

**CIVIL PROTECTION
IN THE EU
AND ITS EFFECT
ON THE SAFETY
OF THE BALTIC SEA
REGION**

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This article describes civil protection activities of the EU in the framework of the Community Civil Protection Mechanism — a system for coordinating civil protection resources and in-kind assistance to countries stricken by natural and manmade disasters. By analyzing the legislation and actual activation of the Mechanism, the authors present the functioning of this system as well as the ongoing changes towards a more planned approach to providing civil protection. The authors address the issue of extending the current civil protection system by introducing preventive measures. The project, co-financed by the Civil Protection Financial Instrument, is used as an example of the introduction of preventive measures in the Baltic Sea region.

Key words: European Union (EU), civil protection, Civil Protection Mechanism, Civil Protection Financial Instrument, disaster, EUSBSR

Introduction

Natural hazards have been accompanying mankind since the dawn of time. In addition, the development of civilization has also led to a constantly growing number of man-made risks. In 2009, the Eurobarometer survey was carried out, which aimed *inter alia* at determining types of disasters the EU citizens are concerned about the most [1]. Despite the apparent differences between countries, most respondents pointed floods (45% of respondents) and severe storms (40% of respondents) as the most dangerous ones (when asked to select up to three answers). Although storms and gales received a considerably higher percentage throughout the Baltic Sea region, one should also mention industrial accidents, which were pointed as the key risk by the Nordic countries. Marine pollution was also recognized as a risk for the Baltic Sea region by respondents from different countries with the exception of Poland and Germany.

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Prevention and mitigation of these risks is one of the basic tasks of the state that ensures safety and security of its citizens. Cross-border nature of many threats and risks as well as limited resources of individual countries has become an additional factor boosting international cooperation. The European Union offers instruments that complement (but not replace) the activities of the member states in this area.

The European Community has been developing its civil protection policy since the mid-80s. Cooperation in this field was initiated by ministers of the interior at the Council meeting in Rome in 1985. Since then it has led to the adoption of several legal acts in the next years². The supporting and complementary nature of the Community actions has been emphasized from the outset. This assumption lies in the EC/EU guiding principle of subsidiarity as well as in the internationally recognized obligation of individual countries as first-responsible for the protection of people on its territory [2].

The Community Civil Protection Mechanism

The primary achievement of the EU in the area is the Community Civil Protection Mechanism [3]. It was set up in 2001 as a system for coordinating civil protection resources and providing in-kind assistance to countries affected by natural and man-made disasters. Although facilitating deployment of assets coming from different EU member states has become the core of the Mechanism, the system itself has been extended to other elements. These elements correspond not only to the response phase, but also refer to preparedness (e.g. the international operations staff training system and co-financing exercises) as well as prevention (e.g. risk management and providing international consortia with financial resources for studies and projects on disaster prevention).

The only area in disaster management which is not covered by the Mechanism is recovery operations. The recovery phase is covered by a separate instrument — the EU Solidarity Fund, set to financially support the immediate restoration efforts of the stricken country [4].

The Mechanism involves 32 participating states, including all countries of the European Economic Area as well as Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Accession is opened to all EU candidate countries and there is an ongoing discussion on extending this possibility also to potential candidates.

While the Mechanism is constantly evolving, its basic assumptions have not changed since 2001 [5]. Other member states and the European Commission provide support to the affected country only in case there is a special request from the affected country. This support, first of all, presupposes sending rescue teams and providing in-kind assistance. Moreover, a multinational team of experts (EUCPT) is often sent to the affected areas in order to assess the situation on site, identify needs, coordinate incoming assistance and ensure cooperation between rescue workers and authorities of the affected country. For better flexibility, it is possible to ask the European

² Full list of current and former legislation available at: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/about/legislation_en.htm#previous

Commission for additional support, e. g. transport or co-financing logistics. It is common practice to provide participating countries with situational reports that present information on activities of all the assisting countries and organizations. This helps to avoid duplication and ensure better coordination when various stakeholders (e. g. the EU, UN, humanitarian NGOs) take part in rescue operations in the affected country. The EU recognizes the leading role of the United Nation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in operations in third countries [6].

The affected EU member states make requests for assistance through a special IT platform. If a disaster occurs in a non-EU state, the country contacts the European Commission using diplomatic channels. Rescue actions in third countries may be performed as stand-alone operations or as an input to the mission organized by other international organizations. Each time a request is made, the European Commission expects the needs to be clarified by the affected country. The EUCPT may also be deployed in order to assist the affected county in assessing the situation.

In order to effectively coordinate actions of countries offering and receiving assistance, the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) has been created within the European Commission. It acts as the operational room that monitors risks worldwide, collects requests, offers assistance and facilitates operations under the umbrella of the Mechanism.

In order to improve management of information flow between member states, the MIC and member states civil protection authorities have been inter-linked using the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS). Besides hosting requests and offers of help, this IT platform offers an opportunity of pooling transport resources. It also includes a database of member states assets (the so-called “modules”, the personnel, equipment and deployment requirements of which are standardized under the Mechanism framework) and CVs of experts who participate in international rescue operations. There is an ongoing process of extension of the CECIS to marine pollution authorities, which is of particular importance for the Baltic Sea region.

In addition to the CECIS, the MIC also uses early warning and alert systems for certain kinds of risk, e. g. the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS) — the joint initiative of the UN and the EU for earthquakes, tsunamis, tropical cyclones, floods and volcanoes eruptions. The GDACS alerts to disasters, subsequently informs about possible humanitarian impact and potentially affected infrastructure, taking into account vulnerability of the region (and its population) to disasters.

Another advantage of the MIC lies in the possibility of acquiring satellite images, which may be used to monitor the movement of oil spills after marine pollution accidents, or as it was in case of Poland in 2010, illustrate the development of floods for the elaboration of drainage recommendations.

When offers of assistance are made by the member states, it is up to the stricken country to decide which of the offers to accept. This decision is essential in order to start rescue and recovery operations and have the necessary resources deployed. The Mechanism itself does not guarantee provision of assistance free of charge.

If the EUCPT is deployed, its composition and tasks may vary according to the nature of disaster and may not be limited only to needs assessment and coordination of the incoming assistance.

The majority of EUCPT members have been previously trained under the Mechanism training programme. The programme was established in 2004 and currently offers 12 courses run by several training centers in the EU. While most of the courses are meant for the EUCPT members performing assessment and coordination, one of them is designed for technical experts, who may join EUCPT in order to provide special expertise in such areas like environmental pollution or infrastructure engineering. One of the courses is designed for key staff of the modules. All courses combine theory and practice, use standard operating procedures and international guidelines.

Apart from the training programme, the EU has also created a system for exchange of experts in civil protection. It gives a possibility to finance short-term knowledge exchange visits (up to two weeks). Potential beneficiaries of this exchange programme are operational, administrative and academic experts from institutions specializing in risks management, response planning, training, technical expertise, and response to shoreline pollution or those, working in public-safety answering points.

Current priority recipients are experts participating in the Mechanism operations, employees from operation centers, CBRN threats specialists and experts on risk prevention.

The Civil Protection Financial Instrument

The Civil Protection Financial Instrument was set up by the Council Decision 2007/162/EC, Euratom to finance actions taken under the Community Civil Protection Mechanism [7]. The resources can be spent on prevention, preparedness or response actions as well as on awareness building.

a) Prevention

- The Commission issues calls for proposals for prevention projects each year. Their purpose is to build better prevention policies through risk assessment and threat identification, adjustment to climate change or development of innovative funding methods for preventive actions.

b) Preparedness

- The Instrument finances a training programme under the Mechanism, including calls for tenders for organisation of training courses and covering participation costs of experts from participating States.

- The Instrument supports organisation of international exercises conducted under the Mechanism. These include both table top and field exercise, testing the functioning of MIC and the member states operation centres as well as rescue operations in the field. The entire process of the Mechanism activation is tested, including the use of the CECIS, the dispatching of the civil protection modules and the EUCPT and other elements such as

satellite imagery. Apart from disasters on land, the exercise might also involve response to accidents on sea. The Commission publishes calls for tenders every year for the organisation of such exercises. The Commission also supports the organization of exercises using modules, training technical assistance teams and the EUCPT.

- Calls for proposals for preparedness projects are published on a regular basis for consortia of at least two states participating in the Mechanism.

c) Response

- The Instrument covers the costs of the EUCPT experts deployment.
- The Commission co-finances transportation of rescue forces provided national means have been used and turned out to be insufficient. Currently the reimbursement can cover up to 50% of the costs.

- The costs of running and development of the CECIS and the MIC are covered by the Instrument.

- The Instrument partially covers the costs related to the planning of response, including development of disaster scenarios, resource mapping, or organization of experience sharing meetings.

- The Instrument supports early warning and alarm systems used by the MIC (lately these have been GDACS, EFAS, EFFIS and others). It also co-finances the North-Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Tsunami Warning System.

d) Awareness building

- The Financial Instrument is used to popularise the Mechanism and other civil protection related initiatives. This also includes the evaluation of the Mechanism.

- The rotating Council Presidency can be used for co-financing workshops on certain civil protection aspects, chosen as their priority in the 6-month period. Such workshops usually gather experts from all around Europe and sometimes from other countries or relevant international organisations.

Benefits of the Civil Protection Financial Instrument for the Baltic Sea region

While looking for examples of prevention projects co-financed by the European Commission via the Civil Protection Financial Instrument, one should mention the initiative undertaken by the Baltic Sea region countries and coordinated by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Secretariat called the 14.3 project [8].

The project is a contribution to the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea region [9]. It is a flagship project under Priority Area 14 and its target is to develop scenarios and identify gaps in order to anticipate potential disasters, thus enabling a rapid and effective EU response through the Community Civil Protection Mechanism. Due to the role of the CBSS Secretariat in the project and thanks to additional financing available, Russian Federation representatives can participate in the 14.3 project.

The 14.3 project is based on the all-hazard approach. It is focused on mapping risks with macro-regional and cross-border reach, wherever joint approach would bring added value. The project is organised in tasks, three of them dealing with specific disasters and one being more general.

Task C will develop scenarios and identify gaps in order to anticipate potential disasters in a macro-regional context. It will develop methodology for a macro-regional approach covering potential major natural and manmade disasters, including the development of macro-regional tools for risk assessment. It is aimed at ensuring better compatibility between various national methods and approaches to the mapping of shared risks or identification of different types of risks. It also gathers examples of good practice for different types of risk scenarios.

Task D on floods prevention will develop reference scenarios for floods using risk assessment methods and, based on that, identify gaps. It will promote the development of innovative methods and procedures as well as disseminate best practices on flood prevention. It will strive to encourage the adoption of a common approach to flood management operations for civil protection teams and modules involved in international operations in the event of a cross-border disaster.

Forest fire prevention is dealt with by task E of the 14.3 project. It will focus on the effective use of risk mapping as a supporting tool. This includes reviewing and evaluating the existing simulation models for forest fire behaviour. On this basis it will develop a scheme for the use of instruments required for risk analysis of forest fires.

Finally, the objectives of task F include nuclear safety risk scenarios and gaps assessed in the macro-regional context. The task prepares a general macro-regional risk assessment focusing on nuclear and radiation safety, including identification of major gaps in current disaster prevention. It will also prepare scenarios designed to test prevention mechanisms and the cascading effect of disasters, as well as to identify gaps. Its final action would be the development of a macro-regional strategy for enhancing prevention methodologies.

Further proposals for the improvement of the Mechanism

The end of the first decade of the twenty-first century brought changes in the basic law of the European Union. The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 was a significant event for civil protection, since it introduced for the first time a section in the EU Treaties dedicated to this subject (Title XXIII) [10]. It specifies a range of supporting and complementary activities of the European Union in this regard. In 2010, two strategic documents were adopted. The documents stress the importance of reinforcing prevention, preparedness and response to disasters among many aspects of safety. These were the EU Internal Security Strategy [11] and the Stockholm Programme — An open and secure Europe serving and protecting citizens [12].

In December 2011, the European Commission presented a proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Union Civil

Protection Mechanism, which, following its entry into force, will introduce further changes in the shape of European civil protection [13]. The proposal, apart from reference to the above-mentioned strategic documents, uses the proposal for actions contained in the Commission Communication of 2010: "Towards a stronger European response in disaster: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance" [14] and the Commission Communication on a Community approach to the prevention of natural and man-made disasters of 2009 [15]. It also refers to the European Commission's evaluation of the functioning of the Mechanism in 2007—2009 [16].

The new proposal combines in a single document provisions for the functioning and funding of the Mechanism (note that the current Civil Protection Financial Instrument expires in 2013). The changes proposed in the document are aimed at a more planned deployment of resources in the event of activation of the Mechanism. New actions are to be introduced, including risk assessment. There would also be greater flexibility in selected procedures, for example, those referring to international transportation of resources. The document strives for greater synergy of EU rescue operations and humanitarian relief efforts, associated with the assignment in 2010 of both areas to the same cell of the Commission — the Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection — DG ECHO (previously civil protection was the duty of the Directorate General for Environment — DG ENV). The EU actions in third countries were adapted to fit the new institutional framework introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon. The Mechanism includes prevention and preparedness of third countries, carried out in the framework of PPRD East (for the countries of the Eastern Partnership) and PPRD South (the Mediterranean countries) projects, currently financed outside of the Civil Protection Financial Instrument.

Particular articles in the draft Decision refer to various phases of the disaster management cycle:

a) Prevention

- The Commission plans to create and update on a regular basis a review of natural and man-made disasters that may affect the EU in the future. It is to include the potential threat of climate change. The Commission plans to release the first edition of this publication before the entry into force of the Decision.

- The Commission would also require the member states to prepare national risk management plans. The role of the plans is to anticipate threats, assess their consequences and the development, selection and implementation of measures to reduce and minimize the risks. They also define a framework for the integration of different risk management tools specific to a particular sector, or a threat. Further negotiations will clarify the ways in which the member states will make available to the Commission their risk management plans. Committing member states to the creation of those plans, the Commission aims to promote a systematic and cross sector approach to the prevention of disasters. The information acquired this way may be used to plan the Mechanism response operations.



b) Preparedness

- The Monitoring and Information Centre will be transformed into a new cell — Emergency Response Centre — ERC. Strengthening the Centre staff with people managing the EU humanitarian aid, member states will receive information about all of the aid (humanitarian and rescue) dispatched by the EU and its members. The CECIS and EDRIS (Emergency and Disaster Response Information System), which is the EU tool for reporting humanitarian assistance, will be integrated into a single platform. The role of MIC staff (which until now was to collect and assess information provided by the state requesting assistance and those offering support) will be expanded to a more advisory role. Using risk scenarios and emergency response plans, taking into account the demands of the state affected by a threat, ERC experts will propose member states what specific resources should be mobilized.

- Creation of a EERC pool of assets is one of the most characteristic elements of the new decision. Member states will voluntarily submit their resources to the European Commission (both modules and other rescue groups as well as in-kind assistance) that in case of emergency (and after analysing the needs of the affected country), will be dispatched by the ERC. Member states will be able to prevent the dispatch of their resources if there are any compelling reasons for it. However, it is expected that the submitted resource is available for the ERC. Supreme control and management of resources remain in the hands of the countries submitting them. The benefit for the state, providing a resource to the pool EERC is the possibility to refund up to 100% of the transport cost.

- It is expected that the resources submitted to the EERC pool would not cover all the EU needs to respond to disasters (at least in the initial period after its creation). Therefore, the current system of ad hoc resource submission will function in parallel with the EERC. Additionally, the Commission will co-finance the creation of resources identified as needed to fill the gaps in the system. This arrangement will be treated as a last resort — when the process of identifying existing resources in the EU confirms the actual inability to fill the gaps with more cost-effective methods. The Commission believes that it may affect resources allocated to the risks of low probability of occurrence (e.g. nuclear events), some costly resources (such as fire-fighting planes) or forces used for horizontal tasks (such as the previously mentioned TAST). Such resources will always be available for deployment at the request of the ERC.

- The Mechanism training programme, as well as the lessons learnt programme, is going to be expanded and will contain prevention elements. Training Policy Group, consisting of experts nominated by the Member States, will be replaced by an extensive training network, which, in addition to civil protection experts will include representatives of training centres and other academic institutions.

c) Response

- The procedure for co-financing of rescue resources transportation is subject to change. Previous pre-financing of total transport costs by the

Commission with the later return of at least 50% by the State sending aid will be replaced by the need to cover all the costs of transport by the country first, only to be later reimbursed by the Commission.

- A new method of operation is the possibility for a Member State to ask for pre-positioning of resources in a high risk situation. So far, the Mechanism responded to emergencies that have already occurred. It will be up to the requesting state to define the "situation of risk" calling for additional support. The pre-positioning may be issued for the time of high visibility events, such as the football championship or Olympics. Pre-positioning must not mean sending the resource to the requesting state, but only the state of high alert in the country of its origin.

- The Commission proposes to list the basic tasks of the so-called host nation support — HNS (carried out by the state requesting assistance and transit countries to ensure efficient use of international assistance). In 2012, the EU guidelines for HNS were developed, and the Commission plans to incorporate some of its elements into the implementing acts [17].

- The activation of the Mechanism in emergency situations outside the EU can be done not only by the affected state, but also by relevant international organizations for humanitarian aid and civil protection (such as the United Nations and some of its agencies)

- In the new proposal, the Commission draws attention to the need to involve EU countries, the whole European Economic Area, acceding/candidate countries and potential candidates (previous decision allows participation in the Mechanism, in addition to members of the EU, only candidate countries).

- It is assumed that the budget for the implementation of the proposed decision for the period 2014—2020 will amount to 513 million euros, which is more than 2.5 times larger than budget of the Civil Protection Financial instrument in the 2007—2013. The European Commission will be obliged to submit to the Council and the European Parliament report on the functioning of the mechanism by the end of June 2017, and a communication on the further implementation of the decision until December 31, 2018. The next report will be presented at the end of the financial period, but no later than the end of 2021.

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