The European Dimension of Civil Protection

A. Miozzo

European External Action Service, Brussels, Belgium (agostino.miozzo@eeas.europa.eu)

Since the establishment of the European Community, much has been done in order to create a political union of States able to confront with the many problems afflicting its vast and heterogeneous territory. The European Civil Protection, however, is far from being fully functional. One of the main reasons can be ascribed to the emphasis posed by the Lisbon Treaty (2007) on Civil Protection as Member State competence. European States, in the preparatory works of the Treaty expressed a clear reluctance on loosing their exclusive sovereignty on such a delicate topic.

Seen from the European perspective, with particular attention to expatriate European citizens, it is possible to identify a multiplicity of recommendations issued by single States.

Most of the times, Member States approach emergency management activities disorderly, in a mixture of intentional excesses in alarmism or omission of interventions which are both dictated by national political dynamics.

In the specific aspect of the civil protection activities, the problem of creating a strong and unitary Civil Protection institution can be furthermore examined when developed countries, usually donor of aid, are hit by a major disaster. These difficulties, in the frame of international relationships, are hard to cope with at a European scale but become insurmountable molochs when experienced on a global dimension.

Three topical and recent cases can be used as examples, Hurricane Katrina (USA - 2005), L'Aquila earthquake (Italy - 2006) and the Tōhoku earthquake (Japan 2011).

These events posed worldwide the basis for a critical analysis of international crisis response in the contest of mega disasters.

The question that arises from these thoughts can be synthesised in the difficult process of integrating different social realities into homogeneous operative procedures. With this contribution, the European External Action Service would like to give a partial answer to such a problem.