Balance of Competences Review
Area: Civil Protection
Submission of Evidence

Eve Coles
Senior Fellow in Civil Protection
Leeds University Business School
Editor: *Emergency Management Review*
Chair: Education Committee, Emergency Planning Society

This submission is based on personal experience and selected evidence to present an opinion of the current state of knowledge and activity in the UK with regard to the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM). It is my considered opinion that there is a real paucity of knowledge (which appears to result in a lack of interest to get involved) amongst UK practitioners with regard to the way in which the EU and different member states deal with and respond to major emergencies. Consequently when participating in EC activities concerned with civil protection UK participants are conspicuous by their absence.

In January to June 2012 during the Danish Presidency of the EU the strengthening of the CPM was high on the agenda of the Danish Government. A conference concerned with lessons learned from emergencies and disasters and the development of quality systems to improve response and recovery in January 2012 facilitated by the Danish Emergency Management Agency was only attended by myself and one other from the UK whereas other member states sent a full range of delegates.

Furthermore I am also concerned that information regarding civil protection activities in Europe is not always disseminated to the practitioner community as well as it could be (thus informing and perhaps facilitating participation) and leads to the lack of knowledge and interest. Put simply the practitioner community doesn't know what is happening in Europe. It is my opinion that this leaves the UK at a distinct disadvantage for a number of reasons.

Firstly, we do not appear to be the first call for recognised expertise to help develop of civil protection systems and structures in Europe. The work undertaken in the UK particularly since the introduction of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 has resulted in the development of knowledge, education, structures, systems and processes that are quite far in advance of those in some member states. The deployment of such expertise from grass roots level upward would allow the UK to take a leadership role in shaping the way in which the CPM is developed and managed and increase our influence in Europe (particularly with the accession countries) whilst at the same time helping to ensure that the impacts from emergencies in Europe are more contained, UK is security is not compromised and UK citizens are as safe as they can be.

Secondly, if there is a major emergency or disaster in Europe that involves UK citizens we (at grass root level) are not particularly well versed in the systems and structures for dealing with such events in member states. There is a lack of knowledge and understanding in the UK about such things that could lead to a less than successful response from us because we are not familiar with our counterparts in Europe and probably not sure how things will work or how our systems fit with those of the member state.

Thirdly, although the UK is one of the leading global nations in the professionalisation of civil protection practitioners and the development of education and training in the field it does not seem to be acknowledged within Europe. This leadership is evidenced by the demand for university courses, the National Occupational Standards in Civil Contingencies (NOS), the Emergency Planning

Society's (EPS) Core Competency Framework, the development of British Standards in crisis management, business continuity management and risk management and the excellent national and international work undertaken by the Emergency Planning College (EPC) particularly in the middle east. Again this lack of recognition from our nearest neighbours puts the UK at a disadvantage with regard to the ability to influence the up skilling of practitioners in Europe and thus render our citizens safe and our security stronger.

Comparative advantages of working through the CPM;

- A developing leadership and influence role for the UK that would have demonstrated advantages for our security and resilience in the face of major disruptions. This could be particularly true for the accession countries who from personal experience seem to be very interested in the way our systems work.
- A better developed understanding of how other member states work in the area of civil protection thus allowing the UK to leverage targeted support when, where and if needed
- A better cultural understanding of other member states and why things happen the way that they do thus allowing our responses to be as refined as they can be by making allowances for member states processes should the need arise.
- A bigger pool of personnel and resources to tackle emergencies and disasters within the EU. A case in point here would be the possible assistance the UK might have requested from the EU in the event of a major incident at London 2012.

How effective are the EU's delivery mechanisms? Would any changes make them more effective, and if so, which ones and why?

The European Commission's (EC) *Community Civil Protection Mechanism* which facilitates cooperation efforts in the event of a major disaster that overwhelms national response capabilities has been in place since October 2001 and was recently amended in November 2007. A steep increase in the number of major emergencies that required a response under *the Mechanism* in 2008 has highlighted some limitations to a successful response and raised questions regarding the strengthening of such arrangements for the future. In order to reinforce the EU's disaster response capacity a number of activities were launched including at study that used a scenario based methodology to investigate potential gaps in *the Mechanism* (Rademaekers *et al*, 2009).

Whilst the Study does identify some major gaps in EU disaster response and makes recommendations regarding the deployment of expertise and resources it did not consider in any depth how responders from different nations and organisations operate together and share information to manage extreme events. It is the contention here that a level of interoperability that goes beyond resources and tools to embrace the knowledge, information, doctrines, policy, protocols and working practices of those tasked with managing extreme crises and emergencies needs to be considered at pan European level to enable a more effective delivery when these ad hoc coalitions of responders a thrown together to deal with a major incident. The body of work in interoperability that is currently being undertaken in the UK and the high level of home grown expertise demonstrates forward thinking in this area and provides an opportunity for the UK to provide leadership and influence (particularly in the accession countries) in this area through greater participation in EU activities (exercises, modules etc) and education and training programmes

Moreover, within the European Commission (EC) itself, evidence presented to the House of Lords European Union Committee in the 2008 – 2009 session suggested that there was a need for better information and knowledge sharing between the various EC structures with regard to civil protection

and crisis management. Singled out by the report were the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC), the Joint Information Centre (SitCen) and NATO and the lack of cooperation, information sharing and coordination both within the EC and also with NATO. This was a disturbing conclusion that suggested that silo type structures within the EC and externally might be a problem that could potentially impact on the EU ability to provide a holistic, effective response to major emergencies in particular those that may compromise UK security. Again as we in the UK have been undertaking much work in information sharing and situational awareness and cooperation between responders it may be it in the national interest to become more involved and promote a less siloed approach within Europe.

Also noted in the report was the apparent lack of UK engagement and participation in EU emergency exercises and I refer you to my comments above.

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

Crises and emergencies whether discreet occurrences contained within national borders or trans-border events affecting a number of nation states are becoming more often than not, truly global events that have repercussions and consequences far beyond their point of origin as the Swine Flu pandemic, the Haiti earthquake, the ash cloud from the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland and wild fires in Europe clearly demonstrate. Such ripple effects also demonstrate that many environments (systems or sectors) can be impacted simultaneously and also emphasise the need to protect the civil population, critical infrastructure, develop continuity management systems for critical services and for crisis management strategy to maintain, sustain economic and ecological stability. Clearly then, as the effects of crises and emergencies become increasingly international in nature and the development of policy in many European member states focuses the notion of resilience the need to create a shared understanding through education and training programmes is essential if a high level of protection is to be afforded to civil populations affected by these types of events. Furthermore, the very nature of such events will usually require the coming together of various organisations and agencies from national governments to local first responders including the public, private, military and voluntary sectors to share resources and information in a distributed fast moving and changing environment. These *ad hoc* groups can present problems in terms of differing response frameworks, organisational structures, protocols, standards, cultural perceptions, security needs when sharing information and in some cases diplomatic issues particularly when convened at an international level.

In order to develop the capability to respond effectively to current and emerging global and regional crises, crisis managers and first responder agencies require a common leadership capability, interoperability of roles and functions to guarantee effective co-ordination, and standardized competence across agencies and member states. This creates the need for a standardised training approach for professionals, decision makers and volunteers at different levels. Crisis management training across Europe is diversified with various programmes running under different EU initiatives whilst more are delivered under the direct control of national governments, local authorities or a specific public service. Two key gaps are evident: high level competence development opportunities for pan European strategic leadership (gold command) and formalized and standardized training for operative level responders (bronze); the development of holistic cross-sectorial training curricula and the provision of key analytic, verification and simulation capabilities that are required for all essential decision makers and responders at EU level and in member states, in order to plan, organise, operate and monitor coordinated crisis management actions.

Crises and disasters are expensive both in terms of people's lives and economically, as EU COM (2010) 600 points out the number of crises and disasters globally has increased fivefold since 1975.

Factors influencing this trend have been climate change, increased populations combined with growing urbanisation, increased industrial activity, and environmental degradation and more recently terrorism has posed a major security threat to EU citizens. Increasing risks such as those mentioned have provided the basis for the EU (through changes made in the Lisbon Treaty) to strengthen its capacity to deal with crisis.

Added to this a CPM capability should be able to realise and deliver elements of a framework which should include the ability to anticipate, assess and prepare for crises and the effective response and recovery from crises coupled with constant review and evaluation to identify the lessons that may arise and the learning that may need to be actioned. However the final ESRIF report (2009) did identify deficits in EUs crisis management capability, suggesting that:

> *"Traditionally, Crisis Management forces are strongly operations–oriented and incident-oriented, with little need for long-term, strategy oriented planning. With the growing complexity of CM operations the need for a more systematic and long-term oriented planning becomes evident.*
> *Capability aspects comprise:*
> *• Preparatory actions that are to be conducted prior to an accident*
> *• Plans and Standards*
> *• Contingency and Backups*
> *• Supply (e.g. energy and water support) of the intervention forces*
> *• Security of to be deployed infrastructure*
> *• Risk Management"*

Ensuring that the EU has an appropriate and 'fit for purpose' CPM capability is a difficult and complex task given the diverse nature of its member States and regions. Implicit within the development of a capability is the need for high level education and training to (support the operational experience and knowledge) for those whose responsibility will be to effectively manage crises and emergencies.

The concept of integrated emergency management (IEM) has long been used by emergency responders in parts of Western Europe, the USA, Australia and New Zealand as a way of describing an aspirational, cohesive and comprehensive multi agency approach to dealing with crises and emergencies. More recently research into interoperability in the UK (Cole: 2010) has shown that despite such aspirations, the diverse nature of emergency organisations during extreme events quite often undermines the 'golden thread' that encircles the responding emergency services and other agencies and leads to a fragmentation of the response. This will almost certainly be true for the management of multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency events that involve many organisations and more than one member State.

Traditionally interoperability has tended to focus on the compatibility of the technology and equipment used by the responders. Efforts to improve interoperability have been primarily concerned with ensuring that one responder agency can communicate with another using secure, resilient and compatible information and communication technology (ICT) systems. However it is the contention here that interoperability is not just about technology but also about people, their organisations and processes and it is here that the UK could be influential in creating a shared understanding of these issues through education and training with emergency/crisis managers and first responders following a broadly similar core curriculum that will allow a standardised approach to the management of crises throughout the EU and its Member States.

Interoperability is a core element in the EUs drive towards an CPM capability. It has further been recognized that to achieve a significant degree of interoperability between collaborating partners

and responders from different organizations and countries it is not only sufficient to realize technical interoperability, but also to achieve co-operability, which means to successfully bridge differences in the concept of operations (CONOPS), organisations and culture. However, cultural bias, differentiated risk perception and communication, incompatible and insufficient equipment, different protocols and regulations, lack of coordinated structures, complicated communication procedures and inadequate information and communication systems, and poor resources management hamper the effective organisation and cooperation between crisis response teams at both horizontal and vertical interactions[1]. There is an urgent need to adapt EC and member state structures of all kinds to facilitate a frictionless collaboration of response teams on all levels (bronze, silver, gold). This includes interoperability on the technical, cognitive and organisational level. In the management of crises and disasters cooperation is not just the exchange of data between responding organisations and limited to the technical dimension of simply tying systems together rather it is the ability of responding organisations and their personnel to understand and appreciate the implications of sharing and shared knowledge and information, of working effectively as a coherent team and of valuing the different perspectives that diverse collaboration can bring. By contributing our knowledge and expertise to the development of greater interoperability in Europe the UK can limit the effects that crisis and disasters may have, ensure greater security and keep our citizens safe. In short I feel we need to get involved more.