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European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

European Disaster Risk Management

What is it?

The European Union is a safe place to live, but even here, natural hazards and human-induced disasters threaten people, property, environment and cultural heritage. Disaster risk management policies aim to tackle these risks through preventive, preparedness, response and recovery actions.

The EU develops policies that focus on prevention and the reduction of disaster risks as these actions will reduce the impact of adverse events. Increasing the resilience of infrastructure, ecosystems, society, and the economy of the EU is an important strand of disaster risk management work.

Why is this important?

In recent years, the EU has seen a wide range of adverse events that caused the devastation of human life, property, the environment and cultural heritage. In the EU, from 1980 to 2020, natural hazards affected nearly 50 million people and have cost Member States on average €12 billion per year.

The EU is expected to experience more extreme events and increased exposure and vulnerability to disasters. For instance, climate change is bringing along more extreme weather events, sea-level rise and changes in the geographical distribution of some infectious diseases.

Continued urbanisation and development in hazardous areas have been putting more people and wealth in harm's way. Urban settings amplify disaster risks such as floods, heatwaves or epidemics.

Environmental degradation in Europe and globally is reducing the capacity of ecosystems to protect us against the impact of disasters.

Recent years have also seen growing instability abroad, geopolitical tensions and diversification of hostile groups, all of which led to increased security threats such as terrorism, cyber and hybrid threats.

Against this complex backdrop, it is crucial to have arrangements in place for effective prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery from disasters.

How are we helping?

In the EU, protecting people, property, environment, and cultural heritage against multiple threats is primarily a national responsibility. However, the EU complements, supports, coordinates national action, and promotes cross-border cooperation on these matters.

A wide set of EU policies and funds aim to strengthen collective safety and resilience against adverse events. Under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, 27 EU countries and 8 other participating states regularly exchange information on disaster risks.

They also run exercises together and pool rescue teams and equipment that can be rapidly mobilised when a disaster overwhelms any other country in the world.

Mapping key disaster risks in Europe

A robust understanding of disaster risks is the first step towards addressing the risks effectively by framing risk management policies. This is why the European Commission regularly prepares overviews of natural and human-induced disaster risks that the EU faces (e.g., publications from 2014, 2017 and 2020).

Prevention and Preparedness Projects in Civil Protection

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism supports EU countries and participating states in disaster prevention and preparedness, providing single country and multi-country grants.

Single country grants are direct grants to national civil protection authorities, offering them technical assistance. National authorities prepare investments in disaster prevention and preparedness and feasibility studies and cost-benefit analyses.

Multi-country grants support consortia of civil protection stakeholders, including national and sub-national authorities, universities, NGOs, private sector and international organisations.

Since 2014, we have funded more than 149 projects.

Economics for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness

Actions to strengthen financial preparedness are needed to reduce the impacts of disasters on people, economies and government budgets. Beyond the financial aspects, prevention and preparedness actions also need to be combined with investments in green and resilient infrastructure.

Recent analytical work on the Economics for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness shows that the benefits of investment usually exceed the costs. They also unlock social and economic opportunities that have an advantage even if no disaster occurs.

Research and knowledge sharing

The Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre provides EU Member States and the disaster risk management community with an online repository of disaster-related data, research and project results and access to a range of networks and partnerships.

The Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network will further facilitate collection and sharing of knowledge and experience to improve prevention, preparedness and response to crises. It will also stimulate research and innovation in the sector and strengthen the links between disaster management and civil protection actors.

Peer reviews

A peer review of disaster risk management and civil protection arrangements provides a country or a region with a unique opportunity to reflect on its readiness to cope with hazards and identify ways of strengthening its broader prevention and preparedness system.

Prevention and preparedness missions (advisory missions)

Advisory missions offer tailor-made support and advice for a better response to the negative impacts of natural and human-induced hazards. Experts from EU Member and participating states are deployed upon request from a national government or the United Nations to support authorities across the world.

Enhancing international cooperation

Disaster risk management in the EU is closely linked to global initiatives, in particular, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

Although the European Commission is not a signatory to the Sendai Framework, it played a leading role in the international negotiations, supports EU Member State signatories and third countries in implementing the Agreement, and works to ensure EU action is coherent with the global agenda.

Facts & figures

Between 1980 and 2020, disasters affected nearly **50 million** people in Europe and caused economic losses of roughly **€12 billion** per year.

European Disaster Risk Management helps populations to better cope with disasters.

Disaster risk management considerations are incorporated into key EU policy areas, including health, environment, climate change adaptation, development, cohesion, agriculture, transport, energy, research, and innovation.