

**Question for written answer E-000261/2011
to the Commission
Rule 117
Catherine Soullie (PPE)**

Subject: Civil protection forces in the EU

The importance of civil protection forces in the European Union has been proven beyond all doubt, but question marks remain as to the effectiveness of arrangements for coordination between them. An exchange visit between the *județ* (district) of Olt in Romania and the council of the department of the Loiret in France has raised questions as to the effectiveness of risk management arrangements owing to differences in technology used by the various civil protection forces in the European Union.

Indeed, some Eastern European countries still use equipment that is over 30 years old and thus cannot protect their populations against the magnitude of the natural and man-made risks present in this day and age. This diversity in equipment and levels of staff training irrefutably affects the effectiveness of risk-management operations, particularly when forces of different nationalities are involved.

This issue is particularly relevant at a time when Europe is increasingly confronted with natural disasters (hurricane Xynthia in western France, floods, forest fires, etc.) or serious chemical or biological dangers (toxic mud slides in Hungary, etc.).

The unequal levels of technical and technological resources amongst EU Member States unquestionably harms our ability to deal with chemical, biological and natural dangers, whether collectively at European level or at a purely national level. Only the establishment of a European civil protection force could bring the technical and technological harmonisation needed to ensure public safety in the event of a catastrophe. Is the establishment of such a force being seriously considered? How can the effective coordination of civil protection forces with different generation equipment be ensured?