

Union Civil Protection Mechanism: prevention; European Civil Protection Pool; rescEU

2017/0309(COD) - 23/11/2017 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to strengthen Europe's capacity to deal with emergency crises (rescEU).

PROPOSED ACT: Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) governed by [Decision No 1313/2013/EU](#) of the European Parliament and the Council strengthens cooperation between the Union and the Member States and facilitates coordination in the field of civil protection in order to improve the Union's response to natural and man-made disasters.

Several recent disasters have hit several Member States simultaneously: the refugee and migration crisis and its humanitarian impact, terrorist attacks, the lack of available assets during the 2016 and 2017 forest fire seasons that resulted in over 100 deaths as well as the severe impact of a series of hurricanes in the Caribbean and fierce storms and flooding in the EU, have constituted a real stress test for the UCPM.

Recent experience has shown that reliance on voluntary offers of mutual assistance, coordinated and facilitated by the Union Mechanism, **does not always ensure that sufficient capacities are made available** to address the basic needs of people affected by disasters in a satisfactory manner, nor that the environment and property are properly safeguarded.

Following the [interim evaluation](#) of the UCPM, the examination of the UCPM by the European Court of Auditors and the [report](#) on the gaps in critical reaction capacity published in early 2017, the Commission considered it necessary to **strengthen European civil protection in the light of disaster trends**, including extreme weather, and against the background of internal security concerns.

The proposed changes are part of the broader objective of working towards a 'Europe that protects'.

CONTENT: the proposal to amend Decision No 1313/2013/EU has the following objectives: (i) to improve disaster prevention and preparedness capabilities; (ii) to improve collective response capacity at European level; and (iii) to ensure the flexibility and efficiency of the administrative procedures of the Union Mechanism when it is involved in emergency operations.

Reinforcement of European reaction assets: the proposal provides for the creation at Union level of a **dedicated reserve of reaction assets (called 'rescEU')** to be deployed by decision of the Commission, which will have the command and control. rescEU will be equipped with selected emergency capacities to respond to wildfires, floods, earthquakes and health emergencies as appropriate.

rescEU shall be established to provide relief where existing capacities do not allow responding effectively to disasters. It shall consist of the following capacities: aerial forest firefighting; high capacity pumping; urban search and rescue; field hospital and emergency medical teams.

All costs of these capacities would be fully covered by EU financing.

At the same time, the Commission proposes to strengthen the European emergency response capacity where Member States can pre-commit national response capacities. This shall be known as the '**European Civil Protection Reserve**'.

Under the new proposal, assets committed to the European Civil Protection Pool will benefit from a **75% coverage of all costs incurred** during UCPM operations within the Union, including adaptation, repair, transportation and operational costs. The proposal also strengthens the incentives to pool capacities.

Increased capacity for prevention and preparedness: the proposal **strengthens the links between prevention, preparedness and response** by connecting risk assessment to risk management planning and requiring Member States to provide their risk management plans to the Commission at the latest by 31 January 2019.

Prevention plans need to include short-term actions and longer-term prevention efforts to adapt to the increasing impacts of **climate change**.

Consistency with other EU instruments in the area of disaster risk reduction and prevention should also be strengthened by linking the EU Mechanism with cohesion and rural development policies as well as health and research.

The proposal also includes provisions to ensure that the disbursement of EU funds through the Union mechanism is accompanied by adequate **visibility**. It also paves the way for the establishment of a dedicated structure, the **Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network**, which will reinforce the training component of the UCPM, in close cooperation with existing relevant national structures on the matter.

More efficient administrative procedures: the proposal seeks to streamline administrative procedures in order to reduce delays in the deployment of aid. It simplifies the current system by introducing a single category of response means, the use of which requires co-financing by the Member States and the EU budget, namely the European Civil Protection Reserve.

In addition, specific provisions limiting the activation of the Union mechanism to a **90-day period** (unless otherwise justified) have been included in order to clarify the scope and to encourage the use of the means in the immediate reaction.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATION: the financial envelope for the implementation of the Union Mechanism for the period covered by the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 is EUR 368.4 million. This proposal seeks a **total overall increase** in the UCPM financial envelope for the period 2018-2020 of **EUR 280 million**.