

Presented for discussion at the Closing Seminar of the Major Project on Prevention of Natural and Technological Disasters in Helsinki 27-28 May 2002

REPORT OF THE MAJOR PROJECT ON PREVENTION OF NATURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL DISASTERS

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1. Introduction

The application for “The Major Project on Prevention of Natural and Technological Disasters” was supported by the Management Committee in its meeting in October 2000. According to the application the aim of the project is to co-ordinate sub-projects and provide Core Group with Secretary General and possibly other experts to organize the Core Group work. Much of the activities had already started as sub-projects of the Major Project on Prevention during the first period of Community Action Program in years 1997-1999.

Establishment of a Core Group and a Secretary General to co-ordinate the work of the Major Project was launched in order to ease the member states’ participation in the sub-projects and to increase the overall effectiveness of the work done in the sub-projects.

The tasks of the core group and the lead country providing the secretary general was in the application described as following:

- to take lead of the main umbrella project
- to set up and establish core group of the main project and to the use of sub-projects
- to chair the core group and to provide it with secretary general and expert work
- to coordinate project to achieve adopted proper acceptable objectives
- to carry out eventually agreed tasks and work of sub-projects and
- to set up the final conclusions, recommendations and guidelines on the basis of results and concluding remarks of the sub-projects

Following countries have been participating in the work of the core group: Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden and United Kingdom. Ms Harriet Lonka from the Finnish Environmental Institute has been appointed as Secretary General of the Project.

The overall goal of the Major Project on Prevention was defined to contribute to prevention of risks and mitigating the effects in the event of a whole range of natural disasters and technological major incidents. The expected results of the projects were defined to try to set up principles and guidelines for the prevention of natural disasters and serious technological accidents covering the fields of risk assessment, flash floods

and fire safety. In this work use should be made of existing guidance at national, regional and local levels within the Community.

This report gives a description of project activities during coordination of Major Project on Prevention. The Progress Report of the first half of co-ordination of Major Project on Prevention was presented to the Management Committee of the Community Action Programme in the Field of Civil Protection on 18 October 2001.

2. Core Group Activities

a. Meetings

Core Group (CG) has had three meetings during the running of the project, first one on 16-17 October 2000, the second on 24 April 2001 and the third on 17 January 2002. All the Core Group meetings have taken place in Brussels.

The participants of the first Core Group meeting were: Mr Ulf Bjurman (S), Mr Steve Boddy (UK), Mr Fabrizio Colcerasa (I), Mr René Feunteun (F), Ms Agnieszka Kapciak (PL), Ms Harriet Lonka (FIN), Mr Jukka Metso (FIN), Mr Ernst Schulte (EU Commission), Mr Horst Siegmund (D) and Mr Helge Stamnes (NO).

The participants of the second Core Group meeting were: Mr Ulf Bjurman (S), Mr Steve Boddy (UK), Ms Mette Lindahl-Olsson (S), Ms Harriet Lonka (FIN), Mr Jukka Metso (FIN), Mr Ernst Schulte (EU Commission), Mr Horst Siegmund (D) and Mr Jürgen Wettig (EU Commission).

The participants of the third Core Group meeting were: Mr Björn Albinson (S), Mr Robert Hergat (F), Ms Harriet Lonka (FIN), Mr Stefano Marsella (I), Mr Jukka Metso (FIN), Mr Ernst Schulte (EU Commission), Mr Horst Siegmund (D) and Mr Helge Stamnes (NO).

Mr Metso has acted as a Chair of the Core Group meetings and Ms Lonka as their secretary.

b. Experiences of the Core Group work

The Core Group has in its meetings followed up the work of different sub-projects. As defined in the first meeting of the CG, an important role of the group has also been to supervise and guide the activities in sub-projects.

It is obvious that there has been a slight controversy among the different tasks of the Core Group. It must be kept in mind that member states are very sovereign in their decisions concerning the participation in the sub-projects. For the Core Group it has not always been easy to get involved in the work done in sub-projects. A question has even been

raised in the CG whether the group could at all take the role of supervising of the projects or was that merely a responsibility of the Management Committee itself.

Discussions in the Core Group on different projects and on issues, which are of interest in different member states have despite some controversies been very fruitful in supervising and guiding the activities of the Major Project on Prevention. Core Group has discussed thoroughly especially the fire prevention and risk assessment entities. On flash floods work have been done in the Commission to draw conclusions on earlier projects. This work was continued at JRC/Ispra. Flash floods issues have been discussed more thoroughly in the last meeting of the Core Group, where Mr Colombo from JRC/Ispra presented the work done on the conclusions at JRC.

3. Secretary General

a. General activities

The Secretary General of the Project has been working on a part-time basis. Till the end of May 2002 Secretary General, Ms Lonka, had used 134 working days for the Major Project activities. These activities have included:

1. Preparing for and acting as a secretary in the meetings of the Core Group
2. Working as a focal point for member states and different sub-projects
3. Organizing the lead country activities in Finland together with Mr Metso
4. Planning for the activities and new sub-projects together with member states' representatives
5. Following up and guiding the sub-contractor work

As part of the Secretary General duties Ms Lonka has visited some member states collecting information and attended seminars and meetings. She attended in the Workshop on Perspectives of European Disaster Management in Frascati, Italy on 22-24 February 2001. She gave there a presentation of Major Project on Prevention. She also attended the Green Week seminar on "Citizen and the Risks" on 25 April in Brussels, where she represented the Major Project on Prevention and described its activities to the seminar participants.

On 23 April 2001 Ms Lonka visited Home Office in London to collect information on fire prevention and risk assessment issues from the point of view of UK Rescue Services' planning and operation. On 25-26 June 2001 Ms Lonka visited the Departement of Bouches du Rhone, Southeastern France, and Emergency call center at Valabre.

On 16-19 April 2002 Ms Lonka visited Swedish Rescue Services Agency to discuss the future Fire Prevention project and its activities and "kick-off" at the Helsinki closing seminar for Major Project on Prevention and to collect feedback for the "Guidelines for Risk Assessment".

b. Participation in and follow up of the sub-projects

The responsibilities on follow-up and other discussions concerning the sub-projects with the representatives of member states have been divided between Secretary General, Ms Lonka, and Mr Jukka Metso from the Finnish Ministry of the Interior. This has been very practical, since as a PNNC Mr Metso holds keen contacts with representatives in different member states.

Ms Lonka has actively participated in the activities on the Risk Assessment sub-project. She has taken the responsibility for preparing the guidelines for use of risk assessment procedures in the field of civil protection in EU, the draft versions of which have been presented to the Core Group. Ms Lonka has also supervised the subcontractor work done for the Risk Assessment project.

On 22nd June 2001 Ms Lonka attended a meeting in Ispra together with Mr Schulte to discuss the possibilities of JRC to take the responsibility of making a conclusive report on flash flood activities completed so far under the Prevention Project.

4. Sub-contracting

One sub-contracting agreement has been signed under the Major Project on Prevention. The sub-contractor for the Risk Assessment sub-project has been Mr Seppo Koskinen from the Inherent Engineering Ltd. Mr Koskinen has made a long career in the process industry and based on that experience he has made background studies for the Prevention Project on industrial risk assessment procedures and their applicability to civil protection. During the second half of the Major Project on Prevention he has completed a study on applicability of a certain industrial risk assessment method, Seqhaz, to the municipal risk assessment.

5. Sub-projects

a. Risk Assessment

In the field of Risk Assessment sub-project certain activities had taken place during the first round of the Community Action Program. The main activities had been: The Finnish Report on risk assessment procedures (1998) and the Norwegian workshop on Risk assessment (1999) aiming at the elaboration of principles and guidelines for the use of risk assessment techniques. Other activities also linked to risk assessment sub-project during 1997-99 were the EUREGIO risk mapping project and the workshop on Safety Chain.

For the use of Core Group a list of conclusions and suggestions for further work in the field of Risk Assessment was compiled by the Secretary General. The list was based on

the Finnish Report and in the Oslo Workshop proceedings and it contained the following activity areas (not in prioritized order):

- 1 Detailed analysis of the present situation of the use of risk assessment methods in rescue services & developing needs
- 2 Possibilities to co-operate with industry, public authorities and insurance companies in developing the use of risk assessment
- 3 A Guide Book / Collection of best practices in risk assessment work in Europe
- 4 A Study to consider the need to establish common risk acceptance criteria
- 5 Integration of risk assessment work with other practices of emergency prevention, preparedness and response
- 6 A Guide Book on the use of GIS as a follow up tool in the R.A.
- 7 A book showing examples of municipalities carrying out follow up procedures to R.A.
- 8 A Guide Book “How to inform the public about risks and hazards in the community”

In the Core Group discussions, the Risk Assessment sub-project was recognized to be one of the priority areas of the Major Project on Prevention in years to come. In many countries lots of activity is going on to develop the use of risk assessments to ensure the safety of the inhabitants at a local level. Such countries are e.g. Finland, France, Norway and Sweden.

An idea of one larger project compiling e.g. the points 1,3 and 7 was put forward in the Core Group. Such a study should have three parts: analysis of the situation, best practices and case studies. Lots of weight was given to making the case studies, useful examples and risk mapping. Such a practical approach might be most useful from the EU member states' point of view.

On the other hand, also studying the usefulness of more sophisticated risk assessment methods (e.g. those used by industry) and their applicability to rescue services' needs at the local level was taken into account by the Core Group.

Establishing a common risk acceptance criteria for the European Union member states was not seen possible nor necessary as target of the work. There are lots of different regional approaches on this even inside the member states. One possible issue of interest might, however, be how risk acceptance is influenced by the awareness of people of different risks. There is probably a need to support the understanding of the importance of creating risk acceptance criteria in the local communities. To give support for such a development might be a reasonable aim for co-operation at the EU-level.

Less consensus was found on the question of combining the interests of the industry, insurance companies and public authorities (point 2). Insurance companies were seen as difficult partners, though very important e.g. from the data-collection point of view. About the co-operation of the authorities with insurance companies was again pointed out the different developments in different countries. There are differences both in the way data collection is done and in the use of the data.

What comes to the use of GIS, the Core Group noted that the time has probably not yet come for a guidebook in this field. There is still lots of basic work underway, e.g. the Maas-Rhine -project on mapping of risk information at a certain area.

The representative of the Civil Protection Unit's Seveso-group attended the second meeting of the Core Group and the discussions on further work on Risk Assessment. The important developments which had been taken place in the field of Risk Assessment in the Stresa workshop in May 2000 were notified. The aim of that workshop was to discuss a need for European standardization for risk assessment in the field of industry. The important result of Stresa was looking at risk assessment procedures comprehensively in different fields of industry, but though strictly as activity of operators.

In this second meeting Secretary General presented a paper "Draft guidelines for use of risk assessment procedures in the field of civil protection in EU". Also a short outline paper on co-operation between industry and rescue services compiled by a sub-contractor, Mr Koskinen, was presented.

It was pointed out that industry and insurance companies have made a lot of work to develop risk assessment procedures, which go beyond the demands set by legislation. Much of the information gained in this way in the field of industry could probably be made use of in the field of rescue services. The question was raised, whether risk assessment approaches used by industry could be modified and applied by municipal authorities in other areas of activity. On the other hand, a need for better information exchange between industry and the rescue services in scaling the risk estimations at a local communities was recognized.

In general it was stressed that Risk Assessment -subproject should be seen as a horizontal project connecting different sectoral approaches (flash floods, fires). Yet it was reminded that in this context risk assessment procedures are first and foremost seen as a tool for fire brigades. They can, though, make up an important way to connect the local planning with the industrial planning as well as prevention of and preparing for floods and other risks.

During the second half of the Major Project on Prevention activities on Risk Assessment sub-project was concentrated to compiling "Guidelines for use of risk assessment procedures in the field of civil protection in EU". An important part of this was the collection of "best practices" on use of risk assessment procedures in different member states.

b. Fire Prevention

The Fire Prevention sub-project had started in April 1999 with the first conference on fire safety for the European citizen held in Chester, England. The UK took the first initiative to make a project proposal on fire safety. This was taken over by Sweden, who proposed a project outline at the second Core Group meeting.

In discussions on Fire Prevention the Core Group was of the opinion that the conclusions of the Chester Workshop were not completely satisfactory. There was a need for prioritization of fire prevention topics between different countries. E.g. in the UK priority is in the community based fire prevention and issues concerning personal safety.

A draft for a project plan on Fire Prevention was presented by Sweden in the second core group meeting. In the introduction to the discussion Swedish representative, Ms Lindahl Olsson, pointed out that Chester Workshop 1999 had discussed all the relevant issues, but now these issues should be broken down to suitable entities for further studies. These entities could be:

1. Comparing fire statistics between member states
2. Comparing fire prevention demands on buildings during use
3. Comparing supervision and fire inspection and views member states have for this in the future

In general the Core Group was in the favour of the idea that statistics study could be the starting point for Fire Prevention –project. It was also pointed out that there are many different approaches for statistics in different countries and this fact should be taken into account in planning the project. The importance of fire investigation and the need to understand the cause of fires in order to target the preventive actions in the most effective way were also stressed.

Sweden agreed on refining the paper and distributing it for comments to different member states. At the same time interested member states should be contacted and asked to nominate their experts for further work on the project.

During the second half of the Major Project on Prevention, Sweden has refined the project proposal on Fire Prevention and has presented an application to the Commission for a Major Project on Fire Prevention on 10 May 2002. This project proposal is discussed in the Closing Seminar of the Major Project on Prevention in Helsinki on 27 May 2002.

c. Flash Floods

In years 1996-97 there had been three different projects on flash floods (Italy-Austria, Belgia-Holland, PREMO) all focused on preventive measures to prevent flash floods, especially concentrating on environmental friendly methods. These three have now been finalised. RESCDAM study, on the other hand, concentrated on studying the rescue action plans based on dam brake scenarios. The Commission was willing to restrict also the further work in this field to flash floods issues.

Ms Agnieszka Kapciak was working at the end of year 2000 in the Commission and made a summary and conclusions of PREMO project.

Till the second Core Group meeting there was two offers for drawing conclusions on the floods reports, one from the Finnish Environment Institute and another from JRC/Ispra. The Core Group was in favour of the idea of involving JRC/Ispra to the Prevention Project activities through this work. Mr Schulte and Ms Lonka visited Ispra in June 2001 to further discuss the practical arrangements and the all over structure of the work.

Mr Colombo from Ispra presented the preliminary results of the work done in JRC/Ispra on conclusions of flash floods projects in the third Core Group meeting. The final conclusions are presented in the Closing Seminar of the Major Project on Prevention in Helsinki on 27 May 2002.