



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)/Council
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Subject:	Draft Council conclusions on Mass Evacuation in Case of Disasters in the European Union

1. Following the Presidency Workshop on Mass Evacuation in Case of Disasters, held in Vilnius (Lithuania) on 16-18 July 2013, the Presidency drew up a set of draft Council conclusions on Mass Evacuation in Case of Disasters in the European Union.
2. These draft Council conclusions were examined by the Working Party on Civil Protection on 9-10 September and 8 October 2013. On 5 November 2013 the Working Party had a final exchange and an agreement was subsequently reached, through a written procedure, on the text set out in the Annex.

3. On this basis, the Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to agree on the text which appears in the Annex and to submit it to the Council for adoption at a forthcoming meeting.
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COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON MASS EVACUATION IN CASE OF DISASTERS

IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Introduction

1. **Recognising** that mass evacuation is an essential measure for protecting populations during certain types of disasters;
2. **Reiterating** that the responsibility to protect citizens, and to take decisions for mass evacuation, lies with the Member States; **noting** that mass evacuation may overwhelm national capacities or may cross borders, and that the Union should therefore encourage cooperation between Member States in this area;
3. **Acknowledging** that evacuation represents a civil protection measure encompassing the movement of population in an organised way, before, during or after a disaster, from the affected areas, or areas that may be potentially affected, and includes the reception of evacuees in areas that can provide protection and survival conditions;
4. **Taking into account**, in the context of mass evacuation, the challenges of ensuring the protection of animals and property and where appropriate their movement to a safe area;
5. **Recognising** that mass evacuation is not defined by absolute numbers but by the point at which mass evacuation overwhelms local capacities and resources;

6. **Recalling** the lessons identified from recent cases of mass evacuation, such as the earthquake in L'Aquila (Italy) in 2009, the triple disaster in Japan in 2011, and the floods in Central Europe in 2002, 2010 and 2013;
7. **Recalling** the **Council conclusions of 6 December 2007** on the development and establishment of Early Warning Systems in the EU; the **Council conclusions of 4 June 2009** on civil protection awareness raising; the **Council conclusions of 3 June 2010** on psychosocial support in the event of emergencies and disasters; the **Council conclusions of 2 December 2010** on Host Nation Support; the **Council conclusions of 11 April 2011** on further developing risk assessment for disaster management within the European Union; and the **Council conclusions of 13 December 2011** on an integrated approach to more effective risk, emergency and crisis communication;
8. **Taking note of** the EU supported and implemented projects which aim to improve procedures for mass evacuation and the reception of evacuees;
9. **Having regard to** the on-going work of the International Organization for Migration on developing global guidance on mass evacuation, and of the International Organization for Standardization on the guidelines for planning for mass evacuations;
10. **Taking note of** the outcome of the Presidency Workshop on Mass Evacuation in Case of Disasters, held in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 16-18 July 2013.

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11. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to develop, where necessary and appropriate, a more systematic and consistent approach to mass evacuation in case of disasters in the European Union in all phases of the disaster management cycle.

12. INVITES the Member States to:

- a) on the basis of risk assessments, identify high-risk or disaster-prone areas, where mass evacuation may be required, or the reception of evacuees may occur, and share non-sensitive information (information whose disclosure would not be contrary to the essential interests of Member States' security) with relevant Member States;
- b) integrate relevant aspects of mass evacuation, and the reception and return of evacuees, into all phases of the disaster management cycle, particularly in the preparedness phase, ensuring that the different needs of specific groups (for instance: children, people with disabilities, elderly people, non-native speakers, non-residents and/or tourists) are considered. This integrated approach should encompass all levels – local, regional and national, and, where appropriate, include the necessary international arrangements;
- c) consider the need to incorporate relevant aspects of the organisation of mass evacuation, and the reception and return of evacuees, into legislation at national or the appropriate sub-national level;
- d) continue developing and improving procedures for evacuation, and the reception and return of evacuees, with the involvement of society, where necessary and possible, in particular by:
 - taking into account the need for possible mass evacuation within the territory of the country, as well as evacuation to other/neighbouring countries and the reception of evacuees, while developing risk assessments and risk management planning at national or the appropriate sub-national level;

- including the operational aspects of mass evacuation in national or the appropriate sub-national disaster response plans;
- enhancing preparedness for disasters at local, regional and national level by identifying the institutions responsible for mass evacuation and the reception of evacuees and by making prearrangements, if necessary, with institutions in other/neighbouring countries to:
 - organise the mass evacuation of residents to other/neighbouring countries and coordinate the reception of evacuees from other/neighbouring countries;
 - coordinate the provision of assistance to residents evacuated to other/neighbouring countries;
- including, where appropriate, relevant elements of mass evacuation and the reception of evacuees in the national or the appropriate sub-national disaster management training programmes and exercises;
- raising the awareness of the population, especially amongst those living in high-risk or disaster-prone areas, of the risks, ensuring the provision of public information and education;
- making practical use of modern technology, especially taking into account information and communication technology;
- further developing the necessary procedures and making arrangements for informing, warning and alerting residents about an imminent or actual disaster, and the need for possible evacuation, taking into account non-native speakers, non-residents and/or tourists present in the territory of the Member State;

- assessing existing and deficient response capacities for mass evacuation and the reception of evacuees (temporary shelter, decontamination equipment, transport, water and food supplies, etc.) as well as possibilities for the return of evacuees;
- developing bilateral/multilateral cooperation in the field of mass evacuation and the reception of evacuees and, where necessary and appropriate, including provisions on mass evacuation and the reception of evacuees in bilateral/multilateral agreements.

13. INVITES the Commission to:

- a) draw attention to risks which may lead to mass evacuation in the overview of natural and man-made disaster risks that the Union may face, to be established and updated by the Commission;
- b) include mass evacuation aspects in appropriate parts of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism training programme (for example: exchange of experts), in exercises, preparedness projects and, where relevant, in a programme of lessons learnt;
- c) set up an inventory of existing research and knowledge on mass evacuation, support further studies, research projects and analyses for the purpose of evaluating the need for and feasibility of mass evacuation in certain types of disasters; disseminate the outcomes of such research and promote the practical implementation of their conclusions.

14. INVITES the Member States and the Commission to:

- a) take into consideration mass evacuation while developing scenarios for disaster response planning in order to assess the need for appropriate arrangements and resources;
- b) explore the need to develop and promote guidelines for the organisation of mass evacuation, and the reception and return of evacuees, in the Member States, which would cover the main aspects of mass evacuation, in particular:

- a general approach to mass evacuation as a population protection measure;
 - necessary planning and preparedness measures including cross-border aspects;
 - procedures for mass evacuation and the reception of evacuees;
 - relevant actions at Union level, where appropriate;
- c)** explore the potential need to develop arrangements on facilitating coordination of mass evacuation, and the reception and return of evacuees, in the event of disasters in several Member States;
- d)** invites the Commission to report back to the Council on the progress made on points 14(b) and 14(c) by the end of 2017, and calls on the Member States to assist the Commission in this task by providing the necessary information.
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