

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject as Civil Protection Advisor to the British Red Cross and as Chair of the Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum.

My areas of responsibilities in the UK involve extensive liaison with Government Departments, Category 1 Responders (organisations with a statutory responsibility for planning for and responding to emergencies), professional associations and voluntary organisations, to explore the auxiliary and supportive role of specified voluntary organisations within the UK. For over eight years, as part of the RC/EU Office, I had responsibility for developing cross-European civil protection and emergency planning networks by maximising the contribution of the Red Cross National Societies within European Union Member States.

Having thought about this activity carefully I am not sure that there is much of value that I can contribute. I have also discussed the matter with a small number of colleagues in the UK emergency planning arena who suggest that they will be making similar points in their submissions.

I have also managed three EC co-financed, projects to: understand better the contribution that NGOs' volunteers can make in prevention of, planning for, and responding to civil emergencies; how organisations can work together to support individuals in an emergency or disaster; and to acknowledge the added value of using every resource from citizen, volunteer to voluntary and statutory organisations, to build and improve national and community resilience in civil protection.

Please find below some brief remarks on the subject.

1. Adding value or delivering impact - increasingly valued and utilised in the UK and EUNS
 - EU Civil Protection Mechanism offers a facility for sharing information, resources and expertise across EUNS.
 - CECIS is an essential information portal.
 - Co-financing of transport is more important for EUNS adversely impacted by economic crisis.
 - Exercises provide cross-border and multi-disciplinary opportunities to participate and observe on significant national. Regional and global disaster risks e.g. climate change, flooding and pandemic flu.
 - EU Training courses offer the RC participation as delegate or opportunity to deliver key messages about the Movement and its Fundamental Principles.
 - Exchange of experts programme provides a facility to influence experts from other countries and to share our own expertise with other EUNS.
 - Funding for projects in response to calls for proposals e.g. research, prevention and preparedness, EU Aid Volunteers. Gives small sums of money to enable the organisation to work across borders and with other organisations to share and develop good practice.

2. Advantages and disadvantages
 - The training courses are of good quality and useful to the individuals attending. The issue arises whether the people attending the courses are those who will be deployed.
 - The courses seem to benefit the individuals who attend, as personal development, and because the basic input is transferable across organisations and boundaries.
 - Working across EUNS boundaries is excellent for building relationships and, sharing expertise and making best use of limited resources.
 - The communication is EC to EUNS and back to EC and not to other organisations within an EUNS so the reach and value of communication within EUNS (UK) is limited in its effectiveness.

3. General points

- There is value in the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) even though the UK has not as yet appealed for aid through the Mechanism. The UK has offered and provided aid to EUMS and elsewhere through the MIC. It is better for the UK to be 'in the MIC club' rather than excluded.
- The Mechanism and the MIC will become more important as risks change and become more global.
- In respect of applying for EC funding for research, the process is time consuming and protracted but successful applications can provide useful data. There is real potential benefit to applying for EC funding but the benefits have not been fully realised by organisations within the UK - Government Depts could do more to promote the funding opportunities offered by the EC.
- An EU approach to risk assessment is of potential value if it provides data about large scale risks - the challenge is for the EU not to overplay the threat of terrorism. Most EUMS have plans in place but the benefits of sharing need exploration.
- There are tangible benefits with the exchange of experts' model - providing individuals who are better trained and informed, with the capability to work in other countries.
- In respect of NATO, there may be a role particularly with the changing threats. The question remains about the military dimension - cannot just substitute military for civilian assets.
- Central Government needs to improve its approach to 'soft' co-ordination of UK capacity and capability across all disciplines. Similarly there is a need to enhance its relationship with the different strands of the Civil Protection Mechanism and the opportunities for improved relations between the UK and the EU.

Moya Wood-Heath
Civil Protection/Emergency Planning Advisor
British Red Cross Society