



**EMERGENCY PLANNING SOCIETY
WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH**

c/o East Staffordshire Borough Council, Town Hall, P O Box 8045, Burton upon
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Chairman

26 February 2013

Balance of Competences Review
Civil Contingencies Secretariat
Cabinet Office
35 Great Smith Street
L O N D O N
SW1T 3BQ

Dear

**EUROPEAN UNION / UNITED KINGDOM – BALANCE OF COMPETENCES IN
CIVIL PROTECTION**

I am making representations on the above Review on behalf of the West Midlands Branch of the Emergency Planning Society. The Branch held a Consultation Workshop on 22 February; those attending were delegates with experience in working for local authorities (district, metropolitan and county), the Fire & Rescue Service (shire and metropolitan brigades) the NHS (major regional hospital) and a major regional university. It is from this perspective that our comments are made on the balance of competences in Civil Protection between the European Union and the United Kingdom.

I would comment that we were very surprised to see the different countries for which the EU Civil Protection Mechanism has been activated in just the last 5 years, that were somewhat remote from the EU; Cuba, the USA, Chile, Mongolia, the Philippines, Malawi, New Zealand, Tajikistan and Japan to name but a few. We support the fact that the EU is co-ordinating international disaster response in this way, as it clearly adds value and simplifies the procedure for the requesting state. However, we wondered what the policy is for the financing of the EU assistance to non-EU members; do the providing countries pay for what is supplied, or do the recipient countries reimburse the EU for what is supplied? Some of the states receiving EU assistance are well able to reimburse the costs involved eg Japan, the USA, New Zealand, whilst others are clearly not in such a sound financial position. At a time when EU countries are generally experiencing a period of recession, it would be unsatisfactory if the EU was providing “free”

assistance to a country that is able to pay for such assistance on a “commercial” basis.

Civil Protection in several EU countries that are known to those taking part in the Workshop seems to operate very differently to the UK. In such countries the Civil protection response is not organised as an “add on” to the response of other organisations eg local authorities or the emergency services, but is a stand alone, fully-funded organisation that is pro-active and is far more “joined-up” than the UK. There is also little consistency within the UK’s Civil Protection response, despite the Civil Contingencies Act now being in force for almost a decade. The role of Civil Protection is sometimes being downgraded by being linked to other local authority responsibilities on an ad hoc basis; eg a recent example where the professional Emergency Planning manager for a local authority suddenly found himself also responsible for Elections! This is a growing trend, which we feel is probably unique to the UK within the EU, and is unwelcome.

Could the EU recommend a minimum level of funding for Civil Protection, as a method of ensuring at least a minimum provision?

I have also completed the Survey Monkey on this topic. Should you have any questions on our comments, or require any further amplification of any aspects of the response, please let me know.

Yours sincerely