

## About us

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Meetings

IOC Worldwide

Member States

IOC Partners

## High Level Objectives

Marine Hazards

Climate Change

Ecosystem Health

Environment Management

## Sections and Programmes

Capacity Development

Ocean Observations &  
Services

Ocean Sciences

Tsunami

## Priority Areas

Ocean & Climate 2015  
platform

Gender Equality

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23.10.2014 - UNESCOPRESS

# Tsunami Warning Exercise in North-Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean

**Four tsunami simulations will be staged by the countries around the Mediterranean and North-Eastern Atlantic from 28 to 30 October. The purpose of the exercise is to test the reactivity of the countries taking part in the Tsunami Early Warning and Mitigation System in the North-Eastern Atlantic, the Mediterranean and connected seas, established under the auspices of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC).**

The exercise, named NEAMWave14, is based on a scenario in which four earthquakes unleash two tsunami events in the Mediterranean, one in the Atlantic Ocean, and a fourth in the Black Sea. Twenty of the 39 countries involved in the **Tsunami Early Warning and Mitigation System in the North-Eastern Atlantic**, the Mediterranean and connected seas (NEAMTWS) will take part in the exercise: Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

The exercise will be an opportunity to test the efficiency of communication systems in charge of transmitting tsunami and, in some countries, to ensure that the authorities in charge of public safety are prepared to face such a threat.

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The Kandilli Observatory and Earthquake Research Institute (KOERI, Turkey), the National Tsunami Alert Centre (CEI, France), the National Observatory of Athens (NOA, Greece), the Portuguese Sea and Atmosphere Institute (IPMA, Portugal) will send out alerts concerning the four events simulated in the exercise.

NEAMTWS will also provide the Emergency Response Coordination Centre of the European Commission, which cofounded the exercise, with an opportunity to test European protection mechanisms established to meet major disasters.

There is concern that tsunami shockwaves could strike the shores of the Mediterranean and North Atlantic. While such disasters have been less frequent in this region than around the Pacific Ocean, in 1755, Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, was destroyed by a tsunami that followed an earthquake in the Azores-Gibraltar Fault Zone. In 1908, a tsunami claimed thousands of human lives in Messina (Italy). More recently, on 12 May 2003, an earthquake in Algeria set off a tsunami that struck the shores of Spain's Balearic Islands and the southern coast of France.

Due to the short distances they travel in small bodies of water such as the Mediterranean, tsunami occurrences there strike the shores with great speed.

The **Tsunami Early Warning and Mitigation System in the North-Eastern Atlantic**, the Mediterranean and connected seas has been operational since 2012. It is one of four such systems coordinated by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), along with the ones launched in the Pacific Ocean in 1965, five years after a deadly tsunami that struck the coasts of Japan and Chile. The IOC also coordinates systems set up for the Indian Ocean and Caribbean in the wake of the deadly Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004.

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Their purpose is to assess risks, issue warnings and raise awareness among the populations concerned.

\*\*\*\*

Media contact: Agnès Bardon, UNESCO Press Service +33 (0) 1 45 68 17 64, [a.bardon@unesco.org](mailto:a.bardon@unesco.org)

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