Committee on civil liberties, justice and home affairs - European Parliament
Committee on the civil dimension of security - NATO Parliamentary Assembly

JOINT SEMINAR
"THE PROTECTION OF THE EUROPEAN CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE"

31 January 2007
09:30 a.m - 12:30 p.m.
European Parliament, ASP 5G2

Background note

What is the European critical infrastructure?
The European critical infrastructure represent the physical resources, services, information technology facilities, networks and infrastructure assets, which, if disrupted or destroyed would have a serious impact on the health, safety, security, economic or social well-being of two or more MS. They include: Energy installations and networks, Communications and Information Technology, Finance (e.g. banking, securities and investment), Health Care, Water (e.g. dams, storage and treatment), Transport (e.g. airports, ports, and railway), Production, storage and transport of dangerous goods (e.g. chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials), Government (e.g. critical services, facilities, information networks, assets and key national sites and monuments)

Critical infrastructures must be defined at Member States' level and at European level. The definition of what constitutes an *EU* critical infrastructure is determined by its cross border effect which ascertains whether an incident could have a serious impact beyond *two or more MS* national territories.

Critical infrastructure (CI) can be damaged, destroyed or disrupted by deliberate acts of terrorism (nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological attacks), natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, fires, forest fires), negligence, accidents (Seveso, transport accidents) or computer hacking.

The damages in one MS may have negative effects on several others and on the European economy as a whole, especially as new technologies (e.g. the Internet) and market liberalisation (e.g. in electricity and gas supply) are highly interconnected and interdependent, making them more vulnerable to disruption or destruction.

The need for a common framework
In such a situation a binding, common EU level framework for the protection of critical infrastructure in Europe is necessary even though the primary responsibility for protecting critical infrastructures falls on the Member States and the owners/operators of critical infrastructures.

Existing provisions
For the moment, no horizontal provisions on critical infrastructure protection currently exist at EU level. Only a number of sectoral measures exist in the IT, health, financial, transport, chemical and nuclear sectors. Some agencies (such as ENISA) have been created and in sectors like aviation and maritime security and inspection services exist within the Commission.

In December 2006[1], the European Commission presented a package of new measures to improve protection of critical infrastructure in Europe: a **"Communication on a European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection"** and a "proposal for a **Directive on the identification and designation of European Critical Infrastructure to improve the protection of critical infrastructure in the EU",** on which the European Parliament is being consulted (Responsible: LIBE, opinions from TRAN, ITRE, IMCO, ENVI et ECON).

The creation of a European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection raises several questions:

- the complementarity of the EPCIP with the national planning and awareness raising
- the creation of a European risk-analysis system
- the question of the data protection exigencies at European and national levels
- the association of the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) when sectoral standards do not exist or where international norms have not yet been established
- the parliamentary scrutiny of the EPCIP at European and national levels
- the association of NGOs, civil society and local authorities
- the role of the private sector and issues of public-private coordination
- the potential role of the military and issues of civil-military
- coordination
- the external dimensions of critical infrastructure protection in the EU's relations with non-MS.

[1] see also:
the conclusions of the European Council of June 2004 that asked the Commission to prepare an overall strategy; the Communication "Critical Infrastructure Protection in the Fight Against Terrorism", COM (2004) 702; the "Green Paper on a European programme for critical infrastructure protection" COM(2005) 576; the EP report with a proposal for a European Parliament recommendation to the European Council and to the Council on the protection of critical infrastructures in the framework of the fight against terrorism - 2005/2044 INI, rapporteur S. Lambrinidis