSA recommendations and horizon scanning activities with the aim of retrieving information on new, emerging or recurring pests that may be of concern for the EU territory in cooperation with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), that has developed and hosts the MEDISYS public health surveillance system and with EU Member States risk assessment bodies.
- Instinctif Partners Ltd, 2017. Report of 2017 Workshop on Crisis Preparedness – Plant Health. EFSA supporting publication 2017:EN-1266. 32 pp. doi:10.2903/sp.efsa.2017.EN-1266



Annex 3: Agenda

Agenda

Inter-sectoral simulation exercises
on crisis management coordination and response in the Plant Health Sector
Popillia japonica outbreak

Day 1:

Background, legal and Institutional framework		
<i>Time</i>	<i>Topic / Activity</i>	<i>Tutor</i>
12.45	Lunch	
13.50	Registration of participants	
14.00	Welcome addresses	Event manager
14.10	Better Training for Safer Food: presentation of a video	
14.20	Introduction of participants	All participants
14.30	01. Exercise Introduction : Background, Aims & Objectives <i>Presentation</i>	Training Coordinator
14.40	Preliminary discussion with participants, expectations	
15.00	Self-assessment test <i>Automatic response systems (ARS)</i>	
15.10	02. Crisis management coordination and response in the plant health sector: institutional and legal framework (15 min) <i>Presentation, Questions & answers</i>	Tutor
15.30	03. General and specific contingency plans (15 min) <i>Presentation, Questions & answers</i>	Tutor
15.50	04. IMSOC/EUROPHYT and multi-country outbreaks (15 min) <i>Presentation, Questions & answers</i>	Tutor
16.10	Coffee break	
16.30	05. Experience with <i>Popillia japonica</i> Newman outbreak (30 min) Activation of contingency plan and interaction among risk assessors and risk managers in preparation of action plan <i>Presentation</i>	Tutor
17.00	Open discussion session	
17.20	Conclusions of Day 1	Training Coordinator
17.30	End of Day 1	
19.00	Welcome drink and dinner	



Day 2

Table-top Simulation exercise		
08.50	06. Simulation exercise: Reference documents and glossary, exercise format	Training Coordinator
09.00	07.01. Simulation exercise, inject 1 <i>Inject and relevant documents provided, role playing in groups</i>	Group work, All tutors
09.30	07.02. Simulation exercise, inject 2 <i>Inject and relevant documents provided, role playing in groups</i>	Group work, All tutors
10.00	07.02. Simulation exercise, inject 1 & 2: outcomes and plenary discussion	
10.20	Coffee break	
10.40	07.03. Simulation exercise, inject 3 <i>Inject and relevant documents provided</i>	Group work, All tutors
11.00	07.03. Simulation exercise, inject 3: outcomes and plenary discussion	
11.20	07.04. Simulation exercise, inject 4; preparation for the audio conference meeting	
11.30	07.04. Simulation exercise, inject 4: audio conference meeting	
12.20	Debriefing on the first 4 injects (hot wash)	Training Coordinator
12.30	Lunch break	
13.30	07.05. Simulation exercise, inject 5 <i>Inject and relevant documents provided</i>	Group work, All tutors
14.00	07.06. Simulation exercise, inject 6 <i>Inject and relevant documents provided</i>	Group work, All tutors
14.30	07.06. Simulation exercise, injects 5 & 6: outcomes and plenary discussion	
15.00	Coffee break	
15.20	07.07. Simulation exercise, inject 7: preparation for the press conference	Group work, All tutors
15.40	07.07. Simulation exercise, inject 7: press conference <i>Video recording</i>	
16.40	07.08. Simulation exercise, inject 8: preparation of the summary report	Group work, All tutors
18.00	Guided tour	
20.00	Social dinner	

Day 3

Debriefing, lessons learned		
08.30	08. Recap on the simulation exercise (hot wash and elements of SimEx Report)	Training coordinator
09.00	Discussion on multi-country outbreak situation (Module 3)	All participants
10:30	Coffee break	
11.00	09. Exercise debrief: Lessons identified, actions required to ensure lessons learned (Improvement Plan) <i>Brainstorming exercise</i>	All tutors involved



12.00	Open discussion session
12.10	10. Summary of the training
12.30	Self-assessment test <i>Automatic response systems (ARS)</i>
12.40	Conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• On-line evaluation of training• Training certificates End of the training session
13.00	Lunch

Annex 4: Training material, outcomes and dissemination activities

Training material

All participants will receive a mock contingency plan and a simulation manual as training material well in advance of the training. The material will include additional explanations of key provisions to be tested and sample questions to be answered.

All participants will receive a Dissemination Kit electronically to enable them to actively disseminate course knowledge upon their return from BTSF training. Participants attending face-to-face courses will receive the information on the USB key.

Please be informed that printed copies would only be available to participants upon prior request.

Training material in your language

By registering for the BTSF ACADEMY all course participants will have the possibility to translate all the information and training materials in the BTSF ACADEMY, including this course, into 22 European languages. Information and training can also be viewed in additional languages using the automated translation features of common web browsers. This feature is accessible via the languages selector on the BTSF ACADEMY home page. It allows users to:

- Access the content of the BTSF ACADEMY translated to EU MS official languages
- Download documents in a translated version and the original language version to compare formatting/original meaning
- Follow the training activities more comfortably
- Improve their understanding of the topics related to their area/s of work
- Disseminate their acquired knowledge
- Use the materials to train other colleagues in their organisation
- Draft additional training material based on the available information translated into their language/s.

Whilst not perfect, the eTranslation service is continuously improving. The BTSF ACADEMY Team will keep working to ensure the maximum compatibility of the original content and to extend accessibility to a wider audience.

Those users interested in the eLearning modules in their own language in the BTSF ACADEMY and viewing the platform in additional languages to the eTranslation option, should follow the instructions in the ACADEMY home page [here](#).

Dissemination Kit

This contains the following training materials:

- All course presentations
- The course syllabus – manual, after-action report and improvement plan
- The training information sheet
- Glossary of terms and abbreviations used in the course
- Additional references for further study
- Written guidance on how to actively disseminate course knowledge to colleagues upon participants' return to their home countries, different methodologies/examples/best practice
- Other information and material delivered at the course such as quizzes, FAQs etc.

Dissemination questionnaire

Two to three months after the respective training session, participants will receive a standard questionnaire requesting information on the dissemination activities of the participant after the training, and details on differences in the approach adopted in day-to-day work following the training.

Self-assessment test

Furthermore, the programme will include an anonymous knowledge test to be carried out at the beginning and at the end of each training session in order to measure the impact of the training on the understanding of the participants of the subjects taught.

Participants are expected to agree to carry out the above tests and to reply to the surveys and questionnaires.

For Face to Face and Virtual Classrooms

By participating in the training, participants agree to:

- be registered in the BTSF Academy
- provide the details requested by the contractor to register in the BTSF ACADEMY (including the provision of requested Commission EU Login details including the (Unique Identifier at the Commission - uid) -instructions on how to do this will be supplied . Please note participants who do not provide details as requested will NOT be able to register in BTSF ACADEMY and **will NOT receive a certificate of participation.**
- attend a group photo of the participants and tutors at the end of the training session. Photographs will be published in the BTSF Academy in the corresponding training course section and will be visible only to registered users of the BTSF ACADEMY.
- give their permission to be filmed, should this be required. At least one session of every series of workshops/videoconferences must be recorded. Videos and photo will be published in the BTSF Academy in the corresponding training course section and will be visible only to registered users of the BTSF ACADEMY.

Please find more information regarding data protection here:

<https://btsfacademy.eu/training/mod/page/view.php?id=417>

Annex 5: Contractor contact details



The Project is managed by: **OPERA Srl**

Project Manager: **Claudio BOMPARD**

Training Coordinator for the Course: **Vlasta KNAPIČ**

Separate notifications will be sent to National Contact Points for each course and will contain the names and contact details of the Event Manager and Assistant Event Manager as well as logistical details on the event.

All official communication between National Contact Points and the project will be maintained through the functional e-mail address **20199602simulationexercise@btsftraining.com** or by phone to +39 06 8073315.

All information on BTSF training can be found at the [BTSF Academy](#) website. The website will be regularly updated with details of forthcoming courses.