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INFORMATION NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations
Subject: EU Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements
– CCA exercise 2010 (CCAEX10) - Draft Evaluation Report

INTRODUCTION

Delegations will find herewith the draft Evaluation Report for this year's Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements exercise, CCAEX10, which took place between 27 and 29 September 2010.

This report is based on the comments made by the players of the directly affected Member States (**DELETED**), the Council Secretariat, the involved Commission services during the hot-wash evaluation meetings on 29 September 2010, on feedback from the involved EU Agencies and on the consolidated written contributions from the four exercise evaluators.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

1. With some effort EU Institutions and Member States are technically able to cooperate in crisis response mode in the framework of CCA. However, it is questionable whether CCA in its current configuration is really the politically agile tool required by the EU as a whole to respond quickly and adequately to a serious crisis situation.
2. The exercise showed that a well-defined crisis framework with established and known information channels is essential to allow for swift crisis response.
3. Continuous efforts to raise the awareness of all involved actors regarding their respective roles in the CCA context are needed.
4. The Support Group should focus more strongly on identifying policy issues for which no formal procedures exist but where EU level crisis response is nevertheless needed . This requires an enhancement of inter-institutional consultation and cooperation as well as closer involvement of with Member States.
5. The role of the Steering Group role as a unique forum for substantial policy discussions and arbitration in a crisis situation could be further developed.
6. Media communication aspects remain central to the CCA. The consultation process between the different institutional actors is now well-established and worked smoothly.
7. The CCA webpage proved very useful as the central interface for all actors but serious work is needed to make it more usable and user-friendly.
8. There is need to review the CCA and its Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in order to adapt them to the institutional framework introduced by TFEU.

MEETING GENERAL EXERCISE OBJECTIVES ?

1. To verify the capacity of the arrangements to respond quickly and efficiently to a crisis

The triggering of the CCA was considered to provide an added value in terms of quick crisis response from an institutional as well as from an organisational point of view. It allowed for quick coordination within a defined framework with established and known information channels. In addition, it contributed to raising the awareness of all involved actors as to their specific responsibilities in the given crisis situation.

Meetings of the CCA Support Group were convened in a "play mode", i.e. without announcing the timing before the start of the exercise as in previous years. The communication on these meetings by means of SMS, e-mail and the CCA webpage worked well and allowed in general to gather the actors in time for the meetings. The duration of these meetings was deemed appropriate.

The quick succession of meetings - at Council Secretariat as well as at Commission level - particularly on day 2 of CCAEX10 was considered realistic and necessary. It was noted that in a real-life crisis situation a Steering Group meeting might have been required earlier than actually undertaken during the exercise. This would have allowed for a timely consideration of some particularly urgent core questions (e.g. whether to restrict travel within the EU, whether to "export" medical treatment or "import" sick persons, whether to impose quarantine etc.).

EU SITCEN should aim at providing rapid situational awareness in an evolving crisis situation as well as indications about possible evolutions in order to facilitate the work of the Presidency and directly affected Member States in the consultation phase prior to the possible triggering of the CCA Emergency Mode. EU SITCEN should, in general, be proactive in advising on the potential use of the CCA and its implications.

2. To verify the role of the different groups of actors asked to provide technical support and advice as well as political insight and guidance in a CCA context

The roles played by the different actors involved proved broadly adequate. However, a need to be able to quickly identify and alert the right persons with expertise in a given sector-specific policy area, was identified.

CCA Support Group

The Support Group fulfilled its task by providing all those involved with an overview of the available policy instruments and means.

The Support Group had a comprehensive look at the available EU instruments which could be used to address the crisis. However, stronger input in some specific areas would have been welcomed by Member States, including the identification of policy issues where Member States' concerted actions were needed even though no formal EU competencies exist.

The efficiency and coherence of discussions at Support Group level should be enhanced. This would allow for cross-cutting discussions on overlapping policy issues. To achieve this, better mechanisms for inter-organisational preparatory work will be required. Early awareness of officials who should attend Support Group meetings about issues at stake would enable them to contribute in a constructive and concerted way to the discussion. Moreover a closer inter-institutional cooperation is desirable regarding the drafting of the outcome of Support Group meetings. And finally, it was suggested that a more active involvement of the Presidency and the Member States' representatives in the Support Group meeting could be desirable¹.

CCA Steering Group

All directly affected Member States were represented at Permanent Representative level in the Steering Group meeting. The group was able to provide the Presidency with input on policy issues requiring EU action that was later on used to produce the Proposal for Action, presented to COREPER. A more in-depth discussion on certain priority policy questions might have been beneficial and helpful in developing more coherent and consistent policy actions across the EU.

COREPER

The result of CCAEX10 was presented to COREPER by the Presidency at the beginning of its regular session on 29 September 2010 as an information point. In order to raise awareness of Permanent Representatives, future Presidencies could consider having a real discussion on the "Proposal of Action" prepared by the CCA Steering Group in COREPER

¹ It should be noted that this observation is not explicitly in conformity with the CCA SOP.

3. To test the adequacy of CCA information flows

The fact that a combination of CCA webpage, SMS, e-mail was used for communication was judged positive and helpful for following the exercise. The information exchange between Presidency, directly affected Member States, Council Secretariat, and Commission, was generally adequate throughout the exercise even if some Member States noticed that not all participants at a national level had received all e-mail and SMS messages. To this end EU institutions, Permanent Representations and Capitals should improve internal information flows so as to ensure awareness of CCA procedures and adequate situational awareness in a CCA situation.

The telephone-conference organised between the Presidency and Member States to decide on the triggering of the CCA faced some technical problems which should be addressed.

The Situation Reports form on the CCA webpage was used by some Member States, others preferred using their own format. A mandatory use of a fixed template should facilitate the compilation of EU-wide situation overviews throughout a crisis.

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4. To test the applicable CCA Standard Operating Procedures

The recently revised CCA SOP provided for more flexible use of CCA provision and was been considered beneficial in this respect. For the first time, two Support Group meetings took place in the course of the exercise. This was judged positive. The second meeting built upon the discussion on the previous day and allowed for an improved preparation of the ensuing Steering Group meeting. The importance of stringent management of Support Group meetings and pre-meetings has been highlighted.

Notwithstanding the above, the exercise underscored the need for further revision of the CCA SOP in order to take into account the institutional changes resulting from the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. The implications of foreign powers and the fact that military means could have been deployed to counter the CBRN threat requires the involvement of EAS structures, hence a possible role for the High Representative. Likewise, the possible role of the President of the European Council in a CCA context should be looked into.

In a crisis depicted in CCAEX10 it is not inconceivable that the Solidarity Clause referred to in Article 222, TFEU, could have been invoked by a Member State, implying a legal obligation by other Member States to assist. However, the implementing mechanism foreseen in the Solidarity Clause has yet to be elaborated. As long as this remains the case the invoking of the Solidarity Clause was thus have to be met by ad-hoc arrangements to be developed in the course of the crisis.

SPECIFIC CCAEX10 AIMS

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2. To test media aspects in a CCA situation, particularly as regards national public opinions' perceptions of the EU's handling of the crisis

Media communication on the crisis was given a high priority during the exercise. Spokespersons of the Presidency, the Council Secretariat and the Commission worked closely together. They consulted each other in a timely manner on the simulated Joint Press Releases. The communication strategy aimed at conveying coherent EU messages and covered diverse aspects of the crisis.

Press "lines to take" were regularly updated and published in the Information Sharing Forum. These were intended to serve as a common reference for spokespersons of Member States and their Permanent Representations for any requests made by media about the ongoing crisis. Press "lines to take" were considered well-prepared, helpful and a useful source to find appropriate wording for the purpose of media communication.

Previous CCA exercises have already highlighted that rapid and coherent crisis communication is of the essence in any successful EU-wide crisis management. To this end the importance of a high-level agreement on key public messages has been identified. During CCAEX10 the Steering Group considered the master messages suggested to them by the spokespersons of the Presidency, the Council's Press Office and the Commission's spokesperson and endorsed these. These master messages were subsequently attached to the Proposal for Action, which the Presidency submitted to COREPER.

Further effort is necessary to raise awareness, notably within Member States, of the EU capacities in support of crisis management. For instance, in the future, workshops on the EU crisis management capacities could be organised.

EXERCISE PLANNING PROCESS

Planning format and methods

The composition and size of the team were considered as very good, comprising all relevant actors needed for the exercise preparation. Having a dual Presidency did not have negative implications

for the planning process. The integration of representatives from the “host state” Poland seemed to be indispensable to make the scenario more realistic and to take into account the particularities of the relevant Member State. The inclusion of possible “host states” in the preparation of future exercises was strongly recommended. Including the two future Presidencies by asking them to contribute with evaluators proved useful and should be pursued as a rule from the start of the exercise planning process.

The regularity and numbers of meetings (more or less a monthly meeting starting in November 2009 until July 2010 with a last meeting taking place in September) also seemed adequate. Documentation support for the Coordination Team members and the support provided by experts were considered to be excellent. In particular, the participation of EU Agencies was highly pertinent and should be further pursued. As regards the work within the Coordination Team and the organisation of its meetings, it was judged that these reflected a high degree of professionalism and the necessary flexibility to react to upcoming needs. The mandate of the Coordination Team was judged to be successfully fulfilled. Finally, the communication in-between meetings was considered appropriate.

As concerns the workload of Coordination Team members, it is recommended that EU SITCEN indicates clearly from the start of the planning process the resources and amount of time that will be needed to cope with the workload of exercise planning, its conduct and evaluation.

Information provided to Member States during the planning process and the communication with them during the planning process was considered good.

It is worth undertaking a cost-benefit analysis for the overall effort invested both by EU institutions and Member States in the preparation of CCA exercises; more targeted and selective exercises could be considered instead.

Main Scenario Requirements

The events described in the scenario were of sufficient political consequence to justify the triggering of the CCA. Choosing a big sporting event as background for a bioterrorist attack provided a suitable background in terms of e.g. media attention, travel activities, vulnerability of locations, presence of nationals from many different Member States.

Generally speaking, the scenario was considered to strike the right balance between realism and the need to address specific exercise requirements. In the view of some Member States, however, the scenario developments were not realistic enough especially for what concerns public health aspects. Detailed exercise scenarios could benefit from building on sector-specific expertise at an early stage.

The scenario provided a possibility to exercise internal bodies of directly affected Member States and allowed the different players to reply to injects according to national and sector-specific circumstances.

The external element added a sense of realism and allowed to investigate and compare reactions at internal borders on the one hand and on external borders on the other.

Member States had in advance been asked how strongly they wanted to be affected in the main policy areas affected by the crisis. Some Member States considered that their expectations were not entirely fulfilled by the way in which this has been implemented in the exercise play.

The exercise was played as an event-driven exercise, during which injects, i.e. country-specific messages, were sent via e-mail to the directly affected Member States. These messages simulated messages from national authorities to the exercise players. The majority of directly affected Member States felt that an element of interactivity, i.e. reactions from the organizers' side to their action, was missing. In addition, a number of participants felt that they could have benefited from more circumstantial information linked to the scenario in order to give guidance to respective capitals on possible response measures. Finally, the attention was drawn to inconsistencies between the figures that were communicated and the subsequent disruptive effects and developments.

The role of "Directing Staff" (DISTAFF) could have been better defined given their weak involvement in the exercise.

A recommendation was made to distinguish clearly between EU SITCEN planners and players in order to avoid any risk of a biased approach to exercise discussions.

WEBPAGES USED DURING CCAEX10

The two Commission simulated events sites ARGUS and EUROPA contributed to the realistic feel of the exercise. The exercise-specific ARGUS page was considered to be an easy complementary means of information. That said, the use of three different websites (CCA webpage, ARGUS and EUROPA) was considered as too cumbersome and time-consuming. Even if in real-life crisis situations many more websites would be available as information sources with the ensuing problem of information overload, participants would have preferred using one single webpage, the CCA webpage. To this end it should be considered how relevant news from ARGUS could best be transferred and integrated into the CCA webpage in the future.

CCA webpage

Improvements compared to last year's version of the CCA webpage were noticeable. However, a clear need for further streamlining and clearer structures facilitating easier navigation and better overview was felt. A thorough review of various types of users' publishing rights should also prove useful.

As regards the information provided, the summary provided in the "Situation at-a-glance" module was considered helpful to obtain a quick update of main events and developments. Beyond that, there is a need for a regularly updated situation overviews which can be printed out.

The default refresh-functionality of the CCA webpage was considered too short (1 min.). Another recommendation made was to create an overview of all CCA "partners" and their 24/7 availability and post it on the CCA webpage.