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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on the Environment,
Public Health and Consumer Protection

on solidarity and mutual assistance between the Member States
in the event of large-scale disasters and the establishment
at Community level of a European relief programme

Rapporteur: Mr Alain BOMBARD

PE 80.321/fin.

At its sitting of 18 April 1980 and 6 July 1981 the European Parliament referred the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr. Ghergo, Mr Giavazzi, Mr Sassano and Mr Lima (Doc. 1-111/80) and the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Combe, on behalf of the Liberal and Democratic Group (Doc. 1-364/81) pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection as the committee responsible.

At its meeting of 30 May 1980 the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection decided to draw up a report and appointed Mrs Fullet, rapporteur. Mrs Fullet was later replaced by Mr Bombard as rapporteur.

The Committee considered the draft report at its meeting of 22 September 1982. Following this meeting the rapporteur was requested to revise the document. The revised report was discussed at the meeting of 26 January 1984 and unanimously adopted.

The Committee decided to request the application of Rule 34 of the Rules of Procedure.

The following took part in the vote: Mr Collins, chairman; Mr Ryan, vice-chairman, Mrs Weber, vice-chairman; Mr Bombard, rapporteur; Mr Eisma (deputizing for Mrs Spaak), Mr Ghergo, Mr Muntingh, Mrs Schleicher, Dr Sherlock and Mrs Van Hemeldonck.

The report was submitted on 30 January 1984.

The deadline for the tabling of amendments to this report appears in the draft agenda for the part-session at which it will be debated.

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The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement :

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the solidarity and mutual assistance between the Member States in the event of large-scale disasters and the establishment at Community level of a European disaster relief programme

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the motion for a resolution on solidarity and mutual assistance between the Member States in the event of large-scale disasters (Doc. 1-111/80),
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution on the establishment at Community level of a European disaster relief programme (Doc. 1-364/81),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection (Doc.
- A. whereas bilateral and multilateral agreements already exist between most of the Member States, but whereas their scope is limited,
- B. whereas only a few Member States possess all the resources and equipment required to deal with a large-scale disaster,
- C. considering that mutual aid between Member States and the strengthening of solidarity between them is one of the objectives towards which the Community must strive,
- D. having regard to the large number of national and international organizations which exist to provide aid in the event of disasters,

- E. whereas duplication of effort and lack of planning must be avoided at all costs so that relief may be coordinated,
1. Emphasizes strongly that with respect to certain disasters which are foreseeable, there is a need for forward planning in order to lessen the risks and deal effectively with the consequences;
 2. Notes that although the nature of disasters may differ greatly, the organizational and communications problems which arise are in many cases identical;
 3. Considers that the aim of outside intervention must be to enable optimal use to be made of local resources and to provide such expertise and equipment as may be unavailable on the spot;
 4. Stresses that outside aid must not be seen as a substitute for local intervention and that such aid must not impose any burden on the local community; to this end, aid teams should provide for their own needs (drink, food, sanitation, accommodation) so that under no circumstances are they a burden on a region experiencing serious disruption;
 5. Takes the view that a strict definition of responsibilities and allocation of roles must be made as soon as outside aid arrives and that in most cases, this should be the task of the local authorities;
 6. Calls on the Commission to submit proposals for the coordination of aid between Member States ;
 7. Recommends that permanent links should be established between the authorities responsible for civil defence in the Member States as well as with the various international organizations involved in disaster relief;
 8. Recommends that the Commission should also encourage an active policy of cooperation between Member States through joint exercises, regular exchanges of specialist personnel and the organization of seminars at European level;
 9. It is also important for the Commission to undertake and encourage as much standardization of materials and equipment between Member States as possible, to ensure the interchangeability necessary for joint use;
 10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and Council of the European Communities.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTINTRODUCTION

1. This report is based on two motions for resolutions tabled pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure. The first, tabled on 17 April 1980 by Mr GHERGO, Mr GIAVAZZI, Mr SASSANO and Mr LIMA (Doc. 1-111/80), calls for a proposal for a directive setting out norms for aid and support which Member States would be required to make available when any Community country was hit by a large-scale disaster. It also recommends that the Commission should adopt appropriate provisions to establish permanent liaison between the specialized centres and agencies existing in the individual Member States. The second motion for a resolution, tabled by Mr COMBE on 3 July 1981, calls for the introduction of a European relief programme.

2. The report only covers emergency aid since medium and long-term aid has already been dealt with in Mr CECOVINI's report on medium and long-term aid to disaster-stricken regions (Doc. 1-387/83).

3. This report does not cover aid to third countries, although this is a problem which might usefully be examined at a later date.

CURRENT SITUATION WITH REGARD TO MUTUAL AID BETWEEN MEMBER STATES

4. Following a Council meeting of Health Ministers in 1978 devoted to mutual emergency aid, the Commission has been studying a proposal from the Federal German Government that rules should be laid down under Article 84 of the EEC Treaty for cooperation, mutual assistance and unhindered border crossings in search and rescue operations for aircraft in frontier regions.¹

5. The Commission recently published a survey entitled 'Mutual health assistance measures to be applied in the event of disasters or particularly serious accidents or diseases' (EUR 8271).

¹ See Written Question No. 2389/82 by Mrs VON ALEMANN
OJ No. C 197, 25.7.1983, p. 24

6. In its answer to a written question from Mr ROGALLA¹, the Commission indicated that it was 'actively seeking ways of setting up arrangements for mutual assistance between Member States in the event of disasters or serious accidents with consequences for public health. Meetings of experts had been held and in due course the Commission intended to present proposals to the Council'.

7. A number of bilateral and multilateral agreements between Member States already exist :

(i) Belgium

Belgium has concluded an agreement with France for mutual aid in the event of nuclear accidents. A convention on civil defence has been concluded with Luxembourg, and an agreement for mutual aid in the event of disasters or serious accidents has been concluded with the Federal Republic of Germany.

(ii) Denmark

Since 1956, Denmark has had an agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany concerning the waiving of border formalities where aid is being given in the event of an accident.

(iii) Federal Republic of Germany

The Federal Republic of Germany has signed a convention with France and Luxembourg concerning disasters and/or serious accidents. An agreement has been concluded with Belgium (see above).

(iv) France

A convention has been concluded with the Federal Republic of Germany (see above). France is linked to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg by a convention concerning (a) the treatment of burns and (b) fires.

(v) Ireland

Ireland has concluded unofficial agreements with the authorities in Northern Ireland for mutual aid in the event of fires, etc.

(vi) United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is linked to the Republic of Ireland by a bilateral agreement.

¹ Written Question No. 1451/82
OJ No. C 12, 17.1.1983, p. 16

(vi) Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has concluded agreements with France, Belgium and the Federal Republic of Germany (see above).

(vii) Italy and the Netherlands

Neither country has concluded any bilateral agreements although the matter is now being studied in the Netherlands where the government is seeking to conclude an agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany and Belgium.

8. Each Member State has its own methods for dealing with natural disasters and accidents; some make no distinction between the two, whereas others divide responsibility between various bodies (army, civil defence).

9. In some Member States, it is possible to make fairly accurate forecasts as to when and where such disasters may occur. For example, forest and brush fires in the Mediterranean regions are depressingly common during the summer months. Other disasters, such as earthquakes, avalanches and volcanic eruptions, while more difficult to foresee, usually occur in certain well-defined regions. A policy of permanent readiness can do much to mitigate the consequences of such disasters.

10. As far as accident prevention measures are concerned (for example, safety measures at nuclear plants, dams, airports, etc.), it is clear that responsibility lies with the national governments. However, an active policy of cooperation involving joint exercises, the exchange of specialist personnel and the organization of seminars at European level is to be encouraged so that each Member State may benefit from the others' experience.

NEED FOR COORDINATION AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

11. When a major disaster or accident occurs, the local authorities are faced with a number of problems: organizing searches for survivors and, in some cases, providing temporary shelter for them, provision of emergency first-aid and the evacuation of injured to specialized centres, possible breakdown of telecommunications systems, restoring essential services - water, sewage, communications.

12. In most major disasters, however well-organized the local authorities are, there will not be sufficient manpower or supplies available to tackle the problems referred to above in the correct order and with optimal speed.

13. In some cases, aid from outside sources, which is usually immediately forthcoming, may prove inefficient because of (a) dispersion or duplication of efforts, (b) problems of communication between foreign teams and the local population, (c) lack of coordination and definition of roles, (d) lack of definition of responsibilities and/or accountability and (e) extra needs created by the intervention teams which make demands on an already overburdened infrastructure.

14. In order to avoid these problems and maximize the effectiveness of outside aid, it would be desirable for some form of centralized agency to be set up to act as a sort of clearing house or two-way information centre. Member States would keep the centre informed of the type of aid they would be in a position to provide in the event of a disaster (expertise, specialist medical teams, emergency shelters etc.).

In the event of a disaster, the local authorities would make immediate contact with the centre, informing it of their most urgent needs. The centre would then transmit these requests to the Member States best able to respond. The centre would also have agreements with international organizations such as the Red Cross and the United Nations Disaster Relief Office, in order to avoid duplication of effort.

15. The committee is of the opinion that except in such cases where the local authorities prove too weak, or without adequate resources, these authorities should be responsible for a very strict allocation of roles. In situations where local experts are available, they should be assigned to work with the outside teams in order to ensure effective communication and cooperation.

Motion for a Resolution (Doc. 1-111/80)

tabled by Mr Ghergo, Mr Giavazzi, Mr Sassano and Mr Lima

pursuant to Rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure

on solidarity and mutual assistance between the Member States in the event of large-scale disasters

The European Parliament,

- whereas the strengthening of solidarity between the Member States is one of the objectives towards which the Community must work through all appropriate actions,
 - considering that where large-scale disasters are due to natural or accidental causes and create a risk to extensive territorial areas and large sectors of the population, it would be particularly useful for the country so affected to be able to draw on aid from the other Community Member States,
 - whereas it is difficult for any single country to have constantly at its disposal all the resources and instruments required to respond to a large-scale disaster since such events are difficult to foresee and altogether exceptional,
1. Calls upon the Commission to submit a proposal for a directive setting out norms for the aid and support which Member States will be required to make available when any Community country is hit by a large-scale disaster due to natural or accidental causes;
 2. Considers it appropriate for the directive to lay down procedures for the provision by each Member State to the others of the resources and instruments needed to cope with such exceptional situations;
 3. Recommends that the Commission should adopt appropriate provisions to establish permanent liaison between the specialized centres and agencies existing in the individual Member States.

Motion for a Resolution (Doc. 1-364/81)

tabled by Mr Combe

on behalf of the Liberal and Democratic Group

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on the establishment at Community level of a European disaster relief programme

The European Parliament,

- whereas nature has, throughout the ages, demonstrated the severity of its laws and produced a long series of natural disasters; earthquakes, tidal waves, tornados, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions have, over the centuries, caused widespread damage and resulted in the loss of many human lives:
1. Calls on the Commission of the European Communities to introduce a programme at European level to provide for the immediate organization of aid in the event of accidents, catastrophes, cataclysms, or other disasters which threaten human lives or widespread material damage in a Member State;
 2. Considers that this European relief programme should not be intended to deal exclusively with disasters of exceptional magnitude or those requiring specific forms of aid;
 3. Considers also that there can be no question of setting up a new relief organization. The programme should consist primarily of
 - an organization plan for the authorities responsible in the event of a disaster in Europe,
 - an allocation of duties,
 - an inventory of manpower and material resources available,
 - a plan of liaison and communication networks,
 - a system of mobilizing these resources and networks;
 4. Considers that this European programme should also specify the part to be played by the different authorities participating in the work in order to ensure that all efforts are coordinated and achieve the greatest effect in the shortest possible time;
 5. Observes that while there is no lack of willingness to help in the event of a major disaster, past experience has shown that it cannot be properly used because no programme has been laid down in advance;
 6. Considers that judicious use should also be made of the special facilities available to individual Member States to assist the country affected by the disaster;
 7. Observes that if the effectiveness of a European relief programme depends on
 - early notification of the rescue services and rapid action on their part,
 - judicious and coordinated use of the facilities available,
 - establishment of the necessary command and operations network,
 then it is important to specify in precise terms who is to be in charge in each individual case, since the European relief programme must, if it is to succeed, specify the part to be played by the different authorities in the operations so that overall coordination is ensured and the greatest effect is achieved in the shortest possible time;
 8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.