

**UK Government's Review of the Balance of Competences  
between the UK and the EU  
EU Response to the Great East Japan Earthquake**

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**Following are my answers to the questions given by the UK Cabinet Office on this subject. Please note that the views expressed bellow are of my own and do not necessarily represent those of JICA .**

- 1. How effective was the EU at coordinating the civil protection assistance offered by EU Member States in the aftermath of the Tsunami? Did Member states offer assistance unilaterally or bilaterally and if so, was this more or less effective?***

**Kristarina Georgieva, Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Civil protection, stated at the event "Japan after Tsunami: Building the Resilience of the World" organised by Friends of Europe in commemoration of the two year anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake (GEJE), that at the request of the Japanese Ambassador to the EU she tried hard to coordinate MS response to the disaster in term of the selection of relief items and method of transportation. Her efforts were supported by nine MS including the UK. Coordinated international relief supplies at the onset of the disaster often help affected countries to respond better. The EU did this, through ECHO, and delivered relief supplies such as tents, blankets, jerry cans, sleeping mats, radioactive monitors, etc. directly to the affected areas such as Ibaragi Prefecture and Miyagi Prefecture, by using the shared cargo planes. Such coordination efforts of the ECHO must have saved much time and resources for MS at the critical moment of response.**

- 2. To what extent did other international organisations such as the UN and the EU provide an integrated response to the crises? Did the EU duplicate any civil protection activity by other international organisations and if so, what impact did this have on the overall response effort?***

More than 140 countries and 39 international organisations offered assistance to Japan after the disaster. Thus coordination efforts both of donors and Japan were unprecedented. However, there seems to have few negative reports on this, perhaps because the international community and Japan learned the lessons from the Kobe Earthquake in 1994. The ECHO 's role in coordinating a substantial part of MS aid contributed to the overall efforts of international coordination. Commissioner Georgieva made a remark at the event mentioned earlier that radioactive monitors delivered by the EU worked so effectively in order to alleviate the worries of people living in the vicinity of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant which became dysfunctional after the disaster. The EU made a difference by making right selection of relief supplies.

*3. Are there any general points you wish to make, which are not captured above?*

At the time of massive disasters international emergency aid help affected people both from material and morale point of view. The latter is equally important. The whole Japanese people realised the bondage of friendship with the international community by seeing and knowing their aid on the ground. In this aspect, the EU made a strong visibility by the visit of Commissioner Georgieva as early as two weeks after the disaster. She delivered the relief supplies herself representing the EU and encouraged many people affected by the disaster. This is the advantage of the EU having a high profile external representation in humanitarian aid and civil protection. Otherwise it would have been unrealistic for each MS sending high-level representatives for visibility reasons.



**EU Relief Team delivering supplies to the local depot  
(photo by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan)**