



PREVENTION ET SECOURS : Deux mondes séparés en Europe ?

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE : Two Separate Worlds in Europe ?

Final statement

The need for action to ensure the continuity of the risk management chain and to improve cooperation among the different links of the chain: this was the goal of the European seminar entitled “Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Response: Two Separate Worlds in Europe?” which was held on December 5th and 6th in Divonne-les-Bains. Scientific knowledge, prevention, preparedness, emergency response, recovery – including reconstruction – are all essential parts of the disaster risk management chain and they must work in harmony to bring about global efficiency.

Organised by the European Network of National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction, the seminar assembled participants representing the major stakeholders of risk management (governments, members of parliament, regional and local authorities, scientists, professionals, businesses, NGOs, etc). They came from Germany, Denmark, France, Italy, Monaco, Sweden, Switzerland and Romania, as well as from international organisations (UN, UN-UNISDR, WMO, UNOSAT).

Starting with a comparative analysis of the situation in some European countries and the presentation of the action in Europe of international organisations, the seminar set its goals as follows: to highlight present achievements, define the difficulties to be overcome and identify potential areas for progress.

The participants agreed on the importance of the following points, in the context of the increasing vulnerability of our countries to natural disasters and the potential negative impacts of climate change:

1. The need to pay careful attention to each step in risk management: not a single step must be left out, as the overall effectiveness is equivalent to that of the weakest link in the chain. The damage caused by disasters in our countries is becoming an increasingly costly burden on our societies.
2. The need to develop interaction between players in the various stages or links in the chain of collective risk management. Of particular importance are discussions between developers and builders on the one hand, and the response and solidarity services (namely financial) on the other. This interaction should help to bring about concrete results which would contribute to genuine sustainable development.
3. The importance of discussion and joint approaches among European countries, in which both civil society and national governments need to be involved in order to improve the efficiency of both response and prevention at European level.
4. The need both for scientific knowledge and practical on-site information in order to optimize processes.

To this end, the participants recommended that the following measures should be implemented at national, European, and international levels:

- research programmes based on this interaction between “prevention-preparedness-response-return to normal-reconstruction”,
- shared feedback on the experience encountered in the different stages and lessons learned,
- common training programmes for the stakeholders at each stage.

The European Network of Platforms identified the following themes of immediate cooperation :

- Geographic Information Systems
- Cost-benefit analysis
- Exchanges between stakeholders
- Feedback experiences

The participants also expressed the view that the Network of European Platforms should be expanded to involve other countries. Similarly, a spirit of European solidarity towards developing countries affected by disasters should be demonstrated through the concerted action of members of the Network by establishing links with these countries. In this context, the participants took note of the PLANAT initiative to organise a meeting of European Platforms in Davos, on the occasion of the IDRC Conference on Risk Reduction in August 2008.

The Divonne-les-Bains seminar thus constitutes the first step of a common approach to collective risk management. The studies and research currently undertaken by the EU on civil protection and prevention could provide an opportunity for further action.

The seminar was organized by the European Network of National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction on the initiative of the AFPCN, and the French Institute of Major Risks (IRMA), with the support of three French Ministries (Ecology and Sustainable Development; Interior, Overseas and Local Authorities; and Foreign and European Affairs), as well as of other partners: the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council and the Municipality of Divonne-les-Bains.

The European Network of National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction was established following the Paris meeting of European National Platforms on 7th and 8th December 2006, and officially launched in March 2007 by the platforms of France (AFPCN), Switzerland (PLANAT) and Germany (DKKV). The DKKV is the current Chair of the network. The initiative is in line with the goals of the Kobe World Conference “ Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters”. On November 30th 2007, the Network presented to the EU Commission common comments from its members in the consultation opened by the EU on its Green Paper : “A strategy of Adaptation to Climate Change”.

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