Community Civil Protection Mechanism. Recast

2006/0009(CNS) - 10/11/2011 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents a report on the evaluation of the application of the Civil Protection Mechanism and the Civil Protection Financial Instrument for the years 2007-2009. It has carried out an evaluation of the following actions in the field of civil protection for the period 2007-2009:

- Council Decision 2007/162/EC establishing a Civil Protection Financial Instrument ('CPFI' or 'Financial Instrument');
- Council Decision 2007/779/EC, Euratom establishing a Community Civil Protection Mechanism (recast) ('Civil Protection Mechanism' or 'Mechanism Decision');
- a preparatory action on a EU rapid response capability in the 2008, 2009 and 2010 budgets;
- pilot projects on cross border cooperation in combating natural disasters and on forest fires, in the 2006 and 2008 budgets respectively.

The results of the evaluation will:

- provide key findings on and lessons to be drawn from the experience gained in the implementation of the above-mentioned actions in the field of civil protection. These will help the Commission in the continued effective implementation of the Mechanism and the Financial Instrument;
- inform the preparation of a comprehensive policy package under preparation in 2011, which will review EU disaster management cooperation with particular regard to two key themes: (1) the responsibility of all actors to take adequate preventive and protection measures, and (2) solidarity and assistance within the EU and among the Participating States in times of need;
- inform the preparation of the communication on the continuation of the Financial Instrument to be presented no later than 31 December 2011, which in practice will be part of the proposal for a new Civil Protection Financial Instrument.

Findings of the evaluation: the Commission notes that the conclusions of the external evaluators are positive overall, in that they recognise and emphasise the usefulness and relevance of EU Civil Protection activities during the period under review.

Monitoring and Information Centre: it has been widely acknowledged that the Monitoring and Information Centre provides useful services that are relevant to Participating States when civil protection assistance interventions are deployed within or outside the EU. The Commission has started to look at how to improve the functioning of the MIC. The Communication on Reinforcing the Union's Disaster Response Capacity advocates the following: building up of the MIC so that it can play the role of operational centre for European civil protection intervention. This requires a qualitative shift from information sharing/reacting to emergencies towards proactive anticipation/real time monitoring of emergencies and operational engagement/coordination. The Commission also noted the ad hoc nature of the current EU disaster response and the need to move to a system where advance planning allows core assets to be available for immediate deployment. The planning of EU civil protection operations will be improved by developing reference scenarios, mapping Member States' assets and drawing up contingency plans, establishing a pool of Member States' assets pre- committed on a voluntary basis to the EU operations, streamlining and reinforcing provisions on transport support, as well as other measures outlined in the October 2010 Communication on disaster response.

Training programme: the training courses have proved to be a valuable asset in terms of preparing national experts for civil protection assistance interventions, thus improving the overall response capability of the Mechanism. Nonetheless, the evaluation also showed that the further evolution of the

training arrangements is limited due to the lack of an overall policy framework. Similar conclusions have been drawn in respect of the exercises programme, which has received overall support but has been affected by the lack of a general policy framework. To better serve their ultimate purpose, i.e. the improvement of operations, the establishment of an integrated training and exercises policy will need to be considered.

The review of the Civil Protection legislation in 2011 will provide an opportunity to consider these various aspects further. It will also raise the question of whether larger amounts can be provided for training actions under the new Financial Instrument, or whether other ways must be found to further enhance the benefits of closer EU co- operation on disaster preparedness.

Transport assistance: the evaluation found that the transport provisions have contributed to an overall improvement in the delivery of assistance and led to a more effective disaster response. The transport provisions also provide a valuable contribution by allowing for the presence and visibility of all Participating States in international disaster situations. Overall the transport arrangements have proved to be useful both in terms of supporting Participating States in pooling and sharing their transport assets and enabling additional offers by tackling the transport deficit problem. The procedures put in place in order to manage the financial assistance via direct grants awarded to Participating States have proved to be useful by contributing to closing a major gap. At the same time it is universally acknowledged that the procedures are complicated and burdensome and should be streamlined; plus, there needs to be more flexibility. Beyond the mere simplification of rules and administrative procedures, important considerations arising from the evaluation lead to a need to investigate different levels of co- financing depending on the urgency or priority of delivery for certain relief resources, as well as improving access to transport assets/options.

Modules: the modular approach is now firmly established in the European civil protection world as a means of enhancing the interoperability, the speed of deployment, the predictability of response, the support that is needed from the affected state (for the module to be able to perform its tasks), and the overall quality and effectiveness of European civil protection interventions. It has met with great success among Participating States, and should be further developed, through specialised exercises and the development of standard operating procedures.

Cooperation projects: these projects co-financed by the CPF in the field of prevention and preparedness would seem to have reached their intended objectives. The completed projects under the 2007 call resulted in a number of interesting guidelines, conferences and reports. An increase in the number of proposals and number of projects receiving financial support over the years can also be noted, which tends to suggest that there are needs to be met. Although many of the projects cannot be assessed with simple financial indicators, much like research and development projects in general, each of the projects is nevertheless considered a useful addition to European prevention and preparedness efforts, which may suddenly have to rely on the developed projects in the event of a major emergency. The Commission concludes that the prevention and preparedness projects have contributed significantly to a number of improvements in the EU civil protection and disaster management system, and the funding possibility should also be maintained in the future.

Pilot projects: innovative arrangements seeking to enhance the availability of key relief assets tested through pilot projects and preparatory actions proved to be viable and should be built upon. It is to be noted, however, that pilot projects and preparatory actions are time-limited by their very nature and cannot be a substitute for a more permanent policy and regulatory framework. The experience gained in the design and implementation of these projects is informing the preparation of the 2011 legislative review.

The Commission concludes that European cooperation and coordination in the field of civil protection has made substantial progress, but there is still also unused potential. One important area, which has attracted increasing awareness, is the policy need in the field of disaster prevention and disaster management. An

enhanced EU prevention policy framework would be able to address the various prevention aspects in different EU policy fields (environment, security, health and regional policies) and facilitate further co-operation among Participating States.

The Commission invites the European Parliament and the Council to take note of these evaluation findings.