



COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Council conclusions on Integrated Flood Management within the European Union

*3085th JUSTICE and HOME AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 12 May 2011*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Recognising** the significant frequency and intensity over the last few years in the European Union of flood events causing loss of human lives and property and damage to social and economic infrastructure, which have resulted in several activations of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism¹; acknowledging that prevention plays a role in adaptation to climate change;
- 2. Considering** that the enhancement of disaster prevention and preparedness, the reinforcement of the Union's disaster response capacity, and coherence and coordination between different policy areas and institutions at local, regional, national and EU level continue to be important objectives for the Union;
- 3. Having regard to the measures taken by** Council Regulation (EC) No 1084/2006 of 11 July 2006 establishing a Cohesion Fund², Council Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002 of 11 November 2002 establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF)³, Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)⁴, and Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)⁵;
- 4. Having regard to Council Decision 2007/162/EC, Euratom of 5 March 2007** establishing a Civil Protection Financial Instrument⁶, which lays down rules for the provision of financial assistance for measures to prevent or reduce the effects of an emergency;

¹ OJ L 314, 1.12.2007, p. 9.

² OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 79.

³ OJ L 311, 14.11.2002, p. 3.

⁴ OJ L 277, 21.10.2005, p. 1.

⁵ OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 1.

⁶ OJ L 71, 10.3.2007, p. 9.

P R E S S

5. **Having regard to the Commission Communication of 12 July 2004** on Flood Risk Management, Flood Prevention, Protection and Mitigation⁷;
6. **Having regard to Directive 2007/60/EC of 23 October 2007** on the assessment and management of flood risks⁸ (hereinafter the "Floods Directive");
7. **Recalling the Commission Communication of 5 March 2008** on reinforcing the Union's Disaster Capacity⁹; **recalling the Council conclusions of 16 June 2008** on Reinforcing the Union's Disaster Response Capacity – towards an integrated approach to managing disasters¹⁰;
8. **Taking note of the Commission Communication of 26 October 2010** - Towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance¹¹ and the **Council Conclusions of 14 December 2010** on the abovementioned Communication¹²;
9. **Recalling the White paper** ‘Adapting to climate change: towards a European Framework for Action’¹³; **recalling the Council conclusions of 25 June 2009** on Climate change: Towards a comprehensive EU adaptation strategy¹⁴, underlining that climate change is affecting and will continue to affect all of society and will have an impact on a number of sectors, 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;
10. **Underlining the Commission Communication** of 23 February 2009 on a Community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters¹⁵ and the **Council conclusions of 30 November 2009** on a Community framework on disaster prevention within the EU¹⁶, in particular paragraph 30(e) inviting the Commission to 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;
11. **Recalling the Council Conclusions of 3 June 2010** on psychosocial support in the event of emergencies and disasters¹⁷;
12. **Bearing in mind European Parliament Resolution of 17 June 2010** on floods in central European countries, in particular Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, and in France¹⁸;

⁷ COM (2004) 472 final.

⁸ OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27.

⁹ 7562/08 - COM(2008) 130 final.

¹⁰ 10128/08.

¹¹ 15614/10 - COM(2010) 600 final.

¹² 17455/1/10 REV 1.

¹³ 8526/09 - COM(2009) 147 final.

¹⁴ 10435/09.

¹⁵ 7075/1/09 - COM (2009) 82 final/2.

¹⁶ 15394/09.

¹⁷ 9838/10.

¹⁸ P7_TA(2010)0241.

13. **Taking note of the Commission Communication of 8 December 2010 on a European Union Strategy for the Danube Region¹⁹**, and its emphasis on risk management, in particular on floods and the target "Implement Danube wide flood risk management plans - due in 2015 under the Floods Directive – to include significant reduction of flood risk by 2021";
14. **Taking into account** the principles laid down in the Council Conclusions of 2 December 2010 on Host Nation Support²⁰;
15. **Underlining** the benefits of networking and exchanges of best practice, as well as the added value of interactive learning and building upon previous experiences, and therefore taking note of seminars, workshops and lessons learnt meetings on floods held in recent years, e.g. the workshop dedicated to "Flood Response Management" in Revinge, Sweden (October 2009), the lessons learnt meeting "Floods in Europe 2010" in Brussels, Belgium (November 2010), and the workshop on "Integrated Flood Management", in Budapest, Hungary (January 2011);

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16. **Underlines** the need for Member States and the EU to take an integrated approach to flood management, building upon existing Member State and EU legislation and policies, with special attention paid to the Floods Directive, encompassing the entire disaster management cycle (prevention, preparedness, response and recovery);
17. **Emphasises** the necessity to respond rapidly and effectively to cascading events, when floods trigger different types of subsequent hazard;
18. **Stresses** that flood forecast and early warning are some of the prerequisites - among other preventive actions - for a successful reduction of flood damage; therefore recommends stepping up local, regional and national early warning systems, e.g. by enhancing the use of the *European Flood Alert System (EFAS)* in addition to improving preparedness at local, regional and national levels by sound cooperation between meteorological, hydrological and oceanographic experts;
19. **Emphasises** the need to strengthen cooperation and information sharing between relevant authorities involved at national, regional and local levels in disaster management and water management in order to further develop an integrated approach to flood management;
20. **Recalls** the importance of encouraging action to reduce flood risks through increasing use of disaster insurance policies for major disasters with risk-based premiums for households, industry/agriculture and infrastructure, bearing in mind current insurance systems and legislation in the Member States²¹;
21. **Calls on** the Member States to consider future flood management challenges which may be associated with - among other factors - climate change in the implementation of EU legislation and Member State policies, and to develop emergency response plans²², taking into account potential exceptional or high impact weather conditions;

¹⁹ 18055/10 - COM(2010)715 final.

²⁰ 15874/10.

²¹ 14971/10, paragraph 23 (c).

²² At local, regional or national level.

22. **Calls on** the Member States, with a view to developing an integrated approach to flood management and taking into account the whole disaster management cycle, to take the following measures:
- a. **Ensure** coordination and cooperation on transboundary information exchange between all competent authorities as appropriate and other relevant actors involved in implementation of the Floods Directive;
 - b. **Promote** optimal use of risk assessment and mapping guidelines²³ addressing different types of disasters in order to improve emergency response plans;
 - c. **Step up** cooperation between neighbouring Member States and third countries in river basin²⁴ districts, by increasing knowledge and exchange of best practices concerning disaster management systems and flood-related capabilities, where such cooperation does not yet exist;
 - d. **Enhance** the mechanisms for cooperation and coordination between civil protection, disaster management, flood risk management, land use planning and water management authorities, in order to link prevention, preparedness and response measures;
 - e. **Prepare for** increasingly high-impact exceptional weather phenomena as a result of climate change by including extreme weather and subsequent flood scenarios in emergency response plans;
 - f. **Include in** emergency response plans relevant references to the protection of human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity²⁵ including critical infrastructure, (e.g. gas, water supply and treatment, electricity and telecommunications networks)²⁶ protected areas, industrial installations and/or establishments involving the use of dangerous substances²⁷ and contaminated sites;
 - g. **Promote** the use of computerised geographical techniques (digital maps, aerial and satellite images) by the competent authorities to improve analysis and methods to manage flash floods, torrential rain, melt water, ice jams and other natural hazards, and increase the time available for an effective response;
 - h. **Promote** the use by Member States of available alert systems such as EFAS (European Flood Alert System) and the GMES ERS (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security Emergency Response Service) to improve, together with the aforementioned forecasting models, early warning for the citizens;
 - i. **Encourage** the use of diverse methods and technologies, including internet-based methods for information gathering and dissemination, and web-based Geographic Information Systems to share basic information with the public. Enhance safety for rescue personnel, for instance by using robotic systems on dangerous flood sites for reconnaissance, or other systems for surveillance;

²³ 17833/10 - SEC(2010) 1626 final.

²⁴ OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27. (Article 2), and OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1. (Article 2).

²⁵ OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27. (Article 7(2)).

²⁶ OJ L 345, 23.12.2008, p. 75 and 16932/06 - COM(2006) 786 final.

²⁷ Including, inter alia, SEVESO and IPPC installations, OJ L 10, 14.1.1997, p. 13 and OJ L 24, 29.1.2008, p. 8.

- j. **Further develop** integrated flood risk-oriented civil protection training for local officials, first responders, children, volunteers as well as other relevant actors, develop "train the trainers" training programmes, and disseminate the latest scientific information to the abovementioned rescue personnel and decision makers;
- k. **Organise** national, regional, and international flood-related exercises as appropriate, with particular emphasis on cross-border cooperation;
- l. **Develop** awareness programmes for widely known and understood codes of alert, incorporate climate change adaptation into Member States' building regulations, and make available information enabling new settlers and builders to be aware of any risks when they move into flood-prone areas;
- m. **Promote** the implementation of the monitoring and early warning modes of CECIS²⁸ with the aim of sharing information and ensuring a more rapid response, and further develop national or multi-national civil protection modules related to flood management to be registered in CECIS;
- n. **Develop** reference scenarios based on risk assessment for the different types of flood at the appropriate level, in order to promote a more rapid response;
- o. **Encourage** the adoption of a common approach to flood management operations for civil protection teams and modules involved in bilateral or international operations, in the event of cross-border or large scale disasters;
- p. **Further develop** and deploy psychosocial teams to provide psychosocial care and reassurance for the affected population in the case of major floods, with special attention to evacuation operations;
- q. **Strengthen** the process of identifying lessons to be learnt in a structured manner following flood events, involving all relevant actors at local, regional and national levels; draw up short reports after flood events and share lessons identified with other Member States²⁹;

23. Calls on the Commission to take following measures:

- a. **Incorporate** the integrated approach to flood management in training and exercises conducted as part of the Civil Protection Mechanism;
- b. **Further develop** a common approach to flood management operations, along with the Member States and relevant international stakeholders;
- c. **Promote** among Member States the development of innovative methods and procedures and the dissemination of experience and best practices, and organise and improve the use of the lessons learnt process, covering the entire disaster management cycle and with due consideration of existing systems;

²⁸ CECIS - Common Emergency Communication and Information System.

²⁹ The reports should follow the steps of the preliminary flood risk assessment in the Floods Directive 2007/60/EC.

- d. **Develop**, together with the Member States³⁰ reference scenarios for floods using risk assessment information provided by the Member States³¹;
 - e. **Disseminate** the results and raise awareness of EU co-funded projects and exercises related to flood management;
 - f. **Promote** the use of adequate financial resources within relevant existing EU funds for infrastructural and non-structural protective investments minimising flood risks and reflecting the priorities of integrated flood management.
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³⁰ 17833/10 - SEC(2010) 1626 final.

³¹ 15394/09.