Basic information

2011/2023(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance **Subject** 3.70.10 Man-made disasters, industrial pollution and accidents 3.70.11 Natural disasters, Solidarity Fund 4.30 Civil protection 4.70.05 Regional cooperation, cross-border cooperation 6.10.05 Peace preservation, humanitarian and rescue tasks, crisis management 6.40.13 Relations with/in the context of international organisations: UN, OSCE, OECD, Council of Europe, EBRD 6.50 Emergency, food, humanitarian aid, aid to refugees, Emergency Aid Reserve	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	GARDINI Elisabetta (PPE)	15/12/2010
	Shadow rapporteur ESTRELA Edite (S&D) UGGIAS Giommaria (ALDE) OUZKÝ Miroslav (ECR)	

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	TŐKÉS László (PPE)	28/03/2011
DEVE Development (Associated committee)	STRIFFLER Michèle (PPE)	09/11/2010
REGI Regional Development	STAVRAKAKIS Georgios (S&D)	27/01/2011
LIBE Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

Council of the

Council configuration	Meetings	Date

European Union	Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)	3085	2011-05-12

European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner
	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)	GEORGIEVA Kristalina

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
26/10/2010	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2010)0600	Summary
17/02/2011	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
17/02/2011	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
12/05/2011	Debate in Council		Summary
13/07/2011	Vote in committee		Summary
19/07/2011	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0283/2011	
27/09/2011	Decision by Parliament	T7-0404/2011	Summary
27/09/2011	Results of vote in Parliament		
27/09/2011	Debate in Parliament		
27/09/2011	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2011/2023(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/7/04687

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE462.621	30/03/2011	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE464.916	13/05/2011	
Committee opinion	DEVE	PE458.634	16/06/2011	

Committee opinion	REGI	PE464.790	22/06/2011	
Committee opinion	AFET	PE462.846	23/06/2011	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0283/2011	19/07/2011	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0404/2011	27/09/2011	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2010)0600	26/10/2010	Summary

Towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance

2011/2023(INI) - 12/05/2011

At the request of Belgium and in light of the nuclear accident in Japan, the Council was briefed by the Commission on the situation in Japan, and had an exchange of views on how existing preparedness and response mechanisms to nuclear incidents could be strengthened, mainly within the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

The suggestions presented by Belgium include:

- to more closely involve national and international nuclear authorities in the activities of the work of the EU's Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC);
- to identify and improve reference scenarios for nuclear incidents (such as Chernobyl, Fukushima and others) and the specific means necessary to respond;
- to give priority to certain reference scenarios based on comprehensive and high quality risk assessments, alongside a more predictable availability of member states key assets (e.g. iodine tablets, alternative cooling systems, decontamination units, nuclear experts, robot modules etc.), including through the possible creation of an assets pool.

With a view to improving civil protection operations, the Commission had proposed last yearthe development of reference scenarios for the main types of disasters, including CBRN(Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) and cross-border terrorist attacks, inside and out the EU (see COM(2010) 0600).

In addition, the existing Civil Protection legislation is currently subject to a review. A legislative proposal is expected to be presented by the Commission later this year.

Towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance

2011/2023(INI) - 26/10/2010 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to propose a strategy with a view to improving the European Union’s disaster response.

BACKGROUND: whether it is an earthquake in Haiti or floods in Pakistan, the EU Member States and EU institutions have responded well to the many disasters that have struck this year, both in the EU and further afield. The quality of this response has helped to demonstrate to EU citizens and Member States the added value brought by EU actions in the field of crisis response.

At the same time, demands on the EU’s disaster response capacity are likely to increase, as disasters continue to grow both in size and frequency. Current budgetary pressures also call for further efforts to promote an efficient use of scarce resources.

The Lisbon Treaty offers an opportunity to build a stronger, more comprehensive, better coordinated and more efficient disaster response capacity in the European Union drawing on the **following guiding principles**:

- the EU should be able to respond effectively and in a spirit of solidarity to disasters both inside and outside the EU;
- the EU disaster response capacity should address all types of disasters (i.e. natural and man-made, other than armed conflicts) that overwhelm national response capacities and result in a need for EU assistance;
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a fully coherent approach for disasters outside the EU will need to bring together the different constituencies that could possibly be deployed (depending on the nature of the crisis);
- when responding specifically to humanitarian needs caused by disasters outside the EU, EU assistance is bound to act in accordance with internationally agreed humanitarian principles;
- an approach that balances response with disaster prevention and preparedness is the best way to respond to the increasing threats posed by disasters.

Improved cost effectiveness can be achieved through a better pooling of assets in order to reduce costs and avoid a duplication of efforts.

CONTENT: building on the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2007),the Communication on Reinforcing the Union's Disaster Response Capacity (2008), this communication focuses on **civil protection and humanitarian aid** which are the two main instruments at the EU's disposal to ensure rapid and effective delivery of EU relief assistance to people faced with the immediate consequences of disasters.

This Communication should be seen as the **first building block** of a broader and more coherent effort towards a strengthened EU disaster response. Legislative texts will be proposed in 2011 to implement the key proposals.

The Communication proposes:

1) The creation of a European Emergency Response Capacity based on pre-committed Member States' assets and pre-agreed contingency plans: the EU needs to shift from *ad hoc* coordination to a system where advance planning allows core assets to be available for immediate deployment. In order to improve planningof EU civil protection operations, the Commission proposes to: i) develop reference scenarios for the main types of disasters (including chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) and cross-border terrorist attacks) inside and outside the EU; ii) identify and map key existing assets that could be made available by Member States for the EU emergency response to these scenarios; iii) develop contingency plans for the deployment of these assets.

To enhance the **availability of key assets**, the Commission proposes a pooling of pre-identified civil protection assets from the states participating in the Civil Protection Mechanism that are voluntarily made available for EU disaster relief operations both inside and outside the Union.

The Commission also proposes:

- improving the prepositioning of relief assets by reinforcing the rapid availability of assets for humanitarian actors in external emergencies;
- ensuring that needs are assessed on time and with precision so that decisions on the assistance to be provided are based on reliable information;
- deployment of the Technical Assistance and Support Teams more systematically, especially in situations where local infrastructure has collapsed, and develop contractual arrangements to ensure their guaranteed availability;
- simplification and reinforcement of existing arrangements for the pooling and cofinancing of transport assets to ensure the delivery of aid to the countries affected, as well as its delivery to the precise area where it is most required;
- the development of the European Emergency Response Centre as the Commission's operational emergency relief interface with the CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) coordination tools.

2) The development of an Emergency Response Centre: the Commission will merge the Civil Protection and the DG ECHO crisis rooms to create a genuine **24/7** European Emergency Response Centre. The centre will ensure a continuous exchange of information with both the civil protection and humanitarian aid authorities on the needs for assistance and the offers made by EU Member States and other actors. This will ensure that Member States can make informed decisions on funding and offering additional assistance. The centre will also develop reference scenarios for the main types of disasters inside and outside the EU.

Stronger EU co-ordination will reinforce the UN's role by ensuring a coherent EU contribution to UN-led relief efforts. It is also important that EU funding, through international and local partner organisations, is properly **acknowledged and visible** in situ (except in cases where the presence of EU symbols would make the delivery of aid more difficult) and on the internet.

Towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance

2011/2023(INI) - 27/09/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution in response to the Commission communication entitled: 'Towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance'.

The resolution states that there has been a dramatic increase in the number and severity of these natural and man-made disasters affecting the Union and its citizens, as well as other countries and regions around the world, as tragically demonstrated by the recent severe catastrophe in Japan. The recent tragedies, such as the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods, have demonstrated that the main tools available to the EU for responding to disasters (humanitarian aid and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism) proved to be working well for what they were designed for and given the circumstances, but whereas there is a **vital need to further reinforce the coordination of the response to disasters affecting the European Union**, both within and outside its borders.

(1) A qualitative shift:Memberswelcome the communication and its objectives. They support the Commission's proposal to establish a European emergency response capacity, including arrangements to guarantee the more predictable availability of Member States' key assets. They endorse the need for a **qualitative shift from the current ad hoc coordination to a predictable and pre-planned system** within the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

The Commission is called upon to **bring forward proposals as soon as possible for establishing an EU civil protection force**, based on the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and enabling the Union to bring together the resources necessary for providing civil protection and immediate emergency relief aid to the victims.

According to Members, the European disaster response should build both on a European emergency response capacity through the strengthening of the European Civil Protection Mechanism based on the capacities and availability of pre-identified and therefore predictable Member States' emergency assets and on a European emergency response centre as the cornerstones of such a strategy. They underline that these developments should follow an **all-hazards approach**, bringing together all relevant players – in particular civil society – including non-governmental organisations and volunteers, for joined-up action, and should exploit synergies among the various existing tools and instruments.

The resolution emphasises that the European disaster response system should **respect the principle of subsidiarity** both of the Member States (who should be able to use their own assets, especially in any case of conflicting national needs) and of the United Nations.

The Commission is invited, when setting up the European disaster response capability, to take into account the **Solidarity Clause** and its implementation arrangements, which need to be adopted as a matter of urgency and which will ensure a more effective and coherent response to disasters inside and outside the European Union.

(2) European Emergency Response Capacity: Parliament considers that the **pool of pre-identified capacities, resources and assets made available on a voluntary basis for EU disaster relief interventions**, both inside and outside the Union, will constitute the nucleus of the EU relief capability, which could be complemented by additional ad hoc offers from the Member States. The resolution recommends that a clear and detailed **scheme of incentives** should be designed in order to permit Member States to commit sufficient capacities to the voluntary pool without increasing the overall spending of the Member States.

Members call on the Commission, along with the Member States, to identify existing capacity gaps. The creation of EU-level assets should be considered, **avoiding any form of competition and/or overlap with national assets**, in order to fill existing capacity gaps where they would result in significant savings for the EU as a whole or enable access to assets that are not available for Member States acting alone, thus offering a good model for burden-sharing.

The resolution considers: (i) **advanced planning** and the preparation of operations by developing reference scenarios; (ii) **mapping Member States' assets** potentially available for deployment in EU disaster relief operations and (iii) **contingency planning** as key elements of an enhanced EU disaster response and essential for rapid deployment and immediate appropriate response to each emergency.

Members call in particular for adequate planning for specific contingencies to respond to manmade disasters related to oil spills, nuclear installations or involving hazardous substances both on land and at sea.

(3) European Emergency Response Centre: Members welcome the Commission's decision to merge the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) and ECHO humanitarian aid crisis room to create a genuine 24/7 Emergency Response Centre as a planning and operational coordination platform as a step in the right direction and call for this also to be implemented in real-time cooperation by the Member States, in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity, in the areas of monitoring, issuing early-warnings and sounding the alarm. They call for an **effective merging of the ECHO crisis room and the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC)**, whilst ensuring adequate funding.

The Commission is called upon to: (i) actively involve the new European Emergency Response Centre in the two Community tools to protect forests from forest fires: EFFIS and EFFICS; (ii) coordinate actions in case of emergency, simplifying and optimising the existing universal service and the 112 emergency number.

(4) Disaster Response, preparedness and prevention: the resolution stresses the vital need to complement the policy for enhancing the EU's emergency reaction capacity by stepping up the EU's and Member States' risk prediction and prevention policies.

Parliament encourages the Commission to prepare a **comprehensive and innovative EU strategy on disaster risk reduction**. It calls for sufficient resources to be dedicated to early identification of possible disasters and ask the Commission to ensure that the revision of the Structural Funds and the Solidarity Fund are used to encourage the development of policies and investments in these areas.

The Commission should present a **proposal, similar to the Floods Directive, to promote the adoption of an EU policy on water scarcity, drought and adaptation to climate change**. Members also reiterate, in this context, the importance of establishing the European Drought Observatory, which would be responsible for studying, mitigating and monitoring the effects of drought. Members consider that the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) can constitute an important instrument for further strengthening transnational, cross-border and interregional cooperation, even with countries which are not EU Member States.

Lastly, the resolution calls for a **comprehensive communications strategy**, involving all EU institutions, Member States, social partners and civil society that will improve the overall visibility and transparency of European actions in beneficiary countries as well as among European citizens, while ensuring that disaster relief is never subordinate to trading or political and strategic concerns.