



PORTUGAL 2007



PT

CIVIL PROTECTION

The aim of this paper is to promote the debate on the future of Civil Protection within the European Union.

The document is influenced by the current discussion in the EU on the future of civil protection in Europe. Various reports and non-papers have been presented recently and the Commission is preparing a communication to be issued to the council in the spring of 2008.

Following the different views and ideas presented in the various papers, there are enough signs of the interest to launch a debate among Member-States on this issue, in particular:

- The proposals contained in the Barnier Report: “For a European Civil protection Force: Europe Aid. The author of the report was Michel Barnier, Former European Commissioner
- 15 Activations of the Community Civil Protection Mechanism during the Portuguese presidency to assist emergencies in the EU (forest fires in Greece and Bulgaria) and in third countries (fires in Albania, FYROM and Paraguay; earthquake in Peru; oil spill in Ukraine).
- European Parliament Resolution of 4 September, calling for “*the establishment of a European rapid emergency reaction force, such as the one proposed by the Barnier Report*”.
- Committee of the Regions Declaration of 7 September, stating that it is “*essential to reexamine the proposal laid down in the Barnier Report to establish a European Civil Protection Force*”.
- Greece presented in GAERC, in October, proposals aimed at “*improving European co-operation to prevent and respond to natural disasters and*

emergency”, favouring the reinforcement of existing tools, enhancing European capabilities and resource-sharing by Member-States.

- After GAERC, Germany proposed “*strengthening EU prevention and preparedness for natural disasters*”, sustaining exchange of good practices among Member-States and the establishment of a European engagement at the prevention and preparedness level.
- At the Meeting of Directors-General for Civil Protection, held on 25 October, the Commission presented several ideas for the future, including namely the implementation of a European Institute specializing in Civil Protection, reinforcing MIC (Monitoring and Information Centre) and developing additional capabilities at European level (applicable to fire-fighting aircraft in a first stage).
- The Conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministers of Foreign Affairs Meeting, held in Lisbon on 5/6 November signal that efforts should be made to establish a Euro-Mediterranean civil protection system, starting with a network of permanent national correspondents.
- The EU Council adopted the recast of the Community Civil Protection Mechanism on 8 November. The Community Civil Protection Mechanism calls for creating modules to enable faster and more targeted response to the specific need in the event of future disasters.
- Six Member States (Austria, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom) submitted a joint paper entitled “Natural Disasters: Strengthening Prevention and Preparedness in the EU” in order to make additional proposals in the field of prevention and preparedness.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CIVIL PROTECTION CO-OPERATION WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Responsibility of the Member States

The Member States are responsible for civil protection and must actively build up this capacity at national and local level. Supporting and additional civil protection

measures by the European Union are a complement to the responsibility of Member States to ensure their own national and local capability. The future Lisbon Treaty provides supporting and complementing competencies alongside that of the Member States.

It is vital to react at the very outset of an emergency. For this reason, efficient assets need to be available at the national and local level in order to respond rapidly and to limit the effects of disasters.

Solidarity

Solidarity is a key principle within the European Union. Therefore Member States confronted with major emergencies can, as a matter of course, expect to receive support by Member States and the Community.

A massive deployment of assets from the MS saves lives and helps to limit the suffering of the affected population. The Monitoring and Information Centre located in the Commission plays a vital role in ensuring effective coordination and timely response. Solidarity among Member States can also be provided by helping to reinforce prevention, by creating networks and technology transfer, by sharing expertise as well as by providing personnel and material resources in crisis response.

PROPOSALS

I. Civil Protection within the European Union

1. Promoting Prevention and Preparedness

Prevention is an essential prerequisite for effective civil protection. Through prevention, human suffering and economic damage can be avoided more effectively. The cost of prevention may at times be a fraction of the cost of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Member States should be requested to share their experiences and best practices in the form of peer reviews. Moreover national and regional expertise should be used for specialised civil protection training in a wider perspective.

2. Setting up of a European civil protection Rapid Reaction Capability

The EU should be capable of rapid and effective action in emergencies caused by natural or technological disasters, in Europe and in the world: rapid, since it presupposes previous resource identification and criteria for the participation of Member-States according to their preparedness and specialization; effective, because it depends on resource sharing.

The proposal to establish a European Rapid Reaction Capability relies on five principles: mutual subsidiarity as regards the role of MS and the UN; voluntary participation of Member-States; Solidarity; Specialization; Possible participation of third countries.

As a first step towards the creation of a European Rapid Reaction Capability, it would be possible at present, and taking into account the recent revision of the Civil Protection Mechanism to transform the database of the CECIS (Common European and Coordination Information System) into a “tool box” (similar to the one existent in Frontex) with information on the modules or other resources Member States could make available in possible major emergencies, such as forest fires, floods and earthquakes.

The role of civil protection in managing the consequences of terrorism could be given greater attention. Measures to deal with the consequences of specific terrorist threats and the role of civil protection in the protection of critical infrastructures could be further developed.

3. Strengthening the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC)

The Commission could be invited to make proposals to strengthen the MIC's role in offering information, analysis and coordination within the Community's civil protection mechanism. The MIC functions both as an information platform and as a service provider should be further developed. The services provided should be user friendly and user oriented. They should take into account the needs of the different target groups: participating states, field experts, decision makers, etc. The MIC should reinforce its analytical capacities and competence for gathering, selecting, analysing and weighting of the appropriate information to be transmitted to the participating states.

II. European Union Assistance in third countries

Due to its ultra-peripheral regions, the European Union has a territorial and human presence in various parts of the world. Existing assets in these regions should be used preferably for third country interventions. The location of these assets should be specified and accessible in CECIS. Institutions of the MS or the Community at the theatre could be used as strategic platforms for the facilitation of logistical support.

4. Establishing an information system for EU nationals traveling outside the European area

In order to ensure consular aid to EU nationals travelling outside the European area, a telephone line should be made available of each Member-State's Crisis Centre and campaigns should be carried out targeted at specific publics, especially in airports. Such proposals are ever more important since growing numbers of European nationals are travelling to third countries.

5. Coordination of diplomatic/consular resources

The proposal is based on the principle of information sharing and coordination at Member-States level, encouraging an effective cooperation on the ground, so as to respond to sudden and unexpected needs by any given Member-State (or diplomatic mission). Exercises and scenarios assistance and evacuation should be encouraged.

6. Implementing specialized labs to identify victims

The 2004 tsunami highlighted the need to reinforce the national arrangements for the identification of victims.

Bearing in mind the capabilities that have been identified in Member-States and lessons learnt in the Tsunami, the *Barnier Report* proposed the establishment of one or two laboratories aimed at supporting victim identification.

QUESTIONS:

1. The various proposals of EU institutions, member states and the Barnier Report foresee several actions in different areas. In order to improve the EU disaster response capacity to emergencies, which actions could bring an added value and should be considered as priorities?
2. Should the Member States' mutual assistance on disaster prevention be strengthened?
3. Should national efforts in the area of disaster prevention play a role in providing operational assistance in the event of disaster and funding for reconstruction?
4. Could the European Rapid Reaction Force proposed in the Barnier Report be understood as a "natural" evolution of the existing pooling of resources set up by the Mechanism in 2001 (recast in 2007) and of the Civil Protection Modules?
5. Could the toolbox in CECIS be a first step to enhance the EU rapid reaction capability?
6. Greece was hit, this summer, by massive fires, with human casualties and incalculable economic and social losses. Would this situation reinforce the need for European Rapid Reaction Capability, by focusing the geographical center of this initiative in the EU territory?
7. Considering the interest of neighbouring third countries to cooperate in civil protection, could the future EU cooperation be open to the participation of third countries e.g., Mediterranean partners?
8. Do you agree with the creation of an information system for EU nationals travelling outside the European area and with the sharing of diplomatic and consular resources?
9. Taking in consideration the work undertaken in the EU, should the creation of laboratories specialized in victim identification be a priority?