



COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Council Conclusions on cooperation with the candidate countries and potential candidate countries of the Western Balkans in the field of civil protection

*2873rd JUSTICE and HOME AFFAIRS Council meeting
Luxembourg, 5 and 6 June 2008*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. RECALLS that Council Decision 2007/779/EC, Euratom of 8 November 2007 establishing a Community Civil Protection Mechanism (recast) ("the Mechanism") and Council Decision 2007/162/EC, Euratom of 5 March 2007 establishing a Civil Protection Financial Instrument ("the Financial Instrument") lay down that participation in the Mechanism and the Financial Instrument shall be open to candidate countries and that other third countries may cooperate in activities under the Mechanism and the Financial Instrument where agreements between these third countries and the Community so allow,
2. WELCOMES the inclusion of Civil Protection in the areas for further cooperation with the Western Balkans, as proposed in the Commission Communication on "Western Balkans: Enhancing the European perspective" and REITERATES the support expressed in its Conclusions on the Western Balkans on 29 April 2008 for enhanced cooperation on disaster prevention, preparedness and response in the region ,
3. WELCOMES the outcome of the "*Seminar on Strengthening Cooperation with Candidate Countries and Western Balkan Countries in the Field of Civil Protection*" co-organised by the Presidency and the Commission in Bled, Slovenia, on 24–26 February 2008, which launched the "*Bled Initiative*",

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4. CONSIDERS that cooperation with the candidate countries and potential candidate countries with a view to improving their capacity for coping with disasters and support to regional cooperation are in the mutual interest of the EU and the countries concerned, and should therefore be developed and strengthened,
5. EMPHASISES the need progressively to link the candidate and potential candidate countries to the Mechanism,
6. ENCOURAGES the candidate countries to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commission as soon as possible to enable them to participate fully in the Mechanism and the Financial Instrument,
7. ENCOURAGES the potential candidate countries to make maximum use of the possibility of cooperating under the Mechanism and the Financial Instrument,
8. RECOGNISES the need for further efforts in the field of capacity building in the candidate and potential candidate countries in order to enable them to fully participate and cooperate in the European Civil Protection instruments, and UNDERLINES the importance to this end of appropriate European support through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance ,
9. UNDERLINES the importance of ensuring complementarities and avoiding duplication with existing bilateral, regional and international initiatives,
10. INVITES the Commission to strengthen cooperation with the candidate and potential candidate countries, in particular by:
 - a) identifying 24/7 contact points in the candidate and potential candidate countries in order to exchange information and facilitate the Civil Protection response during major emergencies,
 - b) contributing to the enhancement of the candidate and potential candidate countries and regional capacities for prevention, preparedness and response to disasters through training, exchanges of experts, best practices and lessons learnt, and multinational exercises within the framework of the Mechanism,
 - c) raising awareness of the requirements and modalities for civil protection modules within the Mechanism and exploring the possible participation of candidate and potential candidate countries in those national, bilateral or multinational civil protection modules or other intervention resources based on the Member States' capacities, with a view to contributing to the interoperability of civil protection services of candidate and potential candidate countries and gradually integrating them into the activities of the Mechanism,
 - d) enhancing cooperation on early-warning systems and facilitating the provision of technical expertise on establishing operational centres, including the single European emergency call number 112,
 - e) raising awareness about the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) among candidate and potential candidate countries and building national administrative capacities to ensure an effective use of IPA for the development of civil protection capacities,
 - f) supporting regional cooperation among the countries concerned in order to contribute to enhancing the overall regional capacity for coping with disasters, and

- g) establishing a comprehensive EU programme on cooperation with candidate and potential candidate countries in the field of civil protection, encompassing all of the above activities and exploring funding possibilities under existing EU instruments, in particular IPA, to support the programme.
11. INVITES the EU Member States and other countries participating in the Mechanism to continue and further develop their cooperation with the candidate countries and potential candidate countries in the field of civil protection and to keep the Commission informed of bilateral activities in order to ensure a comprehensive approach.
 12. INVITES the Commission to report on a regular basis to the European Parliament and the Council on the progress achieved on cooperation with the candidate countries and potential candidate countries in the field of civil protection."
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