OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on a Community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters
(2009/2151(INI))

Rapporteur: Viktor Uspaskich
PA_NonLeg
The Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Stresses the crucial role played by regional and local authorities in the disaster management cycle; strongly believes that active involvement of those authorities in the design and implementation of risk reduction and disaster prevention strategies is the best way to ensure that the most effective and functional solutions are devised; stresses also the importance of consulting and involving public and private stakeholders, including voluntary organisations, in this process;

2. Stresses that a proactive approach is more effective and less costly than one based simply on reacting to disasters; takes the view that knowledge of the local geographic, economic and social context is fundamental to the prevention of natural and man-made disasters;

3. Stresses that it is the regions and local communities that bear the brunt of natural disasters and that, generally speaking, neither their material and human resources nor their know-how or financial resources are sufficient to cope with these disasters under a purely national and/or regional approach, and that these disasters call for an effective European-level solidarity-based response;

4. Takes the view that only a common strategy and coordinated actions between the different sectors and the different actors involved in the disaster management cycle can lead to real advances in the field of disaster prevention and the preparedness, response and recovery process; highlights the role that voluntary work can play in the common strategy and suggests that the actions include a voluntary component; calls on the Member States to foster cooperation to this end at national, regional and local level; suggests that the possibility be assessed, in the context of the European Year of Volunteering 2011, of organising voluntary work cooperation at Member State level with a view to disaster prevention and management;

5. Advocates a global strategy for the whole EU under which a protocol for uniform action is introduced for each type of disaster, including forest fire; emphasises the primary responsibility of the Member States for disaster prevention and management; considers that this strategy must ensure total solidarity between countries and award special attention to the most isolated, most scarcely-populated and outermost regions and certain other regions or islands in the European Union which have special characteristics and specific needs linked to their geography, their topography and the economic and social conditions under which their inhabitants live; emphasising, however, that there are no plans whatsoever to replace or weaken existing national competencies in civil protection and disaster prevention through EU guidelines;

6. Emphasises the importance of public awareness-raising and information measures both in terms of disaster prevention and the public’s response during and after the crisis as essential for life-saving purposes; calls, therefore, on the Commission to develop the
evaluation of the Civil Protection Mechanism and training within the framework of the Civil Protection Programme and prepare Community guidelines for the various possible calamities; stresses also the need for further information relating to the European single emergency telephone line ‘112’;

7. Stresses that the effects of disasters are not confined within the formal and administrative boundaries of regions and Member States; believes, therefore, that the identification of particularly risk-prone areas, specifying the type of risk concerned, should go hand in hand with establishing priority objectives and cooperation mechanisms in such areas; calls on regions to build on already existing territorial and cross-border coordination networks in order to develop cooperation focusing more specifically on disaster prevention; believes that cross-border cooperation structures, such as the macro-regions, with their functionally-oriented cooperation independent of administrative boundaries, can become effective platforms for cooperation in the field of disaster prevention;

8. Advocates making use of the valuable experience acquired in this field through projects implemented in the past under the Community’s INTERREG Initiative and considers that further exploitation of the opportunities offered in the context of the European Territorial Objective is of crucial importance; believes in this connection that the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) can constitute an important instrument for further strengthening intergovernmental, cross-border and interregional cooperation, even with countries which are not EU Member States, and a stable framework for the exchange and transfer of technological know-how and best practices in the field of disaster prevention and for setting up joint databases and early warning systems among its members;

9. Points out that cohesion policy is an essential tool in natural disaster risk prevention; considers that it must be possible for the various funds and instruments to operate flexibly and in a coordinated manner in order to improve the functioning and effectiveness of that policy; stresses that risk prevention must also dovetail with other policies pursued in the field of prevention, in order to prevent the fragmentation of measures and increase their effectiveness and added value;

10. Welcomes the Commission proposal to extend the lessons learnt from exercises in disaster prevention, with particular attention to those parts of Europe which face a combination of risks, such as flooding, cyclones, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes; calls on the Commission to carry out an inventory of information sources and the dissemination of best practices in the framework of risk management; supports the coordination of research activities in this area and believes that links between detection and early warning systems should be reinforced;

11. Supports the Commission’s initiative aimed at assessing the possibility of improving the integration of disaster prevention in the Operational Programmes set up for the period 2007-2013, and calls on the Member States to make use of the structural funds directly allocated to risk prevention so that actions in this field are taken without delay during the current programming period; recalls, however, the need for coordinated action in this respect; suggests that in the strategy for the next programming period the Commission take into account the need to introduce EU financing measures for disaster prevention.
that cover all areas of action;

12. Notes that climate change is progressively worsening natural calamities, including floods and hydrology-related disasters, for which adequate and well-coordinated prevention is essential, and calls on the Commission to explore, as part of the current budget review, every possibility to improve the existing disaster prevention systems, including the possibility of using the early warning and satellite observation resources currently available to assess the risks of drought and desertification;

13. Urges the Commission to ensure that the current budgetary pressures arising from the crisis do not lead to a reduction in the resources allocated to existing disaster prevention policies and, as part of the current budget review, to carefully assess any gaps in the field of prevention and ascertain whether each type of disaster is covered by the instruments available;

14. Urges the Commission not to forget that better management and conservation of woodlands is one of its key priorities in the area of combating climate change; considers that the provision of a genuine forestry policy would make a major contribution not just to combating climate change but also to preventing natural disasters;

15. Calls on the Commission to draft a European action plan on the exchange of best practice in disaster prevention as well as coordinated emergency plans merging national forces for cross-border cooperation in cases of emergencies;

16. Takes the view that the funding of infrastructure under the Structural Funds in the next programming periods must be bound to prior implementation of specific measures in keeping with disaster prevention standards;

17. Calls on the Commission to proceed immediately with a new proposal aimed at further simplifying the administrative rules and increasing the flexibility of the EU’s Solidarity Fund.
RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

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<tr>
<th>Date adopted</th>
<th>27.4.2010</th>
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| Result of final vote | +: 37  
                        –: 1  
                        0: 2 |
| Members present for the final vote | François Alfonsi, Charalampos Angourakis, Jean-Paul Besset, Victor Boştinaru, Zuzana Brzobohatá, John Bufton, Alain Cadec, Salvatore Caronna, Ricardo Cortés Lastra, Tamás Deutsch, Rosa Estarás Ferragut, Danuta Maria Hübner, Filiz Hakaeva Hyusmenova, Seán Kelly, Evgeni Kirilov, Constanze Angela Krehl, Petru Constantin Luhan, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Riikka Manner, Iosif Matula, Erminia Mazzoni, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Jan Olbrycht, Wojciech Michal Olejniczak, Markus Pieper, Monika Smolková, Nuno Teixeira, Michael Theurer, Michail Tremopoulos, Viktor Uspaskich, Oldřich Vlasák, Kerstin Westphal, Hermann Winkler, Joachim Zeller |
| Substitute(s) present for the final vote | Vasilica Viorela Dâncilă, Ivars Godmanis, Catherine Grèze, Veronica Lope Fontagné, Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid |