

Brussels,
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Dear Lord Roper,

Thank you for sending us your Report "Civil Protection and Crisis Management in the European Union".

In line with the Commission's decision to encourage National Parliaments to react to its proposals to improve the process of policy formulation, we welcome this opportunity to respond to your comments. I enclose the Commission's reply and hope you will find this a valuable contribution to your own deliberations.

I look forward to developing our policy dialogue further in the future.

Yours sincerely,



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Vice-President of the European Commission

Lord Roper
Chairman of the European Union Select Committee
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COMMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AN OPINION FROM THE HOUSE OF LORDS

THE CIVIL PROTECTION AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Commission welcomes the interest that the House of Lords is showing in the work of the Community Civil Protection Mechanism (the Mechanism). The Commission notices that the report the Commission has been invited to comment on relates to the implementation of the Council Decision of 23 October 2001 establishing the said Mechanism.

Regarding the coordination between the Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) which is entrusted with the implementation of the Council Decision establishing the Mechanism and NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), the Commission has the following remarks:

1. The only relations which have been established so far between NATO and the Council of the EU are based on the "Berlin Plus" arrangements. This framework does not cover relations between the MIC and the EADRCC, and a unanimous decision by the Council would be required to authorise the establishment of such relations.
2. The MIC and the EADRCC have similar functions, but there are also important differences in the way the two operate. On the one hand, the EADRCC is part of an essentially military organisation, whose members are not the same as the EU Member States and which focuses mostly on emergencies within its mandate area. In contrast the Mechanism is implemented by a civilian organisation and has a world-wide mandate, which enables it to respond to requests for assistance from any country inside and outside the EU. Moreover, there are important differences in the type of services offered by both systems, with the MIC facilitating coordination both at headquarters level and on site through the despatch of small expert teams. Finally, the Commission may also provide financial support to the Member States for the transportation of their civil protection assistance.

3. Cooperation between organisations active in the response to a specific disaster is essential to avoid wasteful duplication of resources and ensure an efficient provision of assistance to affected countries. The Commission has therefore taken a number of initiatives to promote cooperation with NATO's EADRCC. This subject has been addressed at several occasions by the relevant Council Working Party (PROCIV). Given the lack of unanimity on the appropriate level of coordination between the MIC and the EADRCC, no overall approach for MIC-EADRCC cooperation has been agreed. At the request of the Commission, however, the PROCIV working party has recently given its agreement for the MIC to exchange information with the EADRCC when both the Mechanism and the EADRCC have been activated for the same emergency.

4. Should the conditions for a consensus for deepening the cooperation with the EADRCC be met in Council, the Commission is willing to propose activities to be included in this cooperation. This could cover *inter alia* information sharing, early warning and mutual participation in training, exercises and lessons-learned events.

Regarding the suggestion for rationalising the EU existing alert systems (point 19 on "coordinating the coordinators"), the Commission Communication¹ on Reinforcing the Union's Disaster Response Capacity sets as priorities to strengthen its capacity across policies and instruments, and to improve the inter-institutional collaboration. To this end, the Commission will soon make available a comprehensive report on the Community Capacity for Management of Crises addressing *inter-alia* exercises, training and alert systems.

From a more general perspective of the implementation of the Mechanism, the Commission would like to express its willingness to make full use of the Mechanism should the UK request assistance for dealing with major disasters or the imminent threat thereof.

¹ COM(130)2008 final