Community Civil Protection Mechanism. Recast

2006/0009(CNS) - 24/10/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted the report drafted by Dimitrios **Papadimoulis** (GUE/NGL, EL) by 573 votes in favour to 25 against with 35 abstentions and made several amendments to the proposal. The key ones are as follows;

- military assets and capabilities may, as a last resort, be made available by Member States on a voluntary basis to support civil protection in a supplementary and supportive role;

- Parliament stressed the importance of informing and alerting populations in disaster-prone zones through the use of common EU-wide signals and procedures;

- actions under the mechanism should include the identification of best practices to raise citizens' awareness and dissemination to the public of information on safety behaviours in the event of major risks. They should also include the establishment of arrangements for facilitating and supporting assistance to EU citizens in emergencies in third countries, and the identification of best practices for dealing with emergencies, crises and disasters, and the production of a Community civil protection manual geared to the needs and specific characteristics of the Member States;

- Parliament inserted a series of terms and definitions to be used for the purposes of the decision. These include "major emergency", "preparedness", "early warning", "rapid response", and "intervention module";

- a new clause states that, in the event of a major emergency occurring outside the Community, the use of military assets and capabilities available to support civil protection shall be fully consistent with the UN Guidelines;

- additional transport means and logistical support must be established through appropriate international public tendering procedures on the basis of existing EU public procurement legislation without the application of the "security" exception clause;

- the Commission will, in cooperation with the Member States, take structural measures to ensure the coordination and integration of early warning, alert and response systems for the benefit of the Member States and the MIC, as well as coordination with other Community networks, specialised centres and/or agencies competent in civil protection matters.

A series of additional recitals inserted by Parliament gave guidance on the use of the civil protection mechanism. In particular, Parliament stated that:

- the public health dimension of all civil protection interventions should be included in the scope of the Decision, bearing in mind that all disasters affect people both physically and psychologically, which puts a heavy burden on health and social security systems for a considerable time once the intervention phase is over;

- the setting up of instruments in the area of civil protection should primarily benefit the affected citizens after the disaster has occurred. Such benefits should be made visible and measurable so as to convey a strong message of solidarity of the Member States;

- land management and land use are an important part of policies and plans for the prevention and mitigation of disasters. Therefore, plans and policies should implement integrated environmental and natural resource management approaches that incorporate disaster risk reduction;

- the GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) system, which supports the development of European policy on the environment and security and helps to monitor its implementation at local, regional, Community and world level, should be systematically used. Given the strategic importance of earth observation in the environmental and security fields, the deadlines set by the Göteborg European Council of 15 and 16 June 2001 should be adhered to and an independent and operational European global monitoring capacity should be developed by 2008 at the latest.