

Review of the Balance of Competences: Foreign Policy Report - Civil Protection

Submission by Rebecca Taylor MEP

28/02/2013

The following submission has been prepared on behalf of Rebecca Taylor MEP to give a perspective on the EU role in Civil Protection, and in particular, the Civil Protection Mechanism.

Rebecca is a member of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee (ENVI). ENVI assumed competence over the domestic aspects of the Civil Protection Mechanism in the European Parliament during the current negotiations. Rebecca is the lead (shadow rapporteur) MEP for the Liberal Group (ALDE) of MEPs in the Parliament and is the only UK MEP actively involved in the current discussions.

After the text you will find amendments as tabled by Rebecca Taylor to give an idea of her position on the proposal.

The current legislation on Civil Protection is primarily focused around the Civil Protection Mechanism. The Mechanism, in essence, is simply a communication tool to aid cooperation between Member States. Threats such as natural and man made disasters like floods, forest fires, earthquakes and chemical spills, are communicated to the Monitoring and Information Centre. This is currently situated within one of the Commission buildings, with restricted access.

If a Member State considers a disaster to be so great that they require assistance, then the Monitoring and Information Centre communicate this information to the other Member States, along with details of the assistance required. The assisting Member States then take part in a relief operation led by the Member State affected. There is an element of co-financing, to encourage Member States to assist, though this is currently minimal. Decision making is done by the Member States, with the Commission acting as a conduit for information.

The Civil Protection Mechanism also acts a communication hub for response to international natural and man-made disasters. The majority of actions performed through the Civil Protection Mechanism are international rather than within the EU.

The negotiations on the new Civil Protection Mechanism are due to start soon, with the Parliament's position confirmed in late 2012. Negotiations should begin under the Irish Presidency.

The Parliament's position is largely supportive of the Commission's original proposal.

The key changes are;

- 1) An enlargement of the Monitoring and Information Centre, becoming the Emergency Response Centre.
- 2) The establishment of voluntary pools of resources to respond rapidly to threats communicated the Emergency Response Centre. These pools will be physical in some cases, but virtual in others, with Member States allowing resources to be available for disaster response, though with the resources remaining on their territory.
- 3) The submission and regular update of Risk Management Plans. There are different views on how these would be composed. The Commission would like to establish an obligation for all Member States to produce these; to enhance their own preparedness, and for the Commission to gain an understanding of where weak points lie in the EU's preparedness as a whole.

Rebecca understands the need for Member States not to share information essential to their national security. The EU Treaties guarantee this, and the Parliament has no intention of jeopardising this.

The existing Civil Protection Mechanism aids international responses more often than domestic responses, due to the strength of existing EU structures, and the milder European climate. The Commission's proposals referred to in point 2) add a new tool which, some argue, has the potential of leading to increased responses within the EU.

Rebecca is keen to ensure that Member States maintain the primary responsibility to protect their own citizens. This is a guiding principle she will hold throughout the entire process.

Rebecca is broadly supportive of the aims of the Commission's proposal, and believes that the majority of the proposal would be beneficial for the UK, and the EU as a whole.

Union Civil Protection Mechanism

Proposal for a decision COM(2011)0934 – C7-0519/2011 – 2011/0461(COD)

Amendment 1
Rebecca Taylor

Proposal for a decision
Recital 14 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(14 a) For capacities maintained outside of the European Emergency Response Capacity, Member States are encouraged to develop a regional approach. Cooperation between regional and local governments should facilitate effective preparation and response, ensuring that scarce resources are used efficiently, utilising, inter alia, published records of capacities held at each level of government and voluntary pooled resources. Where Member States choose to adopt this approach, the Commission shall be available to provide assistance and support.

Or. en

Justification

The Commission intends to compare Risk Management Plans and establish a European Emergency Response Capacity to address any capacity gaps and flaws which exist across the European Union. It is possible that an EU approach to filling these gaps may be too cumbersome in some cases, where regional and local authorities working together and pooling resources could address the problem. In line with the subsidiarity principle, this should be encouraged but not mandated.

Elisabetta Gardini
Union Civil Protection Mechanism

Proposal for a decision COM(2011)0934 – C7-0519/2011 – 2011/0461(COD)

Amendment 2
Rebecca Taylor

Proposal for a decision
Article 6 – paragraph 2 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

2 a. Where Member States have a vast number of existing risk management plans at devolved levels of government, the minimum requirement of information to be submitted to the Commission shall be a collation of the information within these plans, including but not limited to; possible risks, capacities available, and contingency plans in place. The submission of original versions of regional risk management plans shall be encouraged, along with any relevant data.

Or. en

Justification

The large amount of data on this subject available within some Member States should not hinder the process of submitting a general Risk Management Plan to the Commission for the purpose of the Civil Protection Mechanism

Elisabetta Gardini
Union Civil Protection Mechanism

Proposal for a decision COM(2011)0934 – C7-0519/2011 – 2011/0461(COD)

Amendment 3
Rebecca Taylor

Proposal for a decision
Article 10 – paragraph 1 – point b a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(b a) the Commission shall establish contact with interested non-governmental civil protection actors and, where possible, record what capacities they can make available for operations under the Mechanism.

Or. en

Justification

Non-governmental civil protection actors are often willing to participate in operations within the Union and in third countries, and often own civil protection assets themselves. Whenever they are willing to participate, their support should be welcomed and if possible incorporated from an early stage

Elisabetta Gardini
Union Civil Protection Mechanism

Proposal for a decision COM(2011)0934 – C7-0519/2011 – 2011/0461(COD)

Amendment 4
Rebecca Taylor

Proposal for a decision
Article 11 – paragraph 6

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

6. The capacities registered in the European Emergency Response Capacity shall be available for emergency response operations under the Mechanism at the request of the Commission through the ERC. Member States shall inform the Commission as soon as possible of any compelling reasons that prevent them from making these capacities available in a specific emergency.

6. The capacities registered in the European Emergency Response Capacity shall be available for emergency response operations under the Mechanism at the request of the Commission through the ERC. Member States shall inform the Commission as soon as possible of any compelling reasons that prevent them from making these capacities available in a specific emergency. ***Member States shall provide the Commission with a brief description of these compelling reasons.***

Or. en

Justification

There are many circumstances which could understandably leave a Member State no longer able to participate in a voluntary pool. It does not seem unreasonable therefore to ask for a brief explanation of compelling reasons when they arise, which would add to the durability of the ERC

Elisabetta Gardini
Union Civil Protection Mechanism

Proposal for a decision COM(2011)0934 – C7-0519/2011 – 2011/0461(COD)

Amendment 5
Rebecca Taylor

Proposal for a decision
Article 12 – paragraph 4 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

4 a. Outside of the ERC framework, Member States shall be encouraged to adopt a regional approach where practicable, utilising voluntary pools of resources within their territory, to maximise the efficient use of scarce resources. On request, the Commission shall provide information, expertise and technology to facilitate this approach.

Or. en

Justification

The Commission intends to compare Risk Management Plans and establish a European Emergency Response Capacity to address any capacity gaps and flaws which exist across the European Union. It is possible that an EU approach to filling these gaps may be too cumbersome in some cases, where regional and local authorities working together and pooling resources could address the problem. In line with the subsidiarity principle, this should be encouraged rather than mandated.

Elisabetta Gardini
Union Civil Protection Mechanism

Proposal for a decision COM(2011)0934 – C7-0519/2011 – 2011/0461(COD)

Amendment 6
Rebecca Taylor

Proposal for a decision
Article 19 – paragraph 1 – subparagraph 2

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

<p><i>EUR 276 000 000 at current prices</i> shall derive from heading 3 ‘ Security and Citizenship’ of the financial framework and <i>EUR 237 000 000 at current prices</i> from heading 4 ‘ Global Europe.’</p>	<p><i>55% of that amount</i> shall derive from heading 3 ‘ Security and Citizenship’ of the financial framework and <i>45% of that amount</i> from heading 4 ‘ Global Europe.’</p>
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Or. en

Justification

The proportions under each heading given by the Commissions as percentages equate to 54% and 46%. For the sake of simplicity these have been adjusted to 55% and 45%.