



A community approach on the prevention of disasters

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Between 1990 and 2007 the European Union witnessed a marked increase in the number and severity of both natural and man-made disasters, with a particularly significant increase in the former. The loss of human life, the destruction of economic and social infrastructure and the degradation of already fragile ecosystems is expected to worsen as climate change increases the frequency and magnitude of extreme meteorological events, such as heat waves, storms and heavy rains.

The Community has already developed a set of instruments to address various aspects of disaster preparedness, response and recovery. There are also a number of sector-specific initiatives covering floods (i), technological disasters (ii), and oil spills (iii) which deal with elements of disaster prevention.

The Commission plans to adopt in the first quarter 2009 a Communication on a Community approach to the prevention of natural and manmade disasters.

In particular, the Communication will explore how the EU could seek to reduce the impact of disasters within the EU by:

- the development of knowledge based disaster prevention policies at all levels of government;
- linking the relevant actors and policies throughout the disaster management cycle;
- improving the effectiveness of existing policy instruments with regard to disaster prevention.

(i) Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks.

(ii) Council Directive 96/82/EC on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances, the Seveso Directive.

(iii) Regulation 1726/2002 banning single-hull tankers from European ports.