Union Civil Protection Mechanism 2014-2020

2011/0461(COD) - 17/02/2017 - Follow-up document

This Commission report to the European Parliament and the Council concerns the progress made and the gaps remaining in the European Emergency Response Capacity.

Background to the report: the report recalls that in a world of rising risks, the Union must be prepared to respond to a multitude of potential disasters. The European Emergency Response Capacity (EERC) was created in 2013 as part of the Union's Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) to improve the level of preparedness of civil protection systems within the Union.

For the first time, UCPM States can make available a range of emergency response resources for immediate deployment in EU operations. By registering national resources in the EERC, participating states undertake to ensure that they are available for EU response operations when a request for assistance is made through the European Commission’s Emergency Response Coordination Centre.

The EERC is one of the main innovations of the last revision of European civil protection legislation. It has resulted in a shift from a relatively reactive and *ad hoc* coordination system to a more predictable, planned and coherent organisation of the EU disaster response.

Objectives of the report and main conclusions: this report provides an update on the progress made towards achieving the EERC's capacity objectives and assesses the extent of remaining capacity gaps. In addition to a numerical comparison of objectives and achievements, it builds on the experience gained in the UCPM over the last 2 years (2015-2016). This would suggest that a revision or adaptation of medium-term capacity objectives is necessary.

Since the establishment of the EERC, 16 participating States have made available 77 response capacities (e.g. search and rescue teams, medical teams, water purification systems, etc.) for Union operations around the world. A large number of objectives of the EERC, or "capacity objectives", which are set out in EU legislation, have therefore been achieved.

It appears that there are, however, some gaps or shortcomings in terms of available resources with respect to aircraft used for fighting forest fires and shelter capacities.

The question of whether other types of resources are adequately available needs to be further evaluated.

Aspects that need to be further assessed include:

- the resources needed for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear disasters,
- large field hospitals and medical evacuation capabilities within the framework of the European Medical Corps,
- unmanned aerial systems and
- communication teams.

It may also be necessary to revise some of the current capacity objectives to reflect changes in risk assessments and operational experience.

The report also points out that further analysis is needed in some areas to assess whether there are potentially significant deficits in the EU's ability to respond or whether certain capacity targets as defined in the legislation in force need to be reviewed.

To help ensure sufficient availability of key resources, the Commission published another call for proposals for buffer capacity in 2017. It covers response capabilities in the areas of forest fire fighting with aircraft, shelter capacities, unmanned ground vehicles for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) disasters, emergency medical services, remotely piloted aerial systems, as well as flood containment.

Recommendation: The Commission proposes that the participating States remedy in several ways the remaining deficits for which no capacity is available at national level, for example:

- forming consortia and developing joint modules,
- by seeking contractual agreements on access to such resources,
- by encouraging further research on the subject,
- using existing capacity-building programmes at national and EU level, for example in the context of the EU Structural Funds.

Lastly, the evaluation indicates that the EERC capacity targets need to be reviewed at least every 2 years and the first review will start in 2017. This exercise may lead to the definition of new capacity targets based on national risk assessments, recent disaster experience, general trends, and other relevant sources of information.