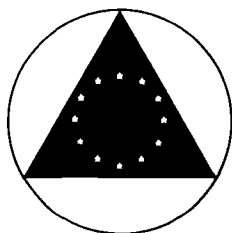


Towards a European society: civil protection



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Gestures of solidarity, which make the idea of Europe a reality in everyday life, help the citizens of the European Community to feel they belong to a single society and to perceive their European identity.

Solidarity, when it concerns civil protection or safety, is not an empty word for the 12 Community Member States. Were a natural catastrophe or a major technological disaster to occur in one of these countries, its partners would immediately lend assistance.

Since 1977, European emergency aid services have been cooperating in dealing with the most serious incidents.

Such help is useful, but insufficient.

To cope more effectively with disasters, the Twelve have together established a veritable Community arsenal for civil protection.

Civil protection figures large in the work programme of the Commission of the European Communities. Work on it took a giant step forward in 1987, in the context of the 'People's Europe' and of planning for a Europe without frontiers.

The 320 million people living in the 12 Community Member States, the very ones who would be affected should a disaster occur, have every interest in seeing that national and Community authorities combine their efforts to cope with major disasters, the scope of which may exceed the individual capacity of any one Member State to react effectively.

Which disasters?

The term 'disaster' signifies any emergency situation in which normal life is thrown suddenly into confusion; the population, as a result, having need of protection, food, clothing, shelter, medical attention, social care and other essentials.

The Community programme covers natural disasters, such as earthquakes, landslides, floods, fires (including forest fires), snowstorms or tidal waves, and man-made disasters, such as chemical or industrial accidents.

This civil protection effort embraces various kinds of measures serving four basic purposes: forecasting, prevention, disaster management and reconstruction.

At Community level, certain initiatives in areas such as research, environmental protection and satellite remote sensing, help forecasting and prevention. In addition, European funds – in particular the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund)

Principal dangers in European Community countries



	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	P	UK
Avalanches												
Landslides												
Tidal waves												
Earthquakes												
Volcanic eruptions												
Tornadoes												
Forest fires												
Dam bursts												
Drought												
Floods												
Industrial accidents												
Accidents from the transport of chemicals												

Source: Commission of the European Communities, Guide to civil protection in the European Community.

and the EAGGF (European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund) can finance reconstruction. With regard to the actual management of disasters, however, there has been a gap which the European programme now aims to fill.

Why Community action?

Although major disasters rarely repeat themselves in the same manner and although their consequences are always different, every disaster poses an identical problem: that of the deployment of available resources and of the effectiveness of the response.

Such a challenge can be met by:

- || Rapid information on the nature of the disaster, the risk involved, the scale and implications of the incident.
- || Matching assistance to specific requirements.
- || Evaluating and identifying the available resources and means.
- || Contacting the competent services and personnel in order to provide immediate aid.

To cope with these emergency situations, every Community Member State has established national planning and widely diversified sectoral plans.

No Community country is free from danger. Some, such as the Mediterranean countries, appear to be more exposed to certain natural disruptions like earthquakes, while others are more susceptible to accidents associated with chemical manufacturing. Globally, however, the problem concerns every citizen living on Community territory.

Civil protection is currently a priority. In this area, as in all the other areas of Community cooperation, there is no lack of reasons to justify the pooling of technical, financial and human resources.

|| *Technical aspects: seeking greater efficiency*

The scope of certain natural disasters, and their human, social and economic consequences, often demonstrate the relative weakness of the available human and material resources.

A similar inadequacy exists with regard to accidents inherent in the development of modern technologies. These disasters are rare, or of a new kind, and the country affected is often unequipped to deal with them.

The concerted intervention of other Community countries therefore answers a pressing need.

Joint action brings added value to the fight against disasters. European cooperation creates benefits of scale and eliminates or reduces duplication. In addition, such cooperation allows time and resources to be saved in the development of the most appropriate relief procedures, and also allows for the exchange of technical information.

□ *Political aspects: towards a 'People's Europe'*

All the activities in the programme to fight disasters accord fully with the spirit of a 'People's Europe' and fit into the Community's overall planning in that regard. They are intended to increase the safety of 320 million Europeans while encouraging their active participation. The European Commission therefore attaches particular importance to activities aimed at informing Europeans – young and old – and at heightening public awareness of efforts jointly agreed on to guarantee their daily security.

Furthermore, any initiative in this area is bound to contribute to the development of a sense of belonging to a Community, in view of the creation of a Europe without frontiers and of the large single market of 1992.

Such diverse technical, social and political arguments clearly help to explain the rapid progress made in the previously unexplored area of European civil protection.

- In May 1985, the first meeting took place of the Ministers responsible for civil protection in the different Community Member States.
- Two years later, on 25 May 1987, the aim became a reality: Community civil protection cooperation began. The Council and the representatives of Member States' governments meeting within the Council adopted, in a resolution, the proposals submitted by the European Commission in April 1987. This was much to the satisfaction of the European Parliament which, since 1981, had been calling for the establishment of a European relief programme.

The Community programme

The Community Member States did not wait until 1987 to bring European solidarity into play. Since 1977, there has been provision in the Community budget for 'emergency aid' to help disaster victims.

Between 1977 and 1987, more than 95 million ECU¹ were granted to help with earthquakes, floods, snowstorms, cyclones, severe cold spells.

¹ 1 ECU (European currency unit) = about £ 0.7, 1r £ 0.77 or US \$ 1.21 (at exchange rates current on 25 February 1988).

Community emergency assistance — in cash and/or in the form of essential items — is provided to the victims as quickly and as directly as possible. It represents a concrete symbol of Community solidarity to those Europeans affected by a natural disaster.

The Twelve now want to go further. In comparison with emergency assistance provided after a disaster, the new civil protection programme casts the net wider.

The objective is to have, in time, a real strategy at continental European level which will include all resources for fighting disasters: a strategy that goes beyond merely responding to emergencies and involves forecasting, prevention and early warning, as well as rescue operations, aid and medium and long-term reconstruction.

A significant step has just been taken on the path to coordinated action.

The inclusion in the Community budget of a new heading for Community cooperation on civil protection demonstrates a wish to make real progress on this issue.

The allocation proposed by the Commission, although modest, should facilitate the preliminary actions singled out by the Council and establish a base for future development in this field.

These preliminary activities essentially involve the compilation of a guide to civil protection, the establishment of a permanent network of liaison officers, more effective use of data banks and the holding of simulation exercises.

[] The guide to civil protection, the central element in the resolution adopted by the Council on 25 May 1987, was compiled with the assistance of experts from the Member States and will soon be published. It is a practical manual intended for use by those responsible for civil protection and by the national authorities involved in planning disaster relief. The text, which comprises more than 300 pages supplemented by annexes, describes the current situation as regards disaster relief in the European Community. It indexes disasters, their characteristics, the multilateral and bilateral agreements signed between Member States, the disaster relief plans established at national, regional and local levels, and the resources which could be made available to Community countries.

The guide also contains a list of liaison officers in the Member States to be contacted in the event of a disaster.

The guide will be revised annually with the help of national experts. As of now, it can be used for three main purposes:

- Helping the authorities responsible for civil protection in Community Member States to organize relief.
- Setting out the guidelines by which each Member State can develop national relief measures, taking account of standards used by most of the other countries.

- Establishing a preliminary assessment of the needs of a country affected by an accident of sufficient scale and gravity to justify assistance from abroad.
- A *permanent network* of civil protection liaison officers has been in operation since 1 July 1987. It is made up of persons experienced in providing relief to other European partners, senior civil servants responsible for administering general policy on civil protection and Community officers.

The task of the permanent liaison officer system is to allow for a rapid exchange of information on the requirements and available resources in the Community for coping with natural or man-made disasters. Such an arrangement should also help to increase the potential of the relief services of each individual Member State.

- More effective use of Community data banks should allow for a detailed exchange of information on the relief structures and resources available in all the Member States in the event of a disaster. An inventory of existing data banks will enable technical proposals to be drawn up for the establishment in the short term of an interconnected system.
- The regular holding of *simulation exercises* and *training activities* by Community Member States facilitates *exchanges of civil protection personnel* with specialist knowledge. The first exercise of this type, known as 'Florac 85', took place in the Cévennes in France on the initiative of the European Commission and as part of the international forestry year. The disaster simulated was a forest fire of a scale beyond the intervention capacity of a single Member State.

This pilot operation enabled a first approach to be made to the technical and operational problems posed by the use of relief resources from various European countries.

In particular, the experiment proved that it was possible:

- To mobilize and assign within 24 hours land and air-borne fire-fighting teams from different Member States.
- To coordinate the simultaneous assistance, by land and air, of relief services of diverse origins, capacities and operational techniques.

On the strength of this successful experiment, the Twelve agreed to organize every year one or two exercises which could receive European Community support.

Such cooperation, jointly based on simulation, training and information, will facilitate a synergy of ideas, techniques and equipment. It will help to make maximum use of the contribution of each Member State and will strengthen contacts between persons who may be called upon suddenly to work together.

Apart from the occasional joint activity, such cooperation will ensure that the relief capacity of each Member State is maintained permanently at a high level.

Other initiatives within the framework of the European Commission programme are aimed essentially at improving *information* – as much for the public at large as for civil protection professionals – through activities which heighten public awareness, in particular:

- | | The publication of a shortened version of the civil protection guide. Appropriate information should help to educate the individual in preventive action. The objective is to encourage appropriate behaviour in the event of a disaster which would enable the individual to protect himself and, possibly, take part in rescue operations.
- | | The drawing up of a 'common language' and the standardization of the technical vocabulary used in the civil protection area, particularly as regards ideas, strategy and logistics.
- | | The adoption by all Community countries of a single or uniform emergency telephone number for all alarm calls.
- | | The designation at Community level of a common radio frequency which would be reserved solely for relief operations carried out either with national resources alone or with help from other Member States.
- | | The development of networks to detect natural dangers, with wider use of satellites to centralize and transmit information, and taking account of the kinds of dangers that are most serious for the Community.
- | | Community participation in seminars, symposia, exhibitions and other public events which deal with civil protection and major risks. For example, the Community participated in 1988 in the international exhibition in Hanover on measures to fight fires and disasters.
- | | The establishment of a European symbol. Awareness of the European identity also depends on symbolic activities which can bring the European identity closer to everyday life.
- | | Enlarging the scope of European civil protection activities, by strengthening its relations with international bodies in a wider conception of European solidarity. Hence, the accession in 1987 to the Council of Europe's 'Open Partial Agreement' on prevention, protection and organization of relief from major natural and technological dangers.



To make the concept of Europe a reality, it is not sufficient merely to create an internal area without frontiers, achieving economic and social unity and balance. The solidarity of European society must reach out to each European person.

The Community can rely on strong support from public opinion. In return, Europeans must find tangible evidence of Europe in their everyday lives, in the subjects of most concern to them and their society.

The twin prospect of the completion of the internal market before 1992 and the development of the 'People's Europe' towards European Union calls for an intensification of activities in the civil protection area.

Day by day, Member States are reinforcing their mutual solidarity. In this context, civil protection helps to encourage in a concrete fashion, for the 320 million people living in these countries, the feeling of belonging to the same Community ■



Proposed European civil protection logo

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