

**“Proposal for a Decision on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism”
PSCE position**

Public Safety Communication Europe Forum (PSCE) is a permanent autonomous organisation aiming at improving provision of public safety communications and information management systems and the safety of the citizens during crisis and emergency situations. PSCE provides a unique common platform for researchers, industry and users enabling regular exchange of ideas, information, experiences and best practices.

PSCE regularly provides its input into discussion of such topics as disaster prevention and response, cloud computing, EU industrial policy for the security industry, harmonised radio spectrum, allocation of spectrum for Public Protection and Disaster Relief etc. By (i) organising two high level conferences per year; (ii) participating in numerous external events, meetings and seminars; (iii) producing policy papers and other publications; (iv) working on a EU-funded project (ACRIMAS and CRISMA), PSCE plays an active role in shaping the EU civil protection legislative framework.

Following its endorsement by the Board on 17 February 2012, PSCE welcomes the **Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism** adopted by the European Commission (EC) on 20 December 2012. Since some of the elements presented in this document directly concern its core mission, PSCE would like to comment and propose concrete amendments on specific strategic issues having a direct link to the scope of its activities and expertise.

1. INTEROPERABILITY AND TRAININGS

Under “Preparedness”, the third paragraph of Article 8(2) states the following:

“The modules shall be interoperable with other modules. They shall undertake training and exercises in order to meet the interoperability requirement and shall be placed under the authority of a person who is responsible for their operation.”

By writing down this statement, the EC recognizes the fact that in the event of accidents, emergencies or disasters, the various communities of interest have difficulty to access and share information between themselves. Interoperability is needed to solve this key issue within and between the countries, regions, and nations. To this end, the EC should encourage the development of shared, more effective and more cost-effective logistics at EU level in order to avoid the deployment by each actor of its own on-site support.

PSCE truly believes that organisational and behavioural interoperability issues should be addressed through EU trainings and exercises as mentioned also in Article 13 of the Proposal. However, one of the remaining problems is the **technical interoperability**. To effectively tackle the complex issue of interoperability and all its different layers, the whole interoperability chain must be considered and the end-users, industrial partners and researchers should work together. There is a real need of a streamlining effort at EU level as there is no market case for the industrial partners to develop such interoperability.

The end users, whose role is crucial in developing interoperability, are typically actively participating in local/ national projects and developments. It has, however, proved to be difficult for them to participate at an international level, despite threats not respecting national borders (e.g. international crime, climatic disasters etc). The isolated presentations of users' demands are not transferrable into developments unless relevant providers take them onboard. Therefore, PSCE believes that EU funds should support initiatives which directly involve end-users, industry and research to collect their feedback in a harmonised and global manner.

Given the fragmented market of the member States, achieving sufficient level of interoperability proves to be a challenging task requiring assessment of user needs and considerable financial resources in order to get equipments that could operate across various systems. **PSCE is of the view that the EC should support the development of interoperability requirements and solutions.**

2. AWARENESS RISING

Both Article 5 (dealing with the prevention), Article 13 (Training, lessons learnt and knowledge dissemination) and Article 20 (stating general eligible actions) of the Proposal perceive the awareness raising and dissemination actions as important elements helping to minimise the effects of disaster on citizens.

In particular, PSCE recalls letter "e" of Article 13(1) which states that the Commission shall stimulate and encourage *"the introduction and use of new technologies for the purpose of the Mechanism"*. Given that rising of awareness on technical solutions under development is one of the key PSCE missions, Board of Directors in principal welcome any activity related to demonstration, testing and validating of new solutions. To this end, actions of this type should be eligible for funding.

PSCE perceives the information exchange flow, from both qualitative and quantitative point of view, as one of the crucial assets determining successful prevention of and response to natural and man-made disasters. Therefore, comprehensive and straight forward communication should be facilitated through all levels of communication chain. In this context, well elaborated public warning policies should play a key role ensuring that the first responder – in most cases the general public – undertakes the correct decisions. Relevant training schemes and various awareness-raising campaigns, targeting citizens of all age categories, should not only teach how to passively respond to the danger but also create sufficient information background turning the general public into the active players of various disaster scenarios. Public warning policies should be constantly reviewed and regularly put into attention of the citizens.

3. SMART FUNDING

It is apparent that the interoperability and training issues mentioned above cannot be effectively addressed without EU financial contribution. To this end, Article 19 (3) of the Proposal states that the foreseen expenditures may in particular cover *"expenses linked to IT networks focusing on information processing and exchange (including their interconnection with existing or future systems designed to promote cross-sectoral data exchange and related equipment), together with all other technical and administrative assistance expenses incurred by the Commission for the management of the programme."*

PSCE is of the view that there are already many EU funded initiatives tackling interoperability which results are very disperse. The lack of interoperable communication systems has impeded the cooperation of PPDR forces, although a relatively high budget was allocated at EU level to tackle this issue. Considering the need to develop procedures, technology and legal agreements to achieve a cost effective

solution for PPDR interoperability, a close interaction between DG ECHO, DG Enterprise as well as the Research Executive Agency is needed. Annex I

Amendment 1

COM(2011) 934 final
The third paragraph of Article 8(2)

Modules

Text proposed by the Commission

“The modules shall be interoperable with other modules. They shall undertake training and exercises in order to meet the interoperability requirement and shall be placed under the authority of a person who is responsible for their operation.”

Amendment

*“The modules shall be interoperable with other modules. They shall undertake training and exercises in order to meet the interoperability requirement and shall be placed under the authority of a person who is responsible for their operation. **The European Commission shall support the development of interoperability requirements and solutions based on end-user driven approach.***

Justification

Achieving sufficient level of interoperability proves to be a challenging task requiring assessment of user needs and considerable financial resources. The statement, as it stands now, is formulated very vaguely, lacking the identification of key responsible entity. Therefore, PSCE is of the view that the primary role in this context should be assigned to the European Commission that should lead this task.

Amendment 2

COM(2011) 934 final
Article 20 (b)

General eligible actions

Text proposed by the Commission

“training, exercises, workshops, exchange of staff and experts, creation of networks, demonstration projects and technology transfer to enhance prevention, preparedness and effective response;”

Amendment

*“training, exercises, workshops, exchange of staff and experts, creation of networks, **introduction and use of new technologies for the purpose of the Mechanism.**”*

Justification

It is proposed to apply this wording in order to be consistent with letter “e” of Article 13(1).

Amendment 3

COM(2011) 934 final

Article 20 (d)

General eligible actions

Text proposed by the Commission

“public information, education and awareness raising and associated dissemination actions, so as to minimise the effects of disasters on Union citizens and to help Union citizens to protect themselves more effectively;”

Amendment

“public information, education, **relevant training and dissemination schemes and various awareness-raising campaigns targeting citizens of all age categories, not only teaching them how to passively respond to the danger but also creating sufficient information background turning the general public into the active players of various disaster scenarios.**”

Justification

A comprehensive and straight forward dissemination actions should be facilitated through all types of potential responders. In this context, well elaborated training and awareness raising programmes should play a key role ensuring that the first responder – in most cases the general public (Union citizen) – undertakes the correct decisions. These programmes should lead towards more resilient society composed of not only passive responders but also proactive and well trained citizens.