

Discussion on national Drought Teams - cooperation and improvements (SWOT analysis)



Short conclusions from discussion:

The discussion focused on the current state and functionality of "drought teams" across DMCSEE countries, focusing on collaboration between the UNCCD focal points, drought experts, and National Hydrometeorological Services (NHMS). The conversation explored how these teams are currently performing, identifying the main challenges they face, and the resources or support required to improve their cooperation and effectiveness.

Participants identified several key **strengths** in their drought team cooperation, including the development of effective drought plans and strategies (HUN), as well as strong collaboration with relevant ministries and regional organizations. Advancements in monitoring systems, such as the installation of meteorological stations and expanded soil moisture networks (GR), were seen as crucial for improving data collection and early warning capabilities. Additionally, raising public awareness and fostering good communication with society were highlighted as essential for building community resilience to drought.

As key **weaknesses** in their drought team cooperation following were mentioned: a lack of staff capacity and insufficient coordination between sectors (Croatia), as well as data gaps and challenges in data sharing, making cross-country comparisons difficult. In some cases, weak collaboration between institutions and limited inter-institutional coordination (Hungary) were also noted as barriers. The separation of meteorological and hydrological topics under different institutions/ministries (Hungary) were seen as additional obstacles to progress. Additionally, weak collaboration with UNCCD focal points and other conventions was highlighted as an area needing improvement.

Challenges that were mentioned: Establishing a hydrological drought early warning system (EWS) and linking it effectively with meteorological drought EWS, while comparing methods, was highlighted as a technical challenge (Croatia, Hungary). Increasing inter-institutional cooperation on drought preparedness, mitigation, and response was seen as critical but difficult to implement across various sectors. Another challenge was the need to popularize the drought issue at higher governmental levels, ensuring that it is recognized as a priority hazard, possibly by using data and numbers to highlight its impact. The lack of public perception of drought as an extreme event further complicates efforts to raise awareness and take action. Additionally, motivating younger staff to engage with the drought topic and fostering international collaboration with institutional support were seen as ongoing challenges.

Participants highlighted several **opportunities** for improving drought team cooperation. Encouraging stronger collaboration between ministries and institutions, such as through knowledge exchange and mapping existing national frameworks (Albania), was seen as a key step forward. Programs like climate action plans and projects (e.g., DriDanube, Clim4Cast) were identified as proactive starting points for increasing institutional capacities and fostering inter-institutional cooperation (Croatia). Increased awareness and attention to drought issues were seen as beneficial for driving action and enhancing public and institutional engagement. Additionally, international meetings were considered valuable for building capacities and improving collaboration among national institutions, while reminding countries of their obligations under the UNCCD convention was emphasized as a way to reinforce commitment.