



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

## **MEMO**

Brussels, 15 May 2013

### **Q/A: The European Emergency Response Centre Opens**

On 15 May 2013 the European Commission launches the Emergency Response Centre, further strengthening our capacity to respond in times of natural and man-made crises.

#### **1) Why is there a need for an Emergency Response Centre (ERC) in the EU?**

When a disaster strikes any delay in responding increases the potential for fatalities and injuries. Civil protection and humanitarian aid are the main operational instruments of the EU's immediate response to disasters. These instruments have been brought together into one Directorate General (DG ECHO) in the Commission which makes it possible to establish a strengthened Emergency Response Centre that can draw on information and expertise from both areas and effectively link, at European level, the civil protection and the humanitarian aid authorities in the Member States.

#### **2) Who will benefit from the ERC?**

The ERC will be responsible for the coordination of the EU's civilian disaster response. It will be at the service of Member States and people in Europe and beyond. It will provide better protection for Europe's 500 million citizens against disasters and also support a more effective response to humanitarian catastrophes in third countries.

#### **3) How will the ERC contribute to a faster and more efficient joint response to disasters?**

The ERC will operate 24 hours a day, capable of dealing with several simultaneous emergencies in different time zones. Its enhanced role means a qualitative shift from information sharing and reacting to emergencies to a more proactive role of planning, monitoring, preparing, operational coordination and logistical support. This will be achieved with an enhanced monitoring and analytical capacity, using the most advanced technologies for satellite imagery and early warning systems.

The centre will ensure a continuous exchange of information with both the civil protection and humanitarian aid authorities on the needs for assistance and the offers made by EU Member States and others. This will ensure that Member States can make informed decisions on funding and offering additional assistance. The centre will also develop scenarios for the main types of disasters inside and outside the EU.

The ERC will also support close coordination between the different Commission services involved in responding to emergencies where a multi-sectoral response is needed (e.g. environment or energy-related emergencies), and will exchange information with the crisis centres of the EU's main international partners.

#### **4) What role do the Member States' civil protection authorities play?**

The primary responsibility for dealing with the immediate effects of a disaster lies with the country where the disaster has occurred. Nevertheless, when the scale of an emergency overwhelms national response capabilities, a disaster-stricken country can benefit from civil protection resources from other countries. With new legislation soon to be in place, the 32 countries participating in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism can pre-commit some of their response capacities to a voluntary pool, ready to be deployed at very short notice as part of a fully coordinated European response when the need arises.

#### **5) Will the ERC only be dealing with response to disasters?**

No, it will address the whole disaster cycle. The ERC will support and co-finance a wide range of prevention and preparedness activities, from awareness-raising to field exercises simulating emergency response.

Near-field Tsunami Early Warning and Emergency Planning is an example of an EU co-funded project in the field of disaster prevention and preparedness. The project aims at promoting technology which warns of tsunamis with a travel time between the first wave to the closest shoreline of less than 30 minutes.

The Commission has also co-financed METEOALARM, which creates alerts for public and government institutions when there is a possible occurrence of severe weather events. METEOALARM extends forecast periods to five days.

#### **6) Will the ERC be a completely new Centre?**

The ERC has been established on the basis of more than 10 years of experience of coordinating European disaster response. In 2001, its predecessor, the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) was created as the main operational tool of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The ERC is the new operational hub of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. It replaces and upgrades the functions of the previous Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC). It will play a key role as a coordination hub to facilitate a coherent European response during emergencies inside and outside Europe.

#### **For more information**

[IP/13/422](#) Emergency Response Centre: for a faster and more efficient European response to disasters

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_2010-2014/georgieva/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/index_en.htm)

The European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm)