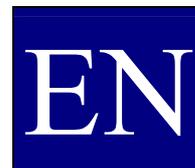




COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Council Conclusions on a Community framework on disaster prevention within the EU

*2979th JUSTICE and HOME AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 30 November 2009*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

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1. **Emphasizing** that in recent years the frequency and severity of natural and man-made disasters have increased, and that this trend is likely to worsen in the coming years;
Acknowledging that prevention plays an essential role in adaptation to climate change;
2. **Recognizing** the importance of effective disaster prevention in saving lives and protecting the environment, property and cultural heritage;
3. **Considering** that Community action to prevent disasters may enhance the protection of people, the economy and the environment from the effects of natural and man-made disasters, and improve the resilience of the EU and its economy to increasing threats of natural and man-made disasters;
4. **Emphasising** that the Member States are primarily responsible for the protection of their citizens and that additional Community action in the spirit of solidarity may be appropriate to prevent disasters where such action complements and supports action taken at national, regional or local levels, respecting the principle of subsidiarity;

P R E S S

5. **Recalling the White paper 'Adapting to climate change: towards a European Framework for Action'¹; Recalling the Council conclusions of 25 June 2009** on Climate change: Towards a comprehensive EU adaptation strategy², underlining that climate change is affecting, and will continue to affect, all of society and will have an impact on a number of sectors; Furthermore **stressing** the need for a cross-sectoral approach in order to enhance synergies and emphasising the need for increased actions across all levels and by all relevant actors; **emphasising that the Commission Communication of 4 March 2009** “A Community approach on the Prevention of Natural and Man-Made Disasters”³ should provide a basis for the ongoing and future work on adaptation;
6. **Recalling the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 : Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters⁴**, which provides the agreed international framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), and stressing the need to link DRR efforts with those for tackling climate change; **Acknowledging** that Community action on disaster prevention within the EU contributes to the overall implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and **emphasising** the need, where appropriate, for Community action and the work of national platforms for disaster risk reduction to be mutually supportive;
7. **Having regard to the Council Decision 1600/2002/EC** laying down the sixth Community Environment Action Programme⁵, in particular Article 5 (3) on adaptation to climate change, Article 6, paragraph 2(b) on accidents and disasters and 2(c) on a thematic strategy on soil protection;
8. **Having regard to the Council Decision of 8 November 2007** establishing a Community Civil Protection Mechanism (Mechanism Recast)⁶, and in particular recital (7) of that Decision stating that prevention is of significant importance for protection against natural, technological and environmental disasters and would require further action to be considered;
9. **Having regard to the Council Decision of 5 March 2007** establishing a Civil Protection Financial Instrument⁷ laying down the rules for the provision of financial assistance for measures to prevent or reduce the effects of an emergency;
10. **Having regard to the Council Directive 2007/60/EC** on the assessment and management of flood risks⁸ ;

¹ 8526/09.

² 10435/09.

³ 7075/1/09, COM (2009) 82 final

⁴ A global blueprint for disaster risk reduction efforts with a ten-year plan, adopted by 168 Governments at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005 in Kobe, Japan.

⁵ OJ L 242, 10.9.2002, p.1.

⁶ OJ L 314, 1.12.2007, p.9.

⁷ OJ L 71, 10.3.2007, p. 9. art 1.2 (b)

⁸ OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27.

11. **Having regard to the Council Directive 2008/114/EEC of 8 December 2008** on the identification and designation of European Critical infrastructures and the assessment of the need to improve their protection⁹; **recalling the Commission Communication of 12 December 2006** on a European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection (EPCIP)¹⁰ setting out an EU framework concerning the protection of critical infrastructures;
12. **Having regard to the Council Directive 96/82/EC** on the control of major accident hazards involving dangerous substances¹¹;
13. **Underlining** the significance of strengthening chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) security in the European Union and welcoming the work taken forward on an EU CBRN Action Plan, actions to prevent, detect and respond to CBRN-incidents¹² ;
14. **Recalling the Council conclusions of 4 June 2009** on civil protection awareness raising calling on the Member States and the Commission to continue to develop their work in providing targeted public information and/or education on what to do before, during and after an emergency¹³ ;
15. **Recalling the Council conclusions of 6 December 2007** on the development and establishment of Early Warning Systems in the EU inviting the Commission to commit to a multi-hazard approach in this field by presenting proposals to strengthen early warning systems for both natural and man-made risks¹⁴ ;
16. **Recalling the Commission Communication of 5 March 2008** on reinforcing the Union's disaster response capacity¹⁵; **recalling the Council conclusions of 16 June 2008** on reinforcing the Union's disaster response capacity - towards an integrated approach to managing disasters¹⁶, inviting the Commission to present proposals regarding disaster prevention within the EU whilst emphasising that reinforcement of the Union's disaster response capacity should be achieved through a balanced approach guided by two principles: national responsibility and EU solidarity;
17. **Taking note of the European Parliament Resolution of 19 June 2008**¹⁷ on stepping up the Union's disaster response capacity and **the European Parliament Resolution of 16 September 2009** on forest fires¹⁸;

⁹ OJ L 345, p.75.

¹⁰ 16932/06, COM(2006) 786 final

¹¹ OJ L 10, 14.1.1997, p.13.

¹² 11480/09

¹³ 9976/09

¹⁴ 15473/07

¹⁵ 7562/08, COM(2008) 130.

¹⁶ 10128/08

¹⁷ P6_TA(2008)0304

¹⁸ P7_TA(2009) 0013

18. **Recalling the Commission Communication of 23 February 2009** on an EU Strategy for supporting disaster risk reduction in developing countries; **recalling the Council conclusions of 18 May 2009** on an EU strategy for supporting disaster risk reduction in developing countries¹⁹, underlining the need to ensure policy coordination and coherence between EU policy areas, in particular climate change, and instruments (such as the Community Civil Protection Mechanism);
19. **Considering** the outcome of the workshop on disaster prevention organised in Stockholm, Sweden from 27 to 29 July 2009²⁰;

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20. **Recognises** that the overall aim of disaster prevention within the EU is to, where possible prevent natural and man-made disasters from happening but if they do occur, aim at reducing their adverse consequences and minimising their social, economic and environmental impact²¹;
21. **Welcomes the Commission Communication of 4 March 2009** on a Community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters²² as an initial step towards a comprehensive and consistent Community disaster prevention framework or strategy contributing to an integrated approach to the EU's disaster management policy;
22. **Underlines** the usefulness of a multi-hazard approach to a Community disaster prevention framework which should be complemented, where appropriate, with hazard-specific measures;
23. **Notes** that whilst the prevention of acts of terrorism is addressed by other EU initiatives, the Community disaster prevention framework should seek to minimize the potential adverse consequences and impacts of these threats;
24. **Underlines** that Community prevention actions should be based on existing knowledge, take into account the Community and Member States' actions already taken, complement and further support national initiatives and cooperation between Member States, avoid duplication and develop synergies with existing national and international work;
25. **Recognises** the important contribution that regional cooperation between Member States and cooperation between regions in different Member States facing the same or similar types of risks can make to an effective Community disaster prevention framework;
26. **Agrees** that initial work on a Community framework on disaster prevention within the EU should aim at further developing knowledge-based disaster prevention policies at all levels of government²³; linking actors and policies throughout the disaster management cycle, and improving the effectiveness of Community instruments with regard to disaster prevention;

¹⁹ 9920/09 (para 13)

²⁰ 12775/09

²¹ social impact includes psychological impact.

²² 7075/1/09 REV1, COM (2009) 82 final.

²³ local, regional, national and EU-level

27. **Emphasises** that Community framework on disaster prevention in the EU should support and encourage the exchange of information related to disasters and their social, economic and environmental impact, taking relevant research into account, and develop knowledge and best practices concerning method for prevention of disasters;
28. **Emphasises** that hazard and risk identification and analysis, impact analysis, risk assessments and matrices, scenario development, risk management measures, and regular reviews are major components of the Community disaster prevention framework and of prevention policies at all levels of government, and **stresses** the potential for an added value of Community work in these areas;
29. **Acknowledges** the need to strengthen the link between policy makers, including official disaster management organisations, and research on prevention of disasters in order to improve prevention policies at national level.
30. **Calls on** the Commission to take the following initial actions:
- a. bring together existing private sector and public sector data and information on disasters and their social, economic and environmental impact, lessons learnt and best practices, with a view to providing policy-relevant information at European and national levels;
 - b. identifying gaps and issues of comparability between national data collection systems and carry out studies on different methods of risk assessment with a view to providing guidance on methods and common definitions, taking into account systems such as the Clearing House Mechanism²⁴;
 - c. before the end of 2010, together with Member States develop Community guidelines, taking into account work at national level on methods of hazard and risk mapping, assessments and analyses in order to facilitate such actions in Member States and to ensure a better comparability between Member States;
 - d. before the end of 2012, develop together with the Member States guidelines on minimum standards for hazard-specific disaster prevention, in particular for types of risks that are shared by Member States or regions in different Member States;
 - e. before the end of 2012, on the basis of national risk analysis, prepare a cross-sectoral overview of the major natural and man-made risks that the Community may face in the future and taking into account, where possible and relevant, the future impact of climate change and the need for climate adaptation; identify on the basis of the overview risks or types of risks that are shared by Member States or regions in different Member States;
 - f. support the exchange and diffusion of best practices and lessons learnt on disaster prevention;

²⁴ As outlined in the White Paper on adaptation to climate change, the Clearing House Mechanism will be a web-based platform for the exchange of information contributing to the Shared Environmental Information System, the collaborative initiative by the European Commission and the European Environment Agency (EEA) to establish with the Member States an integrated and shared EU-wide environmental information system.

- g. promote close cooperation between relevant research institutions and policy-makers, including official disaster management organisations, in order to enhance the transfer of knowledge from the research community to the policy level and to encourage the development of innovative technologies and methods;
- h. consider potential priorities for relevant Community-funded research projects aimed at understanding the link between climate change and natural disasters, assessing the social, economic and environmental costs of disasters, developing methods for the efficient use of satellite images by policy makers amongst others, analysing the consequences of building design and architecture in terms of risk factors and improving disaster prediction including through the use of appropriate technologies (e.g. remote sensing technologies);
- i. establish within the framework of the Community Civil Protection Mechanism and the Civil Protection Financial Instrument, an informal European network for disaster prevention composed of representatives of relevant authorities and where appropriate other stakeholders from relevant sectors, in order to contribute to the development of recommendations, the diffusion of best practices and lessons learnt, exchange of information on national coordination, national strategies and recent development within the field of disaster prevention and circulation of research results;
- j. as part of a Community framework on disaster prevention support initiatives in Member States developing national disaster risk reduction platforms within the Hyogo Framework for Action as well as regional coordination efforts aimed at reducing disaster risks and improving preparedness;
- k. include prevention in existing lessons-learnt exercises following interventions conducted within the framework of the Community Mechanism for civil protection, and make best use of the existing lessons-learnt programme, in order to enhance disaster prevention measures;
- l. develop within existing Community disaster management training programmes prevention components to ensure a high level of awareness and preparedness in the event of natural and man-made disasters and develop special training programmes on prevention taking into account inter alia climate adaptation;
- m. support the Member States in improving the links between existing early warning systems, the dissemination of forecasts and warnings to the public and encouraging cooperation between meteorological and hydrological agencies;
- n. support projects to raise public awareness and to inform and/or educate the population on disaster prevention measures;
- o. contribute to a comprehensive prevention policy throughout the EU by supporting action at different levels, including regional cooperation between Member States and cooperation between regions in different Member States facing the same or similar type of risks;
- p. develop an inventory of existing Community funding instruments supporting disaster prevention activities with a view to assessing the possibility of further integrating disaster prevention into existing EU funding;

- q. ensure that the implementation, review and further development of relevant Community initiatives and funding instruments take into account disaster prevention concerns.

31. Invites the Member States to:

- a. share and make available to the Commission best practices, lessons learnt and relevant data²⁵ and information on disasters, whenever available including the social, economic and environmental impacts of these disasters, with a view to providing policy-relevant information to European and national policy makers;
- b. encourage the linking of actors involved in disaster prevention and in different phases of disaster management, for instance by facilitating the development of national coordination platforms within the Hyogo Framework of Action;
- c. before the end of 2011 further develop national approaches and procedures to risk management including risk analyses²⁶, covering the potential major natural and man-made disasters, taking into account the future impact of climate change;
- d. where appropriate, make use of the guidelines on methods of hazard and risk mapping, assessments and analyses and the guidelines on minimum standards for hazard-specific disaster prevention to be developed by the Commission together with the Member States;
- e. further develop adequate measures including, if appropriate, a legal framework for the prevention of disasters;
- f. before the end of 2011, make available to the Commission information on risks of relevance for the development of an overview of the major risks the Community may face in the future;
- g. support and develop the raising of public awareness and information to and/or the education of the population on disaster prevention measures, improve the links between existing early warning systems, improve the dissemination of forecasts, alerts, and warnings to the public and support cooperation between meteorological and hydrological agencies;
- h. encourage exchange of policy makers and researchers in the form of, for instance, secondments between governmental and research institutions;
- i. make full use of Community funding opportunities to implement national disaster prevention strategies and measures.

²⁵ With the exception of data concerning the vital interests of a Member State

²⁶ The national approaches to risk management would typically also include risk assessments, risk maps and risk management plans including assessments of the anticipated consequences.

32. Invites the Commission to:

Present, by the end of 2010, relevant initiatives for disaster prevention in the EU, bringing together and complementing the activities referred to in the present Council conclusions, including proposals for instruments to review disaster prevention actions, like for example through sharing experiences and best practices. Such new initiatives should be consistent with other relevant EU initiatives, notably regarding adaptation to climate change, and should be in line with the priorities set in the Hyogo Framework for Action²⁷.”

²⁷ (i) Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation; (ii) Identify, assess, and monitor disaster risks – and enhance early warning; (iii) Use knowledge, innovation, and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels; (iv) Reduce the underlying risk factors; and (v) Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.