



Press Release

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EU disaster response coordination timely and effective, say Auditors

The EU's emergency response to natural disasters and major disease outbreaks around the world is generally well-coordinated, according to a new report from the European Court of Auditors.

The auditors examined the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), which is managed by the European Commission and which exists to coordinate responses to disasters worldwide. They looked at three recent international disasters for which the Mechanism had been activated: the 2014 floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa between 2014 and 2016, and the Nepal earthquake in 2015.

They concluded that the Commission's management, through its 24/7 Emergency Response Coordination Centre, had been broadly effective. The activation of the UCPM had, in general, been timely and the EU civil protection teams had helped to coordinate the participating countries' teams on the ground. This work had been made more effective by the widespread sharing of information.

The auditors found that coordination among Commission departments, as well as with other EU and non-EU bodies, had been inclusive. The Commission had also respected the United Nations' overall lead, and had taken steps to ensure a smooth transition into the recovery phase of the disasters.

"When a disaster occurs, the reaction must be swift. Sound disaster management saves lives, and effective coordination among different responders – as we found here – is critical to the successful preparation for and response to disasters," said Hans Gustaf Wessberg, the member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the report. "The Commission's coordinating role and its round-the-clock crisis centre are good examples of value added by European cooperation."

The auditors did find areas for further improvement. They made the following recommendations to the Commission:

The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the special report adopted by the European Court of Auditors. The full report is on www.eca.europa.eu.

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- identify ways to gain additional time in the early stages of disasters and during the selection and deployment of EU civil protection teams;
- develop the disaster communication and information platform to improve the overview of assistance provided and requested, to allow priorities to be followed up better and to make it more user-friendly;
- improve coordination on the ground by improving reporting, working with experts from the Humanitarian Aid directorate, and further involving EU Delegations; and
- improve reporting and accountability by automating the production of statistics and indicators.

In addition, for future emergencies with public health consequences, the Commission should liaise with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control to assess how to optimise arrangements for deploying disease experts outside the EU.

Notes to Editors

The European Union Civil Protection Mechanism was first established in 2001; its aim is to promote swift and effective operational cooperation between national civil protection services. It has two main objectives: strengthening cooperation between the EU and participating countries (Member States plus six non-EU countries) and facilitating coordination in the field of civil protection to improve the effectiveness of systems for preventing, preparing for and responding to disasters.

The Commission's Emergency Response Coordination Centre works round the clock as a crisis monitoring and coordination platform. It links the participating states, the country affected and the experts in the field, distributing information and facilitating cooperation between civil protection and humanitarian aid teams. It is supported by a web-based alert and notification system.

A voluntary pool of relief teams, experts and equipment from EU countries is kept on standby and made available as soon as needed for EU civil protection missions all over the world. Since October 2014, ten countries have committed resources to the pool.

Special Report No 33/2016: "Union Civil Protection Mechanism: the coordination of responses to disasters outside the EU has been broadly effective" is available in 23 EU languages.