



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 18 November 2011

17122/11

**PROCIV 151
JAI 842
COHAFA 110
RECH 375
TELECOM 180**

"I/A" ITEM NOTE

from: General Secretariat
to: Coreper/Council
No. prev. doc.: 12942/2/11 REV 2

Subject: Draft Council conclusions on an integrated approach to more effective risk, emergency and crisis communication
- Adoption

1. In the light of the outcome of the Presidency's workshop on an integrated approach to more effective crisis communication, held in Warsaw, Poland, on 19 and 20 July 2011, the Presidency drew up a set of draft Council conclusions.
2. These draft Council conclusions were examined by the Working Party on Civil Protection on 7 September and on 5 October. On 15 November 2011 the Working Party reached an agreement on the text set out in the Annex.
3. On this basis, the Permanent Representatives Committee is asked to invite the Council to adopt the conclusions set out in the Annex as an "A" item on the agenda.

Draft Council conclusions on an integrated approach to more effective risk, emergency and crisis communication

1. **Pointing out** that risk, emergency and crisis communication is essential in the field of civil protection in order to make citizens safer and more secure, by enabling them to recognise risks, to take precautionary measures to avoid risks, and to react swiftly to minimise risks; and limiting the consequences of emergencies;
2. **Reiterating** that responsibility for protecting their citizens lies primarily with the Member States, while the European Union's activities aim only to support and complement their actions;
3. **Acknowledging** that risk, emergency and crisis communication is the responsibility of Member States, and **considering** that risk, emergency and crisis communication is a process of interaction between different actors, including public authorities, international organisations, NGOs, citizens, the media, businesses and citizens' associations, including trade unions, if appropriate, at local, national, European and international level and that it covers, *inter alia*, warnings and alerts regarding actual or potential risks and threats and informing the public how to behave when such warnings or alerts are given, in terms of information essential for the implementation of civil protection measures;
4. **Pointing out** that risk, emergency and crisis communication measures could be further improved by an integrated approach which would encompass as appropriate all concerned actors and provide for effective coordination between them, and that such an integrated approach would enhance efficiency and coherence in risk, emergency and crisis communication;

5. **Having regard to** Council Decision 2007/779/EC, Euratom of 8 November 2007 establishing a Community Civil Protection Mechanism (recast)¹;
6. **Having regard to** Council Decision 2007/162/EC, Euratom of 5 March 2007 establishing a Civil Protection Financial Instrument, which remains in force until 31 December 2013²;
7. **Recalling** strategy papers, which address the need for more efficient and coherent risk and emergency management practices, such as the Stockholm Programme – An open and secure Europe serving and protecting citizens³, the Internal Security Strategy⁴ and the Council conclusions of 30 November 2009 on a Community framework on disaster prevention within the EU⁵;
8. **Having regard to** the obligations imposed on the Member States by the Directive of 7 March 2002 on universal service and users' rights relating to electronic communications networks and services (Universal Service Directive)⁶ with regard to activities in connection with the single European emergency call number "112";
9. **Recalling** the Council conclusions of 31 May 2010 on the Digital Agenda for Europe⁷ which endorsed proposals to promote the take-up of the internet in order to ensure inclusion in the digital society, namely through the extensive use of equipment and digital content and tools in education and learning, by enhancing digital literacy and skills and by improving accessibility for all, especially for persons with disabilities;

¹ OJ L 314, 1.12.2007, p. 9.

² OJ L 71, 10.3.2007, p. 9.

³ OJ C 115, 4.5.2010, p. 1.

⁴ 5842/2/10 REV 2; 16797/10, COM(2010) 673 final.

⁵ 15394/09.

⁶ Directive 2002/22/EC of 7 March 2002, OJ L 108, 24.4.2002, p. 51, as amended by Directive 2009/136/EC of 25 November 2009, OJ L 337 of 18.12.2009, p. 11.

⁷ 10130/10.

10. **Recalling** the Tampere Convention on the provision of telecommunication resources for disaster mitigation and relief operations, the Council conclusions of 2 December 2010 on Host Nation Support⁸, the Council conclusions of 3 June 2010 on psychosocial support in the event of emergencies and disasters⁹, the Council conclusions of 4 June 2009 on civil protection awareness raising¹⁰, and the Council conclusions of 6 December 2007 on the development and establishment of Early Warning Systems in the EU¹¹;
11. **Noting** the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹², and the Verona Charter¹³; and **emphasising** the importance of providing fast and effective information to people in areas at risk or in which an emergency has arisen, including those who are particularly vulnerable; and **reaffirming** the European Parliament Resolution of 4 September 2007¹⁴, which stresses the need to take special care in cases of natural disasters of the specific needs of people with disabilities in all actions undertaken using the Civil Protection Mechanism;
12. **Considering** that action can be taken only if information regarding the existence of a risk or threat is obtained on a timely basis, conveyed transparently and consistently, and circulated in a proper and balanced way;

⁸ 15874/10.

⁹ 9838/10.

¹⁰ 9976/09.

¹¹ 15473/07; the conclusions take account of the outcome of the Seminar on Early Warning Systems in the European Union.

¹² Adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 December 2006.

¹³ Declaration of the participants in the Consensus Conference held in Verona on 8-9 November 2007 in the framework of the European co-financed project: "Rescuing Injured Disabled Persons in case of Disasters – Civil Protection's Challenge in the Challenge".

¹⁴ P6_TA(2007)0362.

13. **Considering** that EU citizens travelling abroad frequently attribute their lack of sense of security to unfamiliarity with the risks and threats specific to the country in question, cultural differences, and lack of knowledge of the local language and alarm signals;
14. **Pointing out** that technical measures (including modern technologies) which serve to ensure more efficient and effective communication of risks and threats between public authorities, the general public and the media, are an essential component of risk, emergency and crisis communication;
15. **Recognising** that the Member States use different risk, emergency and crisis communication methods depending on the scale and type of risk or threat and national experiences and conditions, taking into account conventional and modern technologies and other information channels, including conventional and interactive media (such as social media) and specific local solutions;
16. **Pointing out** the transboundary nature of many risks and threats, their scale and diversity and the need for cooperation at EU level;
17. **Taking note** of the deliberations at the Presidency workshop on an integrated approach to more effective crisis communication held on 19-20 July in Warsaw, Poland;

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18. Invites the Member States to:

- (a) take steps to ensure an integrated approach to risk, emergency and crisis communication at national, European and international level, taking account of cultural, social, linguistic, economic and technical factors, in order to enable citizens to be better prepared for potential emergency and thus minimise the possible harm; and to increase the effectiveness of public notifications and alarm procedures, and thereby enable protection activities to be carried out efficiently;
- (b) take steps to eliminate barriers to risk, emergency and crisis communication with regard to persons who are particularly vulnerable;
- (c) conduct a dialogue with the public and take other steps to provide appropriate information and guidance so as to improve preparedness for, and resilience to, risk or emergency; and take steps to enhance knowledge on risk and emergency management systems, including communication, through various form of education or training;
- (d) promote dialogue with the media, businesses, citizens' associations including trade unions, if appropriate, and NGOs in activities aimed at increasing the effectiveness of risk, emergency and crisis communication;
- (e) further develop risk and emergency awareness based on modern technologies and interactive information channels such as social media, bearing in mind the need to choose the technology which is best suited to the cultural, social, linguistic, economic risk and technical conditions prevailing in each Member State, with a view to making the exchange of information more resilient, effective and efficient; promote the development of information networks based on coordination between different actors;

- (f) promote the study and development of modern technologies suitable for use in risk, emergency and crisis communication including interactive information channels such as social media, in particular by stepping up cooperation with scientific centres and the private sector;
- (g) make practical use of technologies, including satellite-based technologies, for the transmission of both information on risks and threats and instructions on how to behave in the event of emergencies, incorporating such technologies into Member States' warning and alert systems, and using these to monitor risks and threats, model likely emergency scenarios and identify areas at risk;
- (h) share experiences and good practices relating to an integrated approach to risk, emergency and crisis communication with other Member States and the Commission;
- (i) take account of the need for an efficient information flow between the intervention teams deployed abroad and the host nation recipients;
- (j) raise awareness of the single European emergency call number "112" and the proper use of existing emergency call numbers and where possible provide special solutions for particularly vulnerable persons¹⁵;
- (k) seek to ensure that sufficient radio spectrum is made available for public safety, civil protection and disaster relief and address the need for a co-ordinated approach to radio spectrum and technology so that wireless communication systems can operate effectively and without harmful interference, particularly in border regions and when operational services from different countries and regions are required to act together in case of an emergency;

¹⁵ According to Art 26(6) of the Universal Service Directive 2002/22/EC, as amended by Directive 2009/136/EC of 25 November 2009, OJ L 337 of 18.12.2009, p. 11, "Member States shall ensure that citizens are adequately informed about the existence and use of the single European emergency call number "112", in particular through initiatives specifically targeting persons travelling between Member States".

19. Calls upon the Commission to:

- (a) initiate a process of exchanging good practices and experiences between players within the framework of an integrated approach to risk, emergency and crisis communication;
- (b) take steps to identify problems in communication between services involved in civil protection response in international civil protection missions under the Civil Protection Mechanism;
- (c) take steps to identify available modern technologies and interactive information channels such as social media, including space-based telecommunications and systems utilising space-derived geospatial information, which could enhance risk, emergency and crisis communication effectiveness;
- (d) promote, together with the Member States, the integration of emerging technologies into risk, emergency and crisis communication through research and development, testing, implementation and evaluation; and promote involvement of the end users in the process;
- (e) within the framework of the Mechanism, facilitate mutual contacts between experts in the use of modern technologies in risk, emergency and crisis communication and raise awareness of the use of modern technologies and interactive information channels such as social media for risk and emergency communications;
- (f) consider aspects of risk, emergency and crisis communication in the development of reference scenarios and contingency plans;

- (g) by the end of 2013, review the use of modern technologies and interactive information channels such as social media in risk, emergency and crisis communication by drawing up a report, to be regularly updated, describing current achievements and good practices in that area, with the aim of achieving an integrated approach to risk, emergency and crisis communication within the EU for actions both inside and outside the EU;

20. Invites the Member States and the Commission to make appropriate use of existing EU financial programmes for implementing these proposals, without prejudice to the negotiations on the future financial framework.
