

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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COMMISSION COMMUNICATION TO THE COUNCIL

ON THE COORDINATION OF THE ACTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE

MEMBER STATES IN EMERGENCY AND HUMANITARIAN AID

COM(77) 382 final.

Introduction

Following the discussions that took place within the various Council bodies on the basis of the Dutch Memorandum on the EEC's development aid policy, the Council, at its meeting of 22 March 1977, adopted a Resolution on the coordination of the actions of the Community and the Member States in emergency and humanitarian aid given for natural disasters or comparable circumstances.

In the Resolution, the Council agreed that measures should be taken at Community level to step up, by means of better information and coordination, Community and national disaster aid, both in the phase of immediate help and in that of short-term emergency aid.

To this end the Council requested the Commission to submit proposals for putting into effect the guidelines defined, so that it could rapidly take the appropriate decisions.

The aim of this Communication is to give details of the mechanisms to be set up at Community level and in the Member States and to propose the decisions that should be taken to achieve better coordination.

The Council has also stressed the usefulness of drawing up an inventory of the means at the disposal of the Member States and the Community that could be combined. Once the Council has adopted the arrangements contained in this Communication, the first task of the coordinator and the correspondent designated in each of the Member States will be to draw up that inventory.

I. Coordination-scope and -procedures

As stated in the Resolution, coordination will be geared mainly to two phases : that of immediate help and that of short-term emergency aid.

1. The first phase begins as soon as the event occurs.

The prime objective, as has already been stressed by the Council, is speed of action. This is attained by means of emergency procedures for decision-making and delivery of products; these procedures exist both at Community level and in the Member States.

In these circumstances, coordination will tend to involve principally exchanging information, particularly on the situation in the country(ies) concerned, and producing an inventory of the action taken by the Community by herself and the Member States.

a) Decisions can be taken rapidly thanks to the information supplied by the relevant international organizations, notably UNDRO. Although this information is doubtless of great value, experience has shown that it does not always reflect the true requirements (nature and scale of the needs to be satisfied not specified). Moreover, where there is no natural disaster, there is often no information to be had.

The coordinator's first roles then would be to pass on, where necessary, information on the nature and scale of the requirements in all emergency situations, it being understood that this role may in no way duplicate that of existing organizations. Where appropriate, this could be done after missions have been sent to the countries affected and reports have been received from Commission Delegates.

For their part, the Member States forward to the coordinator any information at their disposal, besides that supplied by the international organizations and details of any action they plan to take and of any requests for the participation of one or more other Member States and/or the Community in an operation (e.g. supply of medicinal preparations by one Member State, air freighting of those products by another Member State).

- b) In the past, aid from the Community and the Member States has been presented to the outside world as a series of scattered operations, which reduced their impact on public opinion in Europe and on the recipient countries--(although there have been exceptions (e.g. Sahel)).

The coordinator's second role in this phase will be to draw up one or more inventories of the actions undertaken by the Community and the Member States and ensure that it gets adequate publicity. This inventory could, of course, constitute the basis for additional aid where desirable.

The Member States inform the coordinator of all the schemes they decide upon so that he can draw up the inventory.

2. The objective of the operations to be implemented during the second phase is to restore the situation in the country affected to normal.

During this phase, the coherence of the action undertaken is more important than the speed.

In contrast with the first phase, the information supplied by the relevant institutions on the nature and scale of the needs is very limited and there is at present no effective mechanism for coordinating Community action and that of the Member States or that of the Member States among themselves, nor is there any procedure whereby schemes to be undertaken can be evaluated and an inventory drawn up of those carried out.

Consequently, in order to achieve maximum coherence :

- a) the coordinator will evaluate the needs to be satisfied during this second phase on the basis of the information gathered from various sources and will forward his conclusions to the Member States as quickly as possible. The Member States will forward any information they have to the coordinator.
- b) the coordinator will define, in conjunction with the Member States, the guidelines for the operations to be undertaken aiming at optimum effectiveness (nature, scale of operations, Community participation and/or participation of each Member State in joint operations).
The coordinator will also have to draw up the inventory of action taken by the Community and/or the Member States, see that it is distributed to all concerned and write one or more reports on the progress of all the operations.
For their part, the Member States will forward to the coordinator to enable him to carry out his duties :
- the decisions taken on the basis of the guidelines stipulated above
 - the monthly reports on the execution of their operations.

II. Administrative arrangements and operation

A. Administrative arrangements

The Commission considers that coordination can only take place if a modest increase in staff is made available and that new tasks can only be undertaken when such staff has been nominated. The Commission would give the coordinator the autonomy that is indispensable for rapid and efficient operating, and would supply the necessary means to carry out his duties (telex, direct telephone, etc...).

Each Member State will designate a person to act as the direct correspondent of the coordinator and centralize the information on emergency aid given by his country.

B. Practical operation

Direct contacts between the coordinator and the correspondents will be made as follows with a maximum of flexibility :

- by telephone or telex for maximum speed
- at informal meetings which the coordinator will be required to call if it should prove necessary and in which the correspondents interested in a given operation will take part
- during missions to the affected country, in which correspondents directly concerned by their countries' operations will be able to take part.

As pointed out in item 1 of this communication, the coordinating machinery would not replace but complement existing procedures for decision and implementation, as regards both the Community (i.e. decisions for emergency food aid and exceptional aids, etc) and also the Member States. Nonetheless it must follow that the impact of aids coordinated in this way would be considerably increased if the means of action available to the Community could be expanded (e.g. doubling of the size of the food aid that the Commission is empowered to decide on its own, increase in appropriations under budget article 950 for financial aid for relief of disaster victims, creation of stocks of minor amounts of foodstuffs specially suitable for emergencies, etc..).

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In conclusion, it is proposed that the Council agree to all the arrangements concerning the coordination set out in this Communication.