EPC WORKING PAPER No.27

Building societal security in Europe: the EU's role in managing emergencies

Arjen Boin
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April 2007

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EUROPEAN SECURITY AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

EUROPEAN POLICY CENTRE

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Foreword

by Antonio Missiroli

Terrorist attacks in the US and Europe, Hurricane Katrina, the spread of avian flu to Europe, flash floods and forest fires across the continent during last year's long, hot summer…all these events have contributed to an increasing sense of vulnerability in Western societies. They have also sparked a growing debate about how to combat such threats – and cope with their impact when they cannot be prevented.

In early 2006, the European Policy Centre – with research support provided by the Swedish Emergency Management Agency – formed a Task Force on 'Managing Emergencies: the EU's role in safety and security' to study the Union's growing role in protecting citizens from harm. This Task Force was established as part of the EPC's programme on European Security and Global Governance.

The Task Force set out to: a) identify the characteristics of complex, trans-national threats; b) assess the EU's capacities to manage such threats; and c) highlight concerns that require policy-makers' attention.

Members of the Task Force included officials from the EU institutions (including the European Parliament) and national governments, along with security experts, crisis management specialists, and representatives of concerned organisations and private companies. Its launch was also timely, coming as it did just months after the terrorist attacks in London and in the midst of another avian flu outbreak in Europe.

The Task Force's detailed findings can be found in a separately published Progress Report, available on request from the EPC.

This Working Paper represents the efforts of several Task Force members to sketch a future direction for the EU's development in this area. Their arguments build on the Task Force's work, but do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all its individual members. The aim is to inject fresh thinking into the debate about the Union's fledgling role and responsibilities in this area.

Our thanks go to a number of people who played a decisive role in the preparation of this Working Paper.

The Task Force and its 'products' would have never seen the light of day without the passion, dedication and thoroughness provided by Vanessa Matthews, who coordinated all our activities and drafted all the individual meeting reports, including the final Progress Report. Sofie Thorin took over from her in early 2007 and has patiently chased after the authors and helped to make this publication possible. Lucia Montanaro-Jankovski has actively contributed to all our discussions and fed her ideas on the role of the private sector into this paper.

The Task Force owes much to the personal engagement and intellectual input of its members, although we cannot mention all of them here. Particular thanks go to Jan-Peter Paul, of the European Commission, for taking an active role on behalf of the Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection throughout the Task Force's work.

Finally, we owe a debt of gratitude to the many speakers who shared their insights and wisdom with us at Task Force meetings.

Together, we have tried to shed light on a critical new activity taking place in Brussels and hope to spur greater attention to this issue, which is of crucial importance for European citizens.

Antonio Missiroli is Chief Policy Analyst at the European Policy Centre.

Societal security: an emerging role for the European Union

By Mark Rhinard

It is now commonplace to hear that the process of European integration is in trouble.

The rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by French and Dutch voters, viewed in conjunction with the EU's recent enlargement, bolsters the arguments of some observers that Europe is only 'widening' and no longer 'deepening'. Other commentators invoke a familiar Brussels metaphor to argue that the bicycle of European integration is in danger of slowing and tipping over.

Such claims ignore an important reality underpinning European cooperation. Even when progress at the *haute politique* level appears stalled, the lower levels of policy-making in the EU continue to function. The European Commission continues to propose new ideas, national civil servants carry on negotiating and decisions are still adopted that influence the daily lives of Europeans.

This reality helps to explain the recent development of a new but largely unheralded role for the EU: providing for the security and safety of its citizens. This role is not limited to police and judicial cooperation; it also encompasses joint efforts to combat public health threats, to improve transport security, to ensure food safety, to fight terrorism and to mitigate disasters.

Although these efforts originate in different sectors and are pursued in diverse parts of the EU administration, they share a common goal: protecting individuals from harm.

The EPC's Task Force on Managing Emergencies was formed to investigate this growing role, identify EU strengths and weaknesses, and offer suggestions for policy reform. The Task Force uncovered a rich array of such policies and activities at the supranational level in Europe, and identified a number of challenges that stand in the way of an effective and legitimate role for the EU in protecting citizens. But one major finding stood out: the lack of strategic direction regarding the future development of this critical new role for the EU.

This Working Paper takes a small step towards rectifying that problem. The authors offer several suggestions for future development, weighing the pros and cons of each option and sketching the steps needed to take these suggestions forward.

By way of introduction, this chapter sets the context for those discussions. It outlines the main findings of the Task Force before introducing a concept which is useful for making sense of the EU's expanding role in protecting citizens – 'societal security'. This concept reflects a growing appreciation of the complexity of modern threats and the resources required to manage them.

This chapter then highlights four recurring challenges identified by the Task Force – including problems related to coherence, national involvement, international cooperation and public/private partnerships – and introduces the main essays in this Working Paper.

The EU as a security actor...at home

Politicians often describe the EU as an increasingly important 'security actor', but usually only when referring to its role abroad.

As a collection of sovereign states with diverse interests in world affairs, the EU's success in forging a common European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) with operational capabilities is indeed remarkable.

Less attention, however, is paid to the growth of EU capabilities in relation to security issues 'at home'. These capabilities span the European policy spectrum and demonstrate the willingness of EU Member States to join forces to combat threats to their populations.

There is no encompassing moniker for these activities. The term 'Justice and Home Affairs' is used to refer mainly to police and judicial cooperation, and the EU's relatively new 'Area of Freedom, Security and Justice' label is too broad. In a different political setting, 'homeland security' or 'domestic security' might suffice; in the EU, such terms are politically inappropriate.[1]

Which kinds of EU policies and activities are we referring to? A few examples drawn from the Task Force's findings illustrate the Union's emerging role.

In the public health arena, officials are working to protect Europeans from the onset of avian flu. The Commission can deploy aid and expertise abroad, and has established rapid alert systems, diagnosis guidelines and common response standards in Europe. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection (DG Sanco) have an ambitious agenda for the upcoming years. The focus is not just on saving lives, but also on preserving the integrity of medical systems and ensuring essential services are maintained when disaster strikes.

In food safety, the Commission has taken a 'farm to fork' approach to protecting European consumers. Animal and plant health inspectors, along with common husbandry and processing guidelines, aim to ensure both European consumers' safety and the smooth functioning of the food commodity market.

In counter-terrorism, new initiatives are underway to improve police cooperation, the surveillance of suspects and extradition procedures. The Council's Joint Situation Centre has ramped up efforts to produce high-quality intelligence about both external and internal security developments. Financial assistance has been made available to combat radicalisation both in war-torn countries and within Europe.

Perhaps the most innovative development of late has been the creation of 'Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements' to facilitate rapid and cohesive decision-making by the EU institutions in times of crisis.

In the area of civil protection, the EU has long-standing competences. In the 1980s, the Council approved a Commission programme to improve the interoperability of national civil protection systems and to increase capacities throughout the EU. In 2001, that authority was formalised with the approval of a 'mechanism' which enables the Commission to serve as a centre-point for the dissemination of emergency tools and supplies across the continent. DG Environment's Monitoring and Information Centre provides 24-hour-a-day information and coordination services.

In the area of transport and energy policy, to cite just two examples, plans are underway to develop a 'critical infrastructure protection' (CIP) programme to encourage reliability and resilience in essential services in the face of new threats. CIP efforts are supplementary to existing common rules on transport

safety (such as air security regulations) and 'best practice' guidelines for nuclear security.

Taken together, these developments suggest a new role for the EU on the European continent.

EU cooperation has always been justified by the need to protect European societies. The building of the European Coal and Steel Community, followed by the European Community, was based on the need to protect citizens from the ravages of violence and war. The difference today is that the EU has moved from *implicit* methods of protecting European populations (economic integration and intensive political contact) to *explicit* ones.[2]

A new way of thinking: the 'societal security' approach

Recent events suggest that European cooperation to protect citizens has come none too soon.

The September 11 2001 attacks on New York and Washington demonstrated the vulnerabilities of even the most powerful countries. The bombings in Madrid and London exposed the cross-border movements of terrorist networks. BSE (or 'mad cow' disease) and SARS served as reminders that today's threats stem from non-intentional sources, too. Similarly, natural disasters and technical failures remain the most likely – and potentially the most deadly – hazards on the European continent.

New vulnerabilities, some generated by European integration itself, compound the danger and hasten the need for cooperative solutions.

Europe's interconnected arteries move people, goods, capital and services, but can also propel once-minor threats to new heights. A glitch in an Austrian energy grid can shut down Internet connections in the Netherlands. An avian flu outbreak in Romania will affect food supplies across the continent. And a terrorist attack anywhere in Europe will send ripples through the continental security network and beyond.

European cooperation reflects a new-found focus on what might be called 'societal security'. This concept is increasingly used in national settings and reflects a new way of thinking about modern security challenges. It is not a

policy in itself; rather, it is a way of thinking about, and acting upon, threats to individuals and society's essential functions.

In the Brussels world of confusing security terminologies, and in the absence of a central EU strategy, societal security offers policy-makers some useful guiding principles.[3]

First, it acknowledges the growing array of threats (real and perceived) that face today's populations. In classical security thinking, threats originated from state-based enemies wielding military resources. Although such dangers still exist, the threats most likely to affect European populations today come from less defined sources, often in the form of nebulous terror networks, unpredictable flu outbreaks and rapidly escalating infrastructure failures. These threats know no borders and deterrence is not always possible.

Second, societal security recognises that the nature of modern threats demands an 'all hazards' approach that mobilises capacities across the policy spectrum. Military resources may play a role, but classic military tools are not enough – and not always appropriate.

The societal security approach implies that all sectors must address the challenges of protecting individuals and society's critical systems: the police, health-care officials, utility providers, transport industry personnel, etc. Each has a role to play. Within this mix, public officials must learn to work with private actors, and the military becomes one element to be mobilised as part of an overall response to severe societal disruption.

Third, the focus of security attention shifts when we adopt a societal security approach. Classical security concepts were geared toward protecting national borders from external attack. Military resources (and civilian ones too, in Sweden's 'total defence' approach) were to be used when territorial integrity was put at risk.

Ensuring territorial integrity remains an essential goal in societal security. But as integration and globalisation undermine state-centric notions of power and reveal new vulnerabilities within societies, equal attention must be paid to *individuals* and society's *critical functions*. By focusing on these two 'objects' of security, the societal security approach offers a specific focus around which to develop and elaborate policies.[4]

In short, this concept helps us to reorient our thinking about how we protect domestic populations. It forces us to reconsider how our changing societies generate new vulnerabilities and draws attention to the fact that mobilising for societal security is a cross-sectoral, cross-border and multi-level endeavour.

In these respects, the major contribution of this approach will become evident if it helps to remove the state-centric and sectoral-specific blinkers that dangerously narrow the way we address security threats in a modern era.

Applying the societal security approach to supranational policy-making in Europe puts recent developments into context.

We have seen initiatives at the margins of mainstream policy sectors aimed at correcting the potentially dangerous side-effects of market integration. A single energy market is regulated at the European level, but who is responsible for cross-border breakdowns in the electricity grid? Financial services are similarly governed through European cooperation, but national governments retain control when a major financial crisis strikes.

EU officials have been at pains to point out these anomalies, often using the security of individuals and key societal systems to justify new initiatives.

Societal security not only makes sense of existing developments; it also prescribes direction for the future.

A security system focused on protecting society's key functions would seek to protect sites where critical systems intersect. It would invest resources in the design and operation of everyday systems, from food production processes to guarding airport perimeters and monitoring sea-going cargo. It would identify vulnerabilities that hide quietly amongst the technologically complex systems that drive our societies. The goal is to prevent a 'cascading effect', where disturbances in one sector trigger breakdowns in another.

Societal security must be pursued on a multi-level and international basis. From their 'total defence' experience during the Cold War, the Scandinavians know that most security capacities are found at the local level. Security is as

much bottom-up as top-down (a philosophy that fits well with the EU's subsidiarity principle).

Cooperation in military and civilian security matters becomes critical in a societal security approach, as do close links between the public and private sectors. Societal security emphasises the international sources and effects of major disturbances. Given the massive economic and information links between Europe and the US, for example, transatlantic cooperation is critical to societal security in an age of globalisation.

Finally, the societal security approach includes principles of evaluation. Adopting it as a guiding principle for action does not mean that a new sector with new policies has to be created. Instead, this approach encourages all sectors to play their part in protecting citizens and critical systems. Capacity building in such areas as prevention, response and repair – for both known and unknown hazards – should become part of everyday policy management (a process known in EU jargon as 'mainstreaming').

Task Force findings: existing problems

Implementing a societal security approach towards protecting individuals and society's critical functions is easier said than done.

The Task Force highlighted a host of useful capacities within the EU institutions, which are usually initiated with the best of intentions but which are constrained by the legal, political and institutional nature of the Union's decision-making process.

The EU was not designed to take societal security concerns into account, nor is it legally mandated to do so. It has accumulated capabilities in a piecemeal fashion. Few policy-makers, at national and European level, are aware of the extent to which the EU is involved across the spectrum of safety and security issues. Although new crisis procedures and coordinating mechanisms are being developed, as one Task Force member remarked: "It's hard to teach an old dog new tricks."

How does the EU fare when assessed on the basis of societal security principles? The Task Force identified four recurring themes requiring policy-makers' attention.

Internal coherence or incoherence?

The various EU policies related to societal security have emerged in an incremental, *ad hoc* fashion. This is hardly surprising, considering the multiple legal bases that exist for such efforts.

For this reason, security and safety policies are often marginalised. The Common Transport Policy, for instance, is mainly geared towards making transport more efficient and promoting sustainable travel. Transport safety initiatives are therefore only addressed in the margins of the broader policy. The Commission's 'civil protection unit' is in DG Environment, which is preoccupied with policy activities related to environmental sustainability. Within the Commission's 'justice and home affairs' remit, efforts to protect critical infrastructure are peripheral to the higher-profile tasks of police and judicial cooperation.

Having emerged within separate institutional pillars and administrative units, EU activities succumb to the type of bureaucratic infighting that characterises much of the Union's policy system. Although coordination is improving, it remains difficult in the face of bureaucratic impediments.

Policy coherence is not the only aspect to suffer: such divisions sustain competing 'security' ideologies that often work at cross-purposes and obscure the recognition of commonalties.

A societal security approach does not prescribe a single, unified policy to manage modern threats. On the contrary, it directs attention to a variety of different policies, resources and capabilities that can be applied on a daily basis to protect the population. The key is to understand the commonalities amongst policies and to ensure that resources are mobilised to the greatest effect.

In the EU, attempts have been made to consolidate and establish bridges between the policies mentioned above.

After 9/11, EU leaders endorsed an Action Plan on Combating Terrorism in 2002, (followed, in 2005, by a Counter-Terrorism Strategy) to consolidate security-related measures. The objective of the Hague Programme, agreed in 2004, was to provide direction for the EU's myriad internal policies related to justice and home affairs (although the proposed Committee for Internal Security, tasked with improving 'operational coordination', never saw the

light of day). Last year, the Austrian Presidency prioritised the consolidation of natural disaster response capacities (prompted by the so-called Barnier Report) to ensure 'better coordination and focus' in EU activities.

However, such attempts are largely cosmetic. The EU's Counter-Terrorism Strategy is neither new nor innovative; it is essentially a laundry list of pre-existing initiatives that remain fragmented. The failure of the Constitutional Treaty explains some of the reluctance (and inability) to pursue 'real' reform.

The lack of coherence creates major problems. On a practical level, the EU is not leveraging its considerable capacities to ensure operational success on the ground. Resources to help cope with natural disasters are divided within the Community 'pillar' (aid and environment), for example, and can even be found in the ESDP's civilian response teams (CRTs). Health officials focus primarily on preventing threats to the population, while biological outbreak response teams are managed by environment officials.

Politically speaking, the *ad hoc* development of security and safety issues allows EU leaders to skirt major questions: why engage in such activities, what is their rationale and what effect do they have on national sovereignty and the security of citizens?

Inter-locking or inter-blocking governance?

The links between vertical levels of governance are a key focus for the societal security approach. Capacities and roles at various levels should be defined through mutual agreement, overlapping when necessary (to ensure resilience during breakdowns), and defined and rehearsed so that everyone knows what is expected of them in times of crisis.

The EU institutions will never play the complete role of a crisis manager in Europe. Their security contribution will rarely extend to identifying threats at the ground-level, or to cleaning up in the aftermath of a major attack. European officials will need to justify their 'value added', which, although substantial in principle, must be clearly specified and demonstrated through exercises with national and local officials.

The Task Force found little recognition at national and local levels of how (and why) 'Europe matters' in relation to security and safety in a particular

policy area. Some of this may stem from ignorance, or from the fact that the EU's work in this area is still at an early stage. It may also result from the different legal bases behind the EU's various activities.

In some areas, European cooperation is mandatory and local officials are required to take account of it. In others, national officials prefer to keep the EU at arm's length. Practitioners are often unsure of such legal nuances and unaware of European competences, and either ignore the Union completely or harbour false expectations as to what supranational capacities it can contribute to protecting citizens.

Local knowledge, national capacities and the supranational perspective must be used in tandem, rather than independently. We need to abandon any preconceptions that protecting societies today is an either/or proposition: i.e. that this should be done *either* at national *or* at international level. Societal security today must be viewed as an 'intermestic' task; i.e. one that requires the mobilisation of resources and actors across international and domestic lines.[5]

Without ensuring that multiple levels of governance work together to manage modern security challenges, Europe will be less safe.

Cooperation or competition with partners?

The societal security approach prioritises societies, not the territorial borders of countries.

This focus not only reflects the nature of modern threats and where they strike. It also points to the wide array of capacities required to address the modern security challenge. No single government, or group of governments, has all the capacities required to deal with those threats alone.

The societal security perspective looks beyond, and not just within, national boundaries for answers. This separates it from approaches such as 'homeland security', which focuses mainly on domestic matters and can potentially inhibit international cooperation.[6]

One disconcerting finding of the Task Force was the obvious lack of cooperation between the EU and other international organisations and third countries. Although cooperation in the area of health pandemics, where the

EU works with the World Health Organization, functions fairly well, cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on issues related to societal security is virtually non-existent.

In recent years, NATO's focus has become 'softer', including capacity building for civil protection, while the EU as an organisation has become 'harder', with new external policies in the form of military crisis management missions. In effect, the security profiles of the two organisations, while still distinct, have moved closer together.

Nevertheless, for political reasons, the EU has largely given up on cooperation with NATO on civil protection issues. This means that NATO, with its domestic air support strength, hazardous material response capacities and efficient command structures, will contribute separately to any crisis on the European continent.[7]

Poor cooperation also means that EU strengths, including its civilian resources, cross-sectoral capacities and administrative footholds inside national governments, may not be put to use during a NATO mission. Cooperation is improving in this respect, as demonstrated in Bosnia and Afghanistan, and possibly Kosovo in the future. But more work needs to be done.

The EU's cooperation with other countries, especially the United States, on societal security issues could also be improved. Economically, the two blocs trade at very high levels and have tightly knit financial infrastructures. Policies formulated on one side of the Atlantic – whether in the area of food safety, information technology protection or border security, for instance – inevitably demand a response from the other.

A focus on societal security exposes common vulnerabilities between the EU and the US, and improved Brussels-Washington relations in this area could strengthen both.

Public or private approaches to societal security?[8]

Public and private actors must work closely together to provide the array of resources required to tackle modern threats.

Businesses constitute a crucial part of the effort to protect citizens and key societal systems – not only because they often own and manage those

systems, but also because security companies now play an integral part in protecting citizens.[9]

This reflects a governmental trend over recent decades towards wholly or partially privatising the provision of the public services which power our daily lives, such as water, energy, transport and the Internet. Businesses not only provide essential services; they are also on the front line when threats and emergencies strike.

The resulting challenges are not hard to identify. Private firms are motivated by many factors (healthy profit margins are one) that can conflict with important societal goals. Investment in more robust infrastructures and activities that facilitate effective emergency management must be balanced with other priorities for cash-strapped utilities. Moreover, companies hold the resources and supplies to manage societal security threats, but they may also find themselves as accomplices to a threat. Differentiating the responsible partners from the 'rogues' presents yet another complex challenge.

For the EU, reconciling the differences in the way 27 Member States manage their critical infrastructures is exceedingly complex.

National governments have struggled for many years to sort out the operational, political and legitimacy problems associated with private ownership of public services. Some countries, such as Finland, have a strong history of partnership between the public and private sectors in emergency management and the protection of critical infrastructures.

The EU could learn from such experiences, although its unique multinational policy environment might limit the extent to which it can draw lessons from national settings.

For now, the jury is still out on the EU's success in forging private and public partnerships. In trying to put together a European-wide programme for protecting critical infrastructure, for example, the Commission discovered the challenges involved: private firms have lodged serious objections, while governments have questioned the idea of an overarching, mandatory programme.

But there are signs that EU officials are making a concerted effort to untangle the many challenges involved in integrating the private sector in public societal security policies.

Working Paper overview

Some words of optimism are in order. The EU, for all its current shortcomings, is very well-positioned to provide societal security in the future.

Globalisation has prompted a shift from state-centric, territorial-based notions of power and authority towards network-based and horizontal means of 'driving' society. At the same time, modern threats come not from states, but from nebulous sources. Terrorists, for example, operate in networks that are flexible and agile, and can reconfigure themselves to address their own new challenges and seize new opportunities.

It follows that governments must respond with equally horizontal, cross-border and flexible means to combat threats.

The EU can help to provide those means. European governance is often praised for its ability to overcome rigid hierarchies by facilitating transnational networks and increasing contacts between all levels of government. It epitomises the new types of governance that characterise today's societies. If it can leverage these strengths in the fight against modern threats, the EU may very well become a supranational 'model' for improving societal security.

However, this scenario requires more robust thinking about the future of the EU's societal security role. Indeed, many of the problems outlined above are linked to a single shortcoming: the lack of any overarching strategy for the future development of the Union's role in protecting citizens.

This shortcoming results from the disparate growth of existing initiatives and a poor understanding of the breadth of EU capabilities. The absence of strategic direction also precludes a wider debate that might improve operational effectiveness and draw the general public into a debate.

To kick-start a strategic discussion, the following chapters in this publication offer three alternatives for the EU's future development in this critical area:

- Option 1: '*muddling through*' under existing institutional and political constraints, presented by Antonio Missiroli and Mark Rhinard;
- Option 2: an *EU agency* to assume societal security responsibilities, presented by Arjen Boin and Bengt Sundelius;

- Option 3: *new forms of cooperation* akin to the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), presented by Magnus Ekengren.

Each chapter identifies the pros and cons of the proposed solution, and provides short-term and long-term policy advice for moving in that direction. The three alternatives are not mutually exclusive; instead, they offer a rich set of ideas that policy-makers can draw on in planning the future development of the EU's role in societal security.

We hope that policy-makers and scholars alike will consider these options carefully and evaluate the key issues they raise.

Mark Rhinard is Senior Researcher at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Stockholm, and Visiting Fellow at the European Policy Centre.

Endnotes

1. For a deeper analysis of the confusion surrounding nomenclature in the EU, see A. Boin, M. Ekengren and M. Rhinard (2006) 'Protecting the Union: Analysing an Emerging Policy Space', Special Issue of the *Journal of European Integration*, Vol.28, No.5.
2. Of course, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was the primary venue for European security cooperation for many years. The EU's change from an implicit to an explicit role in domestic security questions is a trend identified in M. Ekengren (2007) 'From a European Security Community to a Secure European Community' in H.B. Brauch et al. (eds) *Globalization and Security Challenges*, New York: Springer Verlag, and E. Kirchner (2006) 'The Challenge of European Union Security Governance', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.44, No.5, pp. 947-68.
3. The basic precepts of the societal security perspective are explored in D. Hamilton, B. Sundelius, and J. Grönvall (eds) (2005) *Protecting the Homeland: European Approaches to Societal Security*. Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University, USA. See also A. Missiroli (ed) (2005) 'Disasters, Diseases, Disruptions: A New D-Drive for the EU', *Chaillot Paper* 83, Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies.
4. Here the meaning of societal security diverges from the 'human security' concept recently advocated in developed country approaches to foreign policy. For more on human security, see J. Kotsopoulos (2006) 'A Human Security Agenda for the EU?', *EPC Issue Paper* No.48. Societal security is focused on individuals as they make up a population, thus providing a bridge between the safety of the individual and the security of the society.
5. Bengt Sundelius develops the 'intermestic' argument as part of his research into societal security. See his chapters in the works cited in footnote 3.
6. This point was made by Mattias Jennerholm, of the Swedish Emergency Management Agency, during a recent personal correspondence.
7. The European response to Hurricane Katrina, in which aid was provided from NATO, the EU, and individual states, demonstrated the divisions between the organisations. For more on the international contribution to Hurricane Katrina relief, see the article by A.C. Richard, Vice President of the International Rescue Committee, 'Katrina Aid: When the World Wanted to Help America', *International Herald Tribune*: 30 December 2006.
8. I would like to thank Lucia Montanaro-Jankovski for her contribution to this section.
9. The US Department of Homeland Security estimates that 85% of the services associated with national security, public health, and economic stability are privately operated.

‘Muddling through’ – a viable option for the future?

By Antonio Missiroli and Mark Rhinard

The growing role of the EU’s institutions in protecting individuals and society’s core systems from harm – what we term here ‘societal security’ – is a novel development.

There are few cases in the world today of nation states coordinating policies and pooling sovereignty in this sensitive area, one that affects the daily well-being of citizens and touches upon the roots of national responsibility. In this respect, Europe is breaking new ground.

Taking a multi-level, cross-national governance approach to developing societal security policies creates its own set of challenges, of course. The European Policy Centre’s Task Force on Managing Emergencies documented these challenges and drew attention to one central problem: even though some important policy tools and institutional capacities are emerging throughout the EU institutions, there appears to be little strategic direction guiding the Union’s contribution to societal security in Europe.

That finding provided the motivation behind this EPC Working Paper. As set out in the introduction, the goal is to present a number of options for the future development of the EU’s role.

This chapter evaluates one option that is familiar to most EU observers: ‘muddling through’, or ‘making do’, without any significant, formal overhaul of current institutional and political structures.

While apparently less bold than the options presented in subsequent chapters, we argue that this is a more practical and even advantageous approach. The EU displays a number of intrinsic qualities that should be preserved and leveraged, rather than cast aside, as its role in societal security expands.

We first outline these advantages to show how the EU is currently playing to its strengths: marshalling its resources in a way that can serve efforts to boost societal security well. We then consider several criticisms often made of the EU’s role in this area – including incomplete competences, incrementalism and fragmentation – and argue that these features may, in fact, be blessings in disguise.

There are, of course, limits to a muddling through strategy for the EU's future development in this critical area. In the final sections of this chapter, we evaluate existing limitations and set out practical ideas for short-term reform. In this respect, this chapter is best described as outlining a 'muddling through *plus*' option for the future.

EU developments in societal security

The EU has stepped into the struggle to manage new threats to domestic populations and key societal systems.

Threats such as terrorist attacks, infrastructure failures, pandemics and natural disasters are not 'new' *per se*. What makes them novel is the context in which they now strike. Closely-linked and interconnected societies exacerbate vulnerabilities and make such threats difficult to manage.[1]

Recent events, ranging from the Madrid and London bombings to the spread of BSE ('mad cow' disease) and SARS, have focused minds on how the EU can contribute to societal security.[2]

What kinds of related activities have we seen emerge? Drawing from the findings of the EPC Task Force and other scholarly research, we find an impressive array of what might be called *formal* activities, such as new policies in specific areas.

These range from civil infrastructure protection programmes (in the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security) to avian flu preparation guidelines (in DG Health and Consumer Protection), and from counter-terrorism initiatives (in both the Commission and Council) to contingency planning for agricultural crises (in DG Agriculture).

Moreover, structural reforms have been introduced, including new rapid response mechanisms, the creation of crisis centres inside the EU institutions and new procedures for crisis management decision-making.

These formal, explicit activities, which are documented in greater detail elsewhere,[3] reflect a serious attempt by the EU to examine and address the vulnerabilities generated by our increasingly interconnected societies.

The EU is also making significant progress through less formal means as well. Attention is rarely paid to the Union's host of in-built, *generic* capacities that, one can argue, make it particularly well-suited to contribute to the goals of societal security now – even if those capacities were not developed with societal security in mind.

First, consider the impressive range of monitoring and surveillance tools at the EU's disposal. Almost every Commission Directorate-General already has 'eyes and ears' able to track trends within particular sectors. Using information technology, human and professional networks, and technical reporting systems, the EU institutions have the capability to follow routine trends and identify 'deviations' that might raise warning flags.

This is extremely useful in the light of modern threats. Increases in hospital admissions, terrorist suspect 'chatter', a rise in illegal poultry trade from certain regions or in water flows from major tributaries, can signal impending crises.

Second, the EU has a comprehensive set of existing regulatory tools in its governance arsenal. These stem from the EU's development as a cross-border regulatory regime *par excellence*, with decades of experience in forging common approaches to difficult public policy problems.

Such regulatory tools span the range from voluntary guidelines to mandatory decisions, but the real advantage here is the Union's experience in managing complex regulatory processes. This involves many actors working together and reconciling diverse interests – a proven skill of the EU institutions. The European regulatory model also has a demonstrated ability to bring partners up to common standards, thus strengthening the 'weak links' in the chain. Applied to societal security, the EU's experience in formulating common regulations could prove a distinct advantage for its Member States.

Third, the EU has a unique and deep well of expertise to draw on. Every day, thousands of officials and experts descend on Brussels to address challenging technical questions. These individuals have highly specialised information which can contribute to formulating policies which are both of high quality and accommodate the interests of 27 different countries.

The ability to marshal expertise is another of the EU's generic capacities which is useful for societal security. When it comes to developing like-minded approaches to preventing threats and making preparations to deal with

emergencies, or calling on experts during an actual crisis, the EU can assemble and access such networks relatively quickly – a task that many national governments find challenging, to say the least.

Fourth, and most generically, the EU has become a familiar and trusted platform for cooperation over the past five decades. Recent squabbles over institutional reform and the rejected Constitutional Treaty mask the fact that when it comes to cooperating on new issues, European leaders instinctively turn to existing EU avenues – and they do so much more often than their official rhetoric suggests.

While the Union's institutional framework is complex and has some shortcomings, it has been agreed through treaty negotiations between sovereign states. These states interact regularly and keep sizeable diplomatic delegations in Brussels. The EU institutions also effectively solve many of the collective action dilemmas for European states that prevent cooperation amongst regions in other parts of the world.

Taken together, the EU's formal and generic capacities put it on a strong footing for the future. They also suggest the need for caution before taking any steps towards dramatic reform. Future reform efforts need to be justified in terms of how such changes could help to manage modern threats.

The fact of the matter is that we have little experience and understanding (at all levels of government) of the demands of crisis management in a complex society. This reality calls for a pragmatic approach that builds on existing strengths – not necessarily sweeping ideas for new competences and comprehensive programmes.

EU shortcomings: blessings in disguise?

One area in which the EU is open to criticism concerns the way in which its current societal security capabilities have evolved. Claims of fragmentation, incrementalism and incomplete competences (all factually correct) are used to support the argument that major changes are needed if the EU is to become an 'effective' societal security actor.

However, this begs the question: what criteria should be used to decide on the best way to ensure societal security in the face of complex threats? Research on this question is underway (kick-started by the EPC's Task Force

on Managing Emergencies), but is far from complete. In this section, we consider the three main criticisms of the EU's role in societal security in turn.

The 'problem' of *incomplete competences* has been used to argue that the EU is a partial societal security actor at best.

It is true that the Union's competences vary dramatically: in some areas, cooperation is strongly 'communitarised', while in others, it resembles tentative intergovernmentalism. Moreover, the EU is more active in some phases of crisis management (prevention, deterrence, preparation and response) than others. It will never become a 'first responder' (i.e. the first on the scene in the wake of a disaster) because most of the resources required to mitigate the impact of crises are found at national level. Analysts looking for a strong Union role across all the phases of crisis management are therefore likely to be disappointed.

However, drawing such a conclusion is not only premature, but may also be misguided. Do we really want the EU to replace national governments as the central actor in societal security?

On the contrary, the EU and national governments need to play complementary roles. The Union's existing capacities, outlined above, suggest that it is working to its strengths. Community institutions are well-equipped to take a 'bird's eye view' of the threats on the horizon in several different sectors and across the whole of Europe.[4] Experience with avian flu, where the EU has raised useful warning flags and brought national actors together to address common problems, is a good example of its 'added value' in specific phases of threat and crisis management.

Similarly, the *incremental and unguided development* of the EU's societal security role has been criticised.

It is certainly true that there is no 'grand plan'. The EU was never designed to carry out the security tasks it is now being asked to perform. The integration process proceeds at a deliberate (some would say plodding) pace for good reason: to ensure that it reaches high-quality policy decisions that accommodate diverse interests. In areas that raise sensitive issues of national sovereignty, EU Member State governments must often be brought on board slowly. In general, existing EU institutions are not particularly well-suited to the fast-paced and quick decision-making required for many societal security activities.

Incrementalism might actually prove to be a useful feature of the EU's development. The Union must learn to walk before it can run. As a unique experiment in taking a cooperative approach to societal security, the EU resembles, as one Task Force member put it, "a barefoot man walking through a dark wood".

Difficult questions still abound, such as how to divide competences between governance levels most effectively, to what degree capacities should be centralised and to what extent Member States can be expected to implement new programmes. By moving slowly and reactively, the EU is learning by doing – a responsible strategy for future development.

Finally, much has been made of the *fragmentation* of the EU's societal security activities. This is indeed a challenge to coherent policy-making. EU initiatives emerge from different parts of the policy and institutional spectrum in Brussels, often with only lip-service paid to the interconnections between activities.

But we should be wary of reforms which risk over-correcting the fragmentation problem. Complete policy cohesion is not only impossible; it also assumes that there is a central actor who takes final decisions. Such assumptions fall into the 'command and control' myth that security is best provided by clear hierarchies and a formal division of tasks (see the chapter by Boin and Sundelius in this Working Paper).

As the September 11 2001 attacks and the Katrina disaster demonstrated, some degree of flexibility and local control can be quite useful for identifying potential threats and responding to crises when they occur.

In short, policy-makers should think twice before castigating the EU's apparent 'problems' in protecting individuals and key societal systems. The Union has considerable intrinsic strengths in this area. Furthermore, incomplete competences, incrementalism, and fragmentation may prove to be blessings in disguise when it comes to working with Member States to provide societal security in Europe.

By muddling through, the EU can not only preserve these hidden (and counter-intuitive) strengths – it can also build its societal security capacities carefully, taking all relevant factors into consideration.

The shortcomings of muddling through

A muddling through strategy, however, is not free from criticism. To continue on a 'business as usual' path encourages complacency in several areas that need particular attention.

One such area is a lack of awareness of the EU's contribution to societal security. This affects three different levels of 'stakeholders'.

At the EU level, the EPC's Task Force (through its own efforts to bring officials together) found that many officials in the EU institutions were not aware of activities taking place outside their respective departments – even though these activities were closely related to, and sometimes overlapped with, their own. Although centralisation and total cohesion are neither possible nor desirable, improving intra- and inter-institutional understanding about different initiatives could enhance efficiency.

The current lack of awareness amongst EU officials is sometimes matched by a lack of willingness to acknowledge and engage fully in the emergency management activities taking place around them.

This reluctance was especially evident in relations between officials in the Commission and Council regarding new initiatives launched by the Joint Situation Centre (SitCen), for example. These initiatives rarely attract the attention of all Commission officials working on crisis and emergency management issues.

Even within one institution, different departments tend to be inward-looking (focusing on turf building) rather than outward-looking (building synergies). The creation of more than five new crisis centres within the Commission over the past two years suggests that officials may be duplicating resources for reasons of bureaucratic politics.

A similar lack of awareness can also be found at the national level, with equally worrying effects. National emergency management personnel (both policy-makers and operational staff) focus primarily on national preparedness for major emergencies. According to the testimony of national representatives who participated in the Task Force's work, the EU contribution, and the value it can add to local efforts, does not appear to enter into national decision-making calculations.

This may stem from the fragmented nature of the EU efforts to address societal security issues, or it might be explained by a more practical problem: namely, that the EU's added-value has not been thoroughly fleshed out. Either way, a greater awareness at the national level would encourage Member States to participate more in discussions on the EU's contribution to societal security and to work with the Union on this issue.

Admittedly, a muddling through strategy is unlikely to draw national officials more deeply into the EU's activities in this area. National input is crucial in this area of policy-making in order to analyse whether the EU's societal security capacities can be used 'on the ground' and in the 'heat of the moment' – insights that can only be provided by experienced national personnel. Moreover, the implementation of new policies may suffer if few officials feel it necessary to work with the EU on emergency management issues.

There is also a lack of public awareness of the EU's role. Although many of the Union's initiatives in the field of societal security are highly technical, taken as a whole they reflect two related developments: the EU's move into a qualitatively new type of cooperation in Europe and its participation in a multilevel system of emergency management.

Both developments should matter to citizens, given that when the next major crisis or catastrophe strikes, Europe's multi-level emergency management system will be tested. EU leaders would do better to address these implications, and the inevitable 'blame game' that will follow, today rather than waiting for the next crisis. A muddling through strategy alone is not likely to prompt them to do so in the near future.

Conclusion: muddling through and patching up

The insurmountable hurdles which the EU's Constitutional Treaty has run into during the ratification process demonstrate that, in today's Europe, it has become increasingly difficult to conceive of – and implement – a big institutional 'leap forward' in any area unless there is an immediate need to respond to a major collective challenge. Even then, political attention fades in the aftermath of major crises and the pressure for policy change can disappear.

As a result, the EU is probably set to continue muddling through both institutionally and in developing policy in this area. However, this does not

rule out minor and sensible adjustments, and a degree of planning – all without touching the existing EU treaties or making inroads into the prerogatives of the Member States.

The following four steps should accompany a muddling through strategy:

1. High-level (even if informal) responsibility for the broad range of societal security efforts now underway should be clearly assigned within the EU institutions.

In the Commission, President José Manuel Barroso has already set up two internal 'teams' of Commissioners to deal with multi-sectoral issues.[5] We can envisage another team dedicated to emergency management and societal security, arguably comprising the Commissioners in charge of Justice, Freedom and Security, the Environment, Agriculture, Health, Consumer Protection, Energy and Transport.

Such a team should be guided by the President himself, in order to encourage intra-institutional communication and manage bureaucratic turf wars inside both the College and the services. A dedicated unit within the President's *cabinet*, or within an expanded and revitalised Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA),[6] could easily function as an informal platform for communication in this area.

The Council Secretariat could follow a parallel path. Secretary-General/High Representative Javier Solana should appoint a personal representative to coordinate Council-related activities and bodies, and liaise with individual Member States. He or she would need to work closely with the director of the Council's SitCen and its counter-terrorism coordinator.

At a later stage, deeper interaction and integration might be considered, and these two operational 'terminals' (in the Commission and Council) are hopefully bound to collaborate ever more closely.

2. The Commission must enhance its links with national officials at every stage of the policy process relating to societal security.

When policy is being formulated, new initiatives should take account of existing national emergency management systems. This is an extremely complicated task in the new EU of 27 Member States, which perhaps

explains why recent Commission proposals have appeared to include ideas that duplicate or overlay, rather than integrate with, existing national approaches to emergency management (critical infrastructure protection is one such area).

During the implementation phase, a similar rule should apply. Imposing a 'one size fits all' approach is unwise and potentially damaging to successful national projects. Rigid institutional and operational procedures imposed from the top down are surely unconstructive. Instead, the Commission should involve national representatives closely and learn from successful initiatives both within and between Member States.

At times, the Commission appears to overlook the flourishing bilateral and regional links in the current EU. The Benelux countries (plus Germany) have joint agreements in place, as do some Mediterranean countries, while the Scandinavian approach to cooperation in emergency management has followed a well-trodden path of cooperation in security matters since the end of the Cold War. These experiences offer useful lessons for the EU institutions.

3. The EU must engage in more testing and organise more scenario exercises as part of its emergency management planning.

To date, only a handful of sectors have held such exercises, including pandemic preparedness; Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) weapons response; and the joint crisis coordination arrangements coordinated by SitCen. The Commission's crisis centres, along with ARGUS (its horizontal crisis information systems) are used occasionally, but have not been put through a full-scale test.

Scenario exercises serve a variety of useful purposes. They help to identify existing strengths and expose weaknesses. By forcing officials to make quick decisions and mobilise resources, they show if well-worn assumptions stand up under pressure.

Considering the complexity of EU political and institutional arrangements, the more scenarios conducted the better: with each exercise, more problems can be exposed and fixed. This trial-and-error approach fits with our 'muddling through' strategy and means the EU need not wait for the next 'real' emergency to begin patching up the system.

4. The EU should formulate an awareness campaign to inform its own officials, national public servants, and the general public about the EU's role in the safety and security of domestic populations.

Such an effort runs counter to conventional EU practice, which involves quietly toiling away with concerned national officials in the hope of finding policy compromises.

However, by raising awareness, the EU can initiate a useful debate that will, in turn, force leaders to decide what general mission binds the Union's diverse initiatives together and how its efforts 'fit' with those of national governments in Europe's emerging societal security system.

For the reasons outlined above, policy-makers should carefully weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing a muddling through strategy – but act now to 'patch up' current problems.

Endnotes

1. For insights on how the process of European integration itself has played a role in increasing vulnerabilities, see A. Missiroli (2006) 'Disasters Past and Present: Challenges for the European Union', *Journal of European Integration*, Vol.28, No.5, pp. 423-436.
2. For exploratory inroads into this new policy domain for the EU, see A. Missiroli (ed.) (2005) 'Disasters, Diseases, Disruptions: A New D-Drive for the EU', *Chaillot Paper* 83, Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies; and, A. Boin, M. Ekengren, and M. Rhinard (2006) 'Protecting the Union: Analysing an Emerging Policy Space, *Journal of European Integration*, Vol.28, No.5, pp. 405-422.
3. See the introduction to this working paper by M. Rhinard. See also the Progress Report of the EPC Task Force on 'Managing Emergencies' (November 2006), edited by V. Matthews, available on request from the EPC.
4. See A. Boin and M. Rhinard (2005) 'Shocks Without Frontiers: Transnational Breakdowns and Critical Incidents', *EPC Issue Paper* No.42.
5. Currently, those teams address external policy and immigration issues, respectively. Barroso is the leader of the former, while Vice-President Franco Frattini leads the latter.
6. BEPA reports directly to the Commission President on issues regarding forward policy planning.

Managing European emergencies: considering the pros and cons of an EU agency

By Arjen Boin and Bengt Sundelius

Introduction: what role for the EU?

Not so long ago, academics wrote in alarmed tones about the increased vulnerability of modern society, but their calls fell on deaf ears.

Their argument was a solid if complex one: that the ongoing integration of infrastructures, social systems and countries not only drives economic progress, but also opens the door to hitherto-unknown emergencies and disasters. Advances in technology have also created new types of disasters – and this combination of increased vulnerability and evolving threats spells trouble. However, the optimism of the new millennium led to these concerns being dismissed as 'crying wolf'.

All this changed dramatically on September 11 2001. Suddenly, the world felt smaller than ever before. Western countries appeared weak and unprotected. Events proved that some basic knowledge and a few resources were enough to bring the mightiest country in the world to a halt, provoking a state of fear across the globe. Subsequent attacks around the world exposed the inability of governments to respond to impending threats in an effective and convincing way. The 'future crisis' had arrived.

EU Member States reacted in an uncommonly coherent fashion to these frightening new uncertainties. With each new attack, they invested additional authority in the Union's budding security apparatus. Ambitious policy statements, strategy papers, crisis mechanisms, new programmes and a counter terrorism 'czar' saw the light of day. All this came about without any 'master plan' or guiding philosophy.

We call this category of threats 'transboundary emergencies', i.e. threats to the multiple life-sustaining systems that span borders and connect states, and which can morph and jump both geographical and functional boundaries. They do not occur very often, but when they do, they can have a devastating impact, undermining societal security.

In a relatively short time, the EU has developed considerable capacity to deal with such transboundary emergencies, in response to two key factors.

First, there is an undeniable symbolic dimension to these collective efforts, with each step forward following a tragic event. It is said that crises drive the EU's development, and this certainly rings true when it comes to the Union's capacity to manage emergencies. Member States have historically had a tendency to shift problems and accompanying tasks to Brussels if these cannot be addressed effectively at the national level.

Second, there is a genuine belief that contemporary threats to European society – embodied in the 'new terrorism' – demand a coherent and forceful multilateral response. The evolution of the EU's emergency management capacity is thus not just symbolic; it involves building real capacities to enable the EU institutions to help manage transboundary emergencies.

In the introduction to this Working Paper, Mark Rhinard reminds us that the EU was never intended nor designed to deal with acute emergencies at home (transboundary or otherwise).

It has very limited *explicit* mandates that are primarily aimed at preventing or detecting 'domestic crises' at an early stage (the important exception being in the area of animal health). It has some *implicit* authority that enables it to coordinate Member States' efforts, but, in the absence of actual 'European' emergencies, this remains untested.

If the EU is to become an effective crisis manager at the supranational level, much needs to be done.

Over the past 15 years, Member States have agreed to establish new EU agencies to solve pressing policy problems, and there are now 25 of these dealing with emerging issues that the Member States want to see addressed more effectively at the supranational level. A logical next step in the development of emergency management capacity could be the creation of an EU agency with responsibility for this.

If recent history is a guide, it will only be a matter of time (and a few dramatic events) before Member States consider granting additional authority to the EU institutions. Rather than investing more resources and authority in the existing, fragmented emergency management system, we

expect increasing calls for a new agency to be set up as part of the EU's growing role in ensuring societal security.

In this paper, we explore the idea of a professionally staffed, semi-independent EU Agency for Emergency Management. We discuss the logic of centralising command and control structures and consider the potential costs.

In doing so, we take into consideration both the experience of national agencies and research findings, although these must be understood in the specific context of the EU, since lessons gleaned from national experience and international governance theory might not be readily applicable at the European level.

Transboundary emergency management and the centralisation reflex

In the autumn of 2006, a seemingly minor accident in Germany caused a massive power outage in ten European countries. Fortunately, the breakdown only lasted for a few hours and occurred on a Saturday night, when the demand for power is relatively low. Still, the speed with which this transboundary incident reverberated across the continent took the authorities in the Member States by surprise.

The defining characteristic of a transboundary emergency is its potential to jump the borders of nations and systems, snowballing into a disaster of international proportions. A small incident can race through the tightly connected systems that define modern society, gaining momentum and changing shape as it goes.

Given that such emergencies can take many forms, they are impossible to predict, hard to detect, difficult to stop and costly to recover from.

Experts predict the number of these types of emergencies to rise in the near future. They point to modern society's ever-increasing complexity and the close links between the various life-sustaining systems, all of which provide minor glitches with plenty of potential to develop into full-blown emergencies.

They also point to the rise of catastrophic transboundary threats to societal security such as fundamentalist terrorism, climate change and bio-engineering, with governing authorities in a race against time to deal with them.

Experts also agree that national governments will not be able to manage these emergencies independently and will need to collaborate, quickly and effectively, to stop an escalating crisis in its tracks.

There are five tasks that governments will have to perform to contain them: find the source of the problem; address it before its knock-on effects transform it into a different type of emergency; explain what is happening and what is being done; act on lessons learned; and account for their actions once the emergency is over.[1]

These tasks are not as easy as they may seem. Research has shown time and time again that public authorities routinely fail in the performance of these tasks (the response to Hurricane Katrina provides ample illustrations of this). To perform them in a multilateral setting magnifies the challenges.

However, experts disagree on the best way to manage transboundary emergencies.

Pessimists find the very idea of emergency management rather misleading, as they do not believe that such events can be managed (let alone prevented). This school of thought tends to suggest rather extreme measures, ranging from huge investments to strengthen society's resilience to retreating from modernisation.

Optimists, on the other hand, advocate an array of administrative and technological tools designed to prevent, detect and manage emergencies. The technological tools typically include modern communications and information systems, custom-built crisis centres and an abundance of hardware, while the administrative tool of choice is usually some form of centralised command and control structure.

A failed emergency response usually prompts calls for a more centralised response. In the wake of 9/11, most Western governments have upgraded their response systems, typically strengthening the political and administrative centre, thereby reducing the discretion given to lower administrative levels.

In the face of emergencies, leaders are expected to govern with a firm hand, much like a field commander in battle. In preparing for these events, the professionals should be granted the authority to do just that – or so the conventional wisdom goes.

This strong belief in the virtues of professional command and control during an emergency coincides with the rise of the semi-independent government agency in Western societies.

The 'new public management' revolution has ushered in the ideal of the specialised agency, operating far away from daily politics in pursuit of its crucial tasks.[2] In recent years, the European Union has seen an explosion in the number of such agencies.

We assume that it is only a matter of time before the idea of establishing an EU emergency management agency (whatever name it may be given) will be given serious consideration. (Indeed, this is precisely what happened after the electricity black-out mentioned above.)

In anticipation of this call for a centralised EU response capacity, we consider here what such a supranational body could do to manage transboundary emergencies.

The seductive charms of a central agency

There are at least three arguments in favour of creating an EU agency that could take responsibility for managing transboundary emergencies.

It can be argued, from a *functional* perspective, that a central agency would make for more effective emergency management; from a *political* perspective, that it would benefit both the Council and the European Commission (thus creating a rare win-win situation); and from an *institutional* perspective, that it would overcome the artificial legal distinctions that nurture inter-institutional and departmental infighting.

Taken together, these arguments provide a powerful rationale.

The functional argument: effective emergency management

There appears to be no stronger argument in favour of centralisation than a botched crisis management operation. A slow, uncoordinated response marred by poor preparation and weak leadership seems to beg for centrally consolidated command and control structures.

Drawing capacity and responsibility together under one roof is thought to enhance the speed, coordination and efficiency of the response. The reforms

that followed the events of 9/11 (creating the US Department of Homeland Security (US DHS)) and the Katrina disaster (strengthening the autonomy of the US Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA) illustrate this initial reliance on the apparent benefits of centralisation.

This reflex comprises a set of intuitively acceptable assumptions:

- one agency means one point of contact, providing clarity for all involved;
- bringing all operational capacities together in one agency reduces the administrative complexity of the response network, making coordination easier;
- information is channeled to one point, creating a unified awareness of the situation;
- having all the decision-makers working side by side means critical decisions can be made more quickly;
- having one agency simplifies and thus clarifies legal and financial responsibilities;
- bringing resources together enlarges the administrative strength of the response;
- eliminating overlaps reduces costs;
- having all the information in one place facilitates the post-emergency learning process.

The political argument: strengthening the EU

Both the Council and the Commission could benefit from the creation of a central agency, especially if it is an inter-institutional body, as we will argue later.

It would give the Council (and thus the EU's Member States) the opportunity to enhance EU capacities without ceding more authority to the Commission. By ensuring that the agencies' governing boards are made up of their representatives, Member States believe they can retain control over new supranational capacities.

An agency would also provide a less opaque alternative to the current complex and fragmented structures that currently characterise EU decision-making on security-related issues. A central agency would mean a central point of access and thus, in principle, a central point of control and oversight.

At the same time, the creation of a central agency would enhance (albeit indirectly) the Commission's executive powers. At present, most of the EU's emergency management capacities are scattered among the Commission's

disparate bureaucratic departments. Even when these can be marshalled during a crisis, the Commission largely depends on the willingness of Member States to act rapidly and in accordance with its intentions.

Creating a central agency, endowed with capacities and means, would foster a Union approach to emergency management – an ideal the Commission is actively pursuing.

The institutional argument: ironing out inefficiencies

The current state of play in European emergency management is characterised by fragmentation, inter-institutional strife, and cross-pillar divisions. Capacities are scattered across European institutions and within bureaucracies. The Council and the Commission create their own structures and mechanisms, leading to duplication and overlap. The pillar structure, in turn, tends to isolate certain capacities within particular policy domains.

Taking a bird's eye view, a more efficient system would certainly appear desirable.

This is, of course, precisely what the proponents of an EU emergency management agency can – and will – promise. By concentrating capacity and responsibility in one visible organisation, much of the overlap could be eliminated. This would make EU emergency management more efficient (cheaper) and accessible (democratic), and less prone to bureau-political tensions (professional).

Given the many cultural, institutional and political barriers conspiring against a multilateral coordinated response to an emerging threat, creating such an agency would appear to be a relatively painless organisational fix for the hard-to-solve problem of capacity.

However, lest we get ahead of ourselves, we should consider the possible drawbacks of a central agency.

The centralisation reflex reconsidered

A serious debate about the feasibility and potential benefits of creating an EU emergency management (EUEM) agency should begin by re-examining the problem it is intended to address.

Those who call for a new EU agency envision it as a solution to a problem that exists now or is expected to arise in the near future. Moreover, they believe it to be a superior instrument to deal with the problem at hand (or those that may arise in the future). Both these notions are not entirely beyond dispute.

To begin with, there is no agreement on which capacities are required to deal with modern threats. It is hard to assess which of the EU's legal, political-administrative and policy-making capacities could be used to manage transboundary threats.

If we knew what exactly was needed to prevent, stop and recover from such emergencies, we could conceivably formulate precise criteria and measure the EU's range of competences against them. Alas, this knowledge is not available.

For instance, more research is needed on the origins, dynamics and consequences of transboundary threats. While there is a lot of talk about the various threats, very few have actually materialised in Europe. They may occur more frequently in the future, but for now they remain very rare yet high-stake events.

Moreover, there is very little research available on how supranational organisations can deal with these types of threats. The very large US Department of Homeland Security is still expending much of its energy on overcoming what Arthur Stinchcombe termed "the liabilities of newness" – and it did not excel in its first 'field test', Hurricane Katrina (2005).

The unique character of the EU – somewhere between a federal state and an international organisation – means that the few available experience-based insights may be irrelevant.

The crucial question yet to be answered is how a hybrid entity such as the EU can deal with transboundary threats.

To consider if the creation of an EUEM agency is both feasible and desirable, and how it could operate, we draw from two academic fields: public administration and crisis research.

The former tells us much about the creation and effectiveness of public organisations, while the latter contains important findings about the functioning

and effectiveness of centralised response agencies. The combination of these bodies of knowledge generates some important considerations that should be taken into account when proposing an EUEM agency.

1. A new organisation can help tear down existing barriers to cooperation, but it usually creates new ones

A prime reason for creating a new organisation is that it brings together the various tasks and capabilities previously spread between different agents, preferably in one location. This brings about integration, cooperation and synergy. This, at least, is the driving idea.

However, while this may happen, the intended synergies are often blocked by newly erected walls *within* the new organisation. The demands for specialisation, accountability and managerial ease tend to create subdivisions within the organisation, which, in turn, require better internal coordination.

2. Coordination in, and of, EU agencies is a complex task

Running any emergency management organisation is usually an arduous task, as it is hard to prepare for unfamiliar, critical events that tend to occur without any warning. This challenge is compounded by the complexities of managing an organisation in an international and highly political environment.

Different expectations and conceptions of the tasks involved must be aligned, but EU agencies' management responsibilities are usually watered down to ensure the EU institutions remain in the driving seat.

The question then becomes whether the crisis management tasks lifted from well-established EU institutions (e.g. Commission Directorates-General) would be better performed in a new EUEM agency.

3. Bringing all information together does not automatically lead to timely and unified assessments of impending threats

With hindsight, every disaster looks preventable. If only all relevant information had been assembled in the same place, the signals of the impending crisis would have been heard and remedial action could have been taken.

This line of reasoning builds on the common misunderstanding that impending threats 'transmit' early warning signals, if only we could hear them!

The normal solution is to organise a system for listening, interpreting and acting. However, the harsh truth is that threats often emerge in unsuspected, and often inconceivable, 'creeping' ways. Most emergencies are fundamentally 'unknowable' – we do not know what the next 'big one' will look like, when it will strike and how we can recognise it before it occurs.

4. Speedy decision-making does not always lead to the best decisions

The myth of effective crisis decision-making revolves around quick decisions taken under intense pressure, so bringing together all the decision-makers in one organisation appears to be self-evident. It is not.

To be sure, life-or-death decisions must be made during many types of emergencies, but such decisions are usually made at the operational level. Top-level policymakers rarely have to take them, as they are in the business of coordinating, delegating, communicating, and facilitating.

Speed is not the real issue here, but rather the quality of the decision. Performance is measured in terms of the direct and cascading consequences that flow from a given decision. It remains unclear, at best, how centralising the process will improve the quality of crisis decision-making and public communication.

5. One point of view may be the wrong point of view

It is often assumed that bringing all information into one point will help bring about a unified and shared point of view. This is, indeed, quite likely. It is also often thought that such a shared view aids the timely discovery of emerging threats. This may be true, as long as the shared view is the correct one.

However, this is not always the case. One usually arrives at an accurate assessment of the situation through careful deliberation and considering multiple perspectives. Stripping an emergency management organisation of such multiple perspectives may be efficient, but it rarely makes the organisation perform its tasks more effectively.

6. Powerful agencies attract political controversy

A new agency will expend much of its initial energy on designing routines and attracting experts and resources. To survive, it must perform well from the start.

Without a track record, and confronted by many enemies, any new agency is politically vulnerable. Building a new agency is not a *tabula rasa* exercise, since creating a new command and control centre (by taking away capacities from other institutions) will give rise to fierce political infighting, which may well paralyse it structurally.

7. A professional agency still has to deal with intergovernmental politics

Much of the rationale behind creating an EUEM agency is fuelled by the desire to address the shortcomings of existing institutions and procedures at the European level. However, one of the main obstacles to any EU-inspired adventure is found at the national level.

Even if a new agency provides shortcuts to get around many EU constraints that may hamper a supranational response to emerging threats, it will run into problems with the Member States and their traditions, routines, organisations, laws and political preferences.

In fact, an authoritative EU agency may exacerbate national fears by providing an identifiable common enemy or a scapegoat.

A brief overview of the literature does not provide much ammunition for the proponents of an EUEM agency.

It appears that centralising command and control does not necessarily result in better crisis management – as underlined by the recent experiences with the US DHS. In response to a predicted disaster (Hurricane Katrina), this mammoth organisation encountered all the problems mentioned above. The negative political fall-out has been tremendous and has reduced its capacity to perform.

It would, however, be wrong to conclude that, by definition, centralisation is an ill-fated adventure. In the final section, we consider some principles for the institutional design of a professional EUEM agency.

Recommendations for smart design

What can we expect from the EU when electricity grids across Europe fail, when an outbreak of smallpox on the continent is announced or when terrorists strike in multiple European capitals?

These are so-called *low chance, high impac*t events, for which we expect Member States to ask for assistance, as they will be unprepared and unable to cope with them alone. The question is: what can the EU do and what should it be able to do?

One can argue against an EU agency tasked with the acute response phase (thus resembling the well-established and formerly independent US agency, FEMA). However, an EU agency for pre-response activities (such as emergency preparedness) makes sense: building joint capacity to manage transboundary emergencies would enable those with operational responsibility for responding to crises (at various levels) to be able to do so effectively.

A closer look inside the newly-created US DHS, which is composed of numerous autonomous and well-established agencies, provides a good example of what such a facilitating strategy might entail.

The DHS has a federal mandate to develop capacity across the US so that agencies which operate in the field – such as rescue services, police units, border and airport controllers and the coast guard – can perform effectively in acute situations.

Turning research insights into improved field practice, through training and exercises, is one of the mandates of the DHS' umbrella structures. The same logic could apply to an EU agency. The focus would not be on an organisational quick-fix, but on the gruelling (and rewarding) effort of building transboundary emergency management capacity over time.

This agency could begin by concentrating on coherence. It could enhance joint capacity through standard setting, building inter-operability, and developing training programmes and shared information bases, without falling into the traps of misplaced centralisation. This is how the DHS works to enhance coherence across 50 states and thousands of municipalities.

Moving beyond preparedness, the EU might be expected to coordinate responses to crises originating both from within and outside the Union.

A European-wide crisis response would benefit from a central platform provided by the EU, possibly in the form of an agency. However, careful deliberation will be required to give this body authority beyond coordinating an EU-wide pooling of available resources, as the analysis in this chapter demonstrates.

The institutional status of such an agency would also require careful consideration. Rather than choosing between a Community or Council structure, we would advocate an inter-institutional constellation: i.e. an agency that can draw upon the Commission's expertise while remaining accountable to the Council.

To this end, an *ad hoc* legal status may have to be devised, which also makes room for expertise from the Member States.

This calls for a clever design to avoid paralysis. If there is one single problem that such an agency should address, it is the inter-pillar tensions that currently undermine a coherent and coordinated response to transboundary emergencies.

As operational capacity would still be located at the national level (and would, in many Member States, be shared with the regional or local levels), the subsidiarity principle would still be respected.

This is a good thing. After all, emergency management touches directly upon the core responsibilities of the constitutional contract between the people and their rulers. The EU must have clear 'added value' if it is to assume responsibility for certain emergency management tasks, and there must be clear limits on an EUEM agency's authority, decision-making powers and size.

What is needed, first and foremost, is a European debate to: identify Member States' expectations, consider the merits of centralising preparations for coping with emergencies and responses in a measured way, and clearly spell out potential costs.

Before EU leaders create a new agency, they must pinpoint what the Union can contribute to the complex task of providing emergency management

and explain why the benefits of creating such an agency outweigh the inevitable pitfalls.

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The views expressed in this chapter are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect those of SEMA.

Endnotes

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Societal security cooperation: what role for the Open Method of Coordination?

By Magnus Ekengren

EU societal security and the need for new methods of coordination

The EPC's Task Force on 'Managing Emergencies' provided a unique overview of an emerging field of EU activity.

It revealed how the Union has met new security and safety challenges by creating capacities in a timely, innovative and pragmatic manner. It also identified many of the weaknesses stemming from the *ad hoc* nature of solutions, unclear competencies and big differences in national crisis management systems, which hamper the exchange of information, institutional coordination and interoperability between national systems.

Despite such problems, there seems to be an enduring belief amongst practitioners that existing methods of cooperation can provide all the solutions. Existing institutional methods, new procedures for swift decision-making and *ad hoc* coordination amongst Member States are seen as the answers to what are fundamental problems.

The premise of this chapter is that such an approach greatly underestimates the challenges facing the Union in taking on a new responsibility for societal security.

The problem is that the policies and principles of EU societal security require a common understanding of what constitutes a threat, long-term strategies and effective coordination of crisis management capacities, not just at central government level but also at other levels within the EU Member States.

None of these requirements are currently being met, which explains why practitioners so often complain about the striking gap between expectations and capabilities in the Union's security policies, and the lingering lack of trust in the EU as a viable crisis manager.

There is therefore now an urgent need for an in-depth discussion of practical ways to implement a societal security approach in the EU.

The institutional challenge is of historic magnitude. The aim of many societal security policies is nothing less than to transform the Union's traditional 'passive' multi-sectoral, functional cooperation in long-term conflict prevention into 'active' crisis management policies for immediate implementation.

Since the Lisbon Agenda was launched in 2000, the EU has been pursuing a similar objective in the field of economic policies, where the aim has been to deepen integration by creating a border-free market and to 'actively' pursue political goals such as 'growth and jobs' and the creation of a knowledge-based economy.

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest a way of strengthening EU societal security strategies and the coordination of national administrations' activities in order to boost the Union's crisis management capacity. The proposed method is based on applying the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) – currently used in the Lisbon framework – to respond to the societal security challenge in Europe.

This approach is based on the conviction that there are clear limitations to strengthening the EU's security by coordinating rapid response capabilities or introducing binding commitments for Member States.

Instead, tools are needed that can foster common approaches in the long term, involve more levels of national administration and non-governmental actors, and put pressure on Member States to harmonise their systems and implement common decisions without posing a threat to national sovereignty.

The need for new and more 'open' forms of EU cooperation is underlined by big differences in the field, both in national emergency structures and in sector-specific requirements. The OMC has demonstrated its potential to meet exactly this type of 'multi-level' challenge in other EU policy areas.

This chapter begins by discussing the challenges involved in fostering societal security in Europe and outlines the reasons why today's institutions and methods are insufficient to meet these challenges. This is followed by a brief description of the OMC and its possible application in the field of EU civil protection cooperation, as an example of its potential. The chapter ends with a critical discussion of the pros and cons of the OMC in the field of EU societal security.

The challenges

Generally speaking, the political and institutional challenges involved in EU societal security can be summarised as follows:

- Strategic-political capacities are relatively weak in all sectors. There is a growing awareness that Europeans are facing common threats, but as yet there are no concrete signs that Member States are prepared to make the leap to a grand strategy which would require them to give up their sovereignty for the sake of efficiency and the common good.
- The *ad hoc* character of the EU's crisis management is striking (see Mark Rhinard's introduction to this Working Paper).
- There is a very strong focus on operational, management aspects in many key areas relating to societal security (civil protection, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), intelligence). This is unfortunate given that the Union's greatest comparative advantages – and those which can provide most 'added value'– are probably in the preventive and preparatory phases of crisis management.
- There are still great national variations in most sectors.
- Cross-sector communication and capacity is low not only at the EU level, but also within national or even city systems (Madrid 2004, London 2005).
- Although they are supervised by the Union, most preparedness objectives and plans are still national (e.g. pandemic preparedness), and there are very few EU guidelines in this area.
- The link to other international actors is weak and unclear.

Sector-specific challenges

Different EU competences in different policy areas have resulted in challenges that are specific to each sector.

In the area of animal health, for instance, there is a clear EU competence, with legal acts implemented by well-established and predictable networks of national and European officials, which guarantees a high degree of compliance. The drawback of this strictly-guarded judicial division of competences is that, in practice, it leaves the EU with responsibilities that are too narrow and ignores crucial issues such as the need for rapid integration with other relevant policies.

In other sectors such as intelligence and human health, where the legal basis for action is weak, the pattern of implementation varies greatly among Member States.

Here, new and less coercive approaches than law-making are proposed as a way to strengthen harmonisation, while at the same time avoiding perceived threats to national sovereignty: for example, EU 'targets' and 'headline goals' (ESDP); recommendations and principles (critical information infrastructure); best practice and peer pressure (intelligence, national pandemic-preparedness plans); inspections (animal and human health); direct and indirect subsidies; improved horizontal cooperation (intelligence); and threat definitions (critical infrastructure).

The question is to what extent Member States will comply with, and follow, the EU guidelines.

Other policy areas, such as civil protection, have a solid legal basis, but suffer from an exclusive focus on operational aspects and the lack of a medium- and longer-term strategy.

In summary, some sectors need a stronger legal basis that can complement non-binding capacity goals, while others already equipped with a legally-compelling armoury often lack the necessary flexibility to handle unforeseen crises.

Long-term challenges

The challenges to EU societal security also reflect longer-term processes. The practical aspects of developing a societal security approach require complex multi-level policy-making, which in turn generates a process in which national characteristics, loyalties and competences are increasingly reconciled with EU instruments and actions, but also create tensions and dilemmas between the two levels.

A process which creates expectations at both levels and complementary national and European institutions, but also duplicates existing activities and leads to disputes over competences, may generate a need for further institutional change.

The lesson to be drawn from a study of EU multi-level governance is the importance of creating mechanisms and arenas able to 'fuse' European security agents into one policy process which can implement common rules and prepare the ground for rapid coordination efficiently.

The Union should try to foster multi-level administration for European societal security and crisis management, based on mutual respect for the subsidiarity principle; i.e. that the EU and national levels should try to avoid interfering in each other's competences as much as possible.

An administrative system is needed that can turn decisions taken centrally into rapid legislation or assistance at the appropriate levels and that favours long-term organisational learning and the building of mutual trust between EU institutions and agencies, and among Member States.

To sum up: the main challenge is to create a 'common template' that enables the EU institutions and national administrations at all levels to converge over time to provide the capacity for all phases of crisis management.

In many sectors, the challenge is to complement the legal basis for societal security with appropriate operational political-strategic instruments – and to establish a more coherent framework for the many different types of non-binding tools found in different sectors, in order to gain a better overview and encourage cross-sectoral learning, coordination and evaluation.

To what extent can the OMC meet all these challenges?

Open Method of Coordination: multi-level governance by objectives

The main element of the OMC consists of EU guidelines, adopted by the Council of Minister (on the basis of Qualified Majority Voting), which allow the Union to set common long-term goals in a given sector and specific timetables for meeting them.

Member States are tasked with meeting the EU's objectives using common quantitative and qualitative indicators that allow for comparison, benchmarking, learning from best practices, and occasionally naming and shaming (in the event of national failures to meet agreed goals).

The Commission leads the process by coordinating National Action Plans (NAP) which describe how Member States intend to translate the EU guidelines into national and regional policies.

The idea is that EU objectives should leave national governments with sufficient room for manoeuvre in implementing common targets to allow for national diversity and flexibility. The aim is to provide a monitoring and learning process where regular peer reviews are the only sanction. There would be no legal penalties for non-compliance.

It has often been said that OMC provides for EU multi-level governance by objectives. The lack of binding rules means that the Union has to compensate for this through strict monitoring.

On the basis of past experience, it seems that the Union has to exercise an almost constant influence over the interpretation of common objectives and national instruments in order to coordinate national governments' policies, implying a 'partial delegation of power' from the Member States to the EU. In employment policy, sub-national actors, local and regional authorities and social partners have been instrumental in developing and implementing the European objectives.[1]

EU 'preparedness' guidelines and National Action Plans for EU crisis management capacity

In applying the OMC to a central policy field such as civil protection and critical infrastructure protection, the Council would adopt common 'preparedness' guidelines for Member States to follow.

The Union's goals could cover everything from national governments' plans for producing a vaccine to combat avian flu to the reforms needed in national agencies to improve the effectiveness of EU alert systems.

The guidelines could be seen as a long-term complement to the current short-term capacity goals and coordination mechanisms.

Member States' efforts could be assessed annually on the basis of Council/Commission reports. The Commission should also take into account the diversity of national conditions when evaluating the implementation of EU 'preparedness' guidelines. Political recommendations could be issued to those Member States which do not abide by their commitments to meet the EU objectives.

The result could be a learning process, as in the other policy areas where

this method has been applied, with the creation of long-term structures to produce active norm- and standard-setting networks.

By applying the OMC, the EU could establish a more sustainable system, encompassing regional and local security and emergency actors, and providing for benchmarking to facilitate 'transgovernmental' cooperation. Achieving 'deeper' national levels of civil and societal defence is crucial for the efficiency of emergency management – a field that, to a large extent, has traditionally been characterised by a bottom-up, decentralised non-governmental structure.

Advice could be sought from the growing number of experts in the Member States and the EU's institutions.

One important question concerns how to formulate the 'preparedness' criteria that would form the basis of comparison and peer pressure between Member States.

These should be based on capacity indicators aimed at fostering national preparedness to provide European assistance, a division of labour between Member States based on their comparative advantages, and stronger incentives for those which possess the appropriate means.

The case of civil protection

The OMC should be applied with great sensitivity towards sector-specific problems and an awareness of the concrete shortcomings of existing instruments.

For example, as the Task Force found, one of the problems with the Union's civil protection cooperation has been the almost exclusive focus on immediate emergency response to the detriment of prevention, preparation and longer-term consequence management.

In the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, the Commission launched a consultation process with EU governments on transforming the existing civil protection tools into a broader instrument capable of addressing the prevention of, preparedness for and response to disasters.[2]

The Commission defined three objectives for Union action: to support and complement Member States' actions; to promote swift and effective operational

cooperation between national civil protection services; and to promote consistency in international work.

To this end, it proposed that, in some form, EU governments should declare their 'firm commitment' to joint action in delivering civil protection assistance and reinforcing EU coordination capacities, such as an 'operational planning capacity' for the Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) and a common unit on site with the formal authority to coordinate the assistance.

The aim is to increase the MIC's capability to mobilise military means, hire equipment that Member States cannot obtain for themselves and promote a system of specialised national modules for European use. According to the Commission, these standby modules should be deployed 'quasi-automatically' when asked for by an 'appropriate European authority'.[3]

In their response, many Member States emphasised the need to respect national sovereignty and the principles of subsidiarity, and warned against any reform that did not strengthen the EU's added value. Many of them argued that the Union's role was, first and foremost, to coordinate support for national interventions and hence they favoured the proposals to improve the MIC.

There was also a broad consensus on the need to strengthen the Union's capacity to act in the area of prevention, preparedness and public information.

However, most Member States were hesitant about creating a standby capacity for mutual European assistance, not least on the grounds that the composition of national and European teams needed to be as flexible as possible in a situation where future disasters are 'unknown'. Different types of teams are needed for different interventions and they should be composed of personnel dealing with emergencies on a daily basis.

Some Member States argued that the idea of a flexible modular system required further discussion.[4]

Again, the great challenge in developing EU civil protection relates to the tensions between the need for common action, concerns about national sovereignty and practical, sector-specific needs.

The OMC can help the Union to strike the delicate balance required by developing both legal instruments (such as the Council Decision on civil protection), and political and strategic objectives.[5]

EU preparedness guidelines could include measures to combat long-term risks to civilians, the environment and critical infrastructure. These objectives should be based on common assessments of the threats and causes of accidents, and should be supported by crisis scenarios, training schemes and competence requirements for personnel, as well as indicators to achieve ever greater interoperability between national systems.

National modules could be made sufficiently flexible for European-wide use by deciding on the exact composition of the teams on a case-by-case basis, while ensuring that Union standards are respected.

These standards could also serve as indicators to be met in crucial areas of common concern, such as transport capacity for European civil protection assistance and the protection of critical infrastructure.

Member States should aim to meet these goals through annual 'National Preparedness Plans' closely monitored by the Council and promoted by the Commission. Policy recommendations should be issued to Member States which do not comply with the agreed guidelines and indicators. These could result in a system in which they could use the MIC to request long-term prevention and preparation assistance as well as consequence-management support.

The insights gained from each Member State's National Preparedness Plan would facilitate better coordination in preparing aid and rescue operations, so that support could be sent to the scene of the emergency at short notice.

Comprehensive national plans would also provide a more solid basis than today's 'capacity lists' for future discussions on how the EU's role should be shaped in order to provide the greatest added value and constitute a truly 'extra-national' asset.

In the long run, this dialogue could evaluate the pros and cons of establishing a permanent, standby EU civil protection force.

Pros and cons of the OMC in EU societal security

The OMC would undoubtedly provide a viable template for EU societal security, improve coordination and encourage national administrations to act without threatening their sovereignty.

General guidelines for this policy area as a whole could be translated into sector-specific strategic goals. The first EU guidelines could be based on a joint Council/Commission report.

The key critical question is to what extent, in the absence of coercive mechanisms, the pressure of EU benchmarks and monitoring could drive changes in national policy.

In other policy areas, scholars have found little evidence of such changes as a result of the OMC, and critics have pointed to a blurring of the lines of responsibility and accountability between the EU and Member States.

This risk could be avoided by a clearer legal division of competences between the different levels, by, for example, regarding the national level as mainly responsible for societal security for the foreseeable future. This issue will, of course, always be problematic in an area as sensitive as citizens' security.

Another challenge in relation to societal security is whether the OMC will be able to involve 'all relevant actors'. Here one could imagine the Union adopting a whole range of guidelines adapted for the national, regional and local levels, respectively.

How could the EU guidelines be drawn up to take account of the diversity in national systems, and make it possible to transfer best practices from one Member State to another?

A debate is already underway in other policy areas about how to complement the OMC with more binding rules and European legislation. Fritz Scharpf has suggested using a combination of differentiated 'framework directives' and the OMC as a way to make Member States comply without creating a system that is overly rigid and does not accommodate the diversity of Europe's policies.[6]

However, the advantages of the OMC are currently stronger than the disadvantages. The only alternative to the *status quo* and the current problems is

to create long-term common outlooks and preparedness guidelines by political, non-binding means, combined with specific legal instruments.

Rather than establishing far-reaching treaty obligations for a certain type of support or formalised 'firm commitments', as the Commission has suggested, the OMC could provide the necessary practical guidelines for voluntary EU solidarity, as would have been required under the Solidarity Clause in the Constitutional Treaty.

In practice, this will probably be sufficient to mobilise the necessary European resources and activity. Those Member States which already possess the relevant means are unlikely to refrain from participating in a system based on increasingly closer cooperation on common goals and resources, peer pressure, policy recommendations and mutual trust.

The OMC would also contribute to raising the political price of not providing assistance or adapting national emergency structures. It would create political pressure on the Member States to comply with EU guidelines and participate in joint training and exercises, as a soft-law solution may prove essential in the absence of a new institutional 'grand design'.

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Endnotes

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Conclusions

The future of societal security in Europe

The essays in this Working Paper aim to inject fresh thinking into the debate about the EU's role in safeguarding its populations and the functioning of its societies – what we call 'societal security'.

The EPC's Managing Emergencies Task Force sought to open policy-makers' eyes to the EU's growing role in societal security; this Working Paper is designed to help them to look to the future.

The goal of all three options outlined earlier in this paper is to encourage policy-makers to take the EU's emerging role more seriously, explore its strengths and weaknesses, and provide strategic direction. Each essay presents a distinct option, and debates its advantages and disadvantages. Together, they provide rich grist for the mill of policy debate over the EU's future role in societal security.

Four main issues arose repeatedly in the course of the Task Force's discussions. The introduction to this Working Paper outlined these in the form of rhetorical questions to policy-makers. This concluding chapter revisits them in the light of insights gained from the essays.

Internal coherence or incoherence?

This question is intentionally provocative, of course; no level-headed policy-maker would argue for incoherence.

As things currently stand, the EU's societal security policy tools and administrative capabilities are spread across its institutions. A plethora of policy units have some emergency or crisis management responsibilities, but these units rarely communicate directly with each other either on an individual basis or collectively. Inter-departmental and inter-institutional tensions generate poorly coordinated policies.

The real issue here is how to achieve coherence while preserving in-built strengths and avoiding the introduction of new, rigid decision-making structures. The authors caution against the 'centralisation reflex'; i.e. the notion that all problems can be solved through a command-and-control, hierarchical system of authority.

Experience teaches us time and time again that empowering local specialists (whether in organisations or geographical locations) in acute situations is crucial to prevent threats becoming full-blown crises.

The first step in improving coherence is to raise awareness within the institutions of the EU's growing role in societal security. Many officials know little about their institution's competences and the array of activities taking place. By mainstreaming a greater appreciation of societal security, EU officials can help to adapt old mindsets to new challenges, and impress upon colleagues that scanning the horizon for impending threats, preparing for crises and acting effectively when they do occur is everybody's business.

Interlocking or interblocking governance?

This question is arguably the most fundamental, as it evaluates the proper relationship between the national and supranational levels in the area of societal security. Clearly, most of the capacity for protecting populations should remain at the national level in Europe, with the EU stepping in where there are clear gaps and/or demonstrated 'added value' in European cooperation.

The authors in this Working Paper encourage the EU institutions to show a healthy respect for existing arrangements at the national level, since these include long-established capacities and well-known strengths in the various EU Member States, as well as successful bilateral and regional relationships which are already producing results in various parts of Europe.

Some of these relationships revolve around agreements that could provide a model for European-wide cooperation. The study being carried out by European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security into the cooperation between the Nordic countries on critical infrastructure is a step in the right direction.

The EU should see its role in Europe as empowering – through capacity building and support – the many government agencies and private entities that operate in the field. Rescue services, police forces, airport guards, border control agents, coast guard patrols and others are on the 'front line' of modern threat management. Adding value to these existing efforts should be the EU's criterion for getting involved.

The Union could improve relations with national governments by focusing on its own strengths, such as its ability to increase administrative capacities

across Europe through common programmes, foster information exchange and facilitate technical, cross-border cooperation.

In that vein, the EU could turn research on new threats and crisis management into relevant training programmes, with European officials taking the lead in continent-wide training and exercises. This would play to the EU's strength in building capacity and consensus over time.

Cooperation or competition with partners?

The EU is not the only platform for societal security cooperation in the world, or even in Europe. Other organisations, such as NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and third countries such as the US, share many of the same concerns and are developing their own capacities for addressing modern security threats.

We have already seen how overlapping competences and poor communications have caused problems between the EU and other international and national organisations (such as those that arose and hampered the European response to the Asian tsunami and Hurricane Katrina in the US). Can these problems be overcome?

The EU is arguably better suited than NATO to address the whole range of societal security issues. In particular, the Union excels in many of the non-acute phases of societal security, such as monitoring to identify potential crises, defusing threats and preparing for emergencies. NATO has stronger operational capacities, such as air transport and rapid mobilisation teams. Yet the two organisations' remits are clearly beginning to overlap and better coordination is crucial. One could easily argue for a division of labour between the two.

However, before functional solutions can be proposed, political questions must first be answered. NATO and the EU do not share the same membership and have evolved with very different missions. Without a political consensus on cooperation, the situation is unlikely to improve in the near future.

The prospects for greater EU-US cooperation are slightly better. Several of the authors in this Working Paper note that the two blocs, which share a long history of partnership, face many of the same challenges. The US federal government is trying to facilitate cooperation amongst diverse agencies and autonomous entities in the area of 'homeland security', in much the same way as the EU is trying to coordinate activities in Europe. The EU and US

also face a number of shared threats, including terrorism, cyber-crime, health pandemics and natural disasters.

Given the similarities between the two blocs and the common challenges to providing for societal security, it is worth considering recasting the 'New Transatlantic Agenda', last updated in 1995. One of its four main objectives is to "jointly respond to global threats", an area where progress could be made through a common focus on the exigencies of societal security. This should be added to the agenda of the forthcoming EU-US and G8 summits during Germany's EU Presidency.

Public or private approaches to societal security?

This is another intentionally provocative question, intended to spur thinking about how best to organise for societal security in today's world.

The private sector holds many of the keys to protecting citizens. Businesses run utilities, dominate the Internet and even provide security services. Many of the core functions that keep the wheels of our societies turning are now managed by private firms.

On this issue, the EU could learn much from national experiences. Member State governments have worked with private firms for many years to encourage business behaviour which is more in line with the public interest. Finland is a good example of a country that traditionally works well with the private sector, both on revenue-based activities and non-revenue-based projects that benefit the public.

However, national governments can compel private firms to cooperate more easily than the EU can. In the short term, therefore, the Union must use other incentives.

The upcoming Security Research Programme, an addition to the Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7), will dispense almost €1.5 billion in research funding over the next seven years, and there are hopeful signs that this will be used to draw the private sector into European-level cooperation on societal security-related activities.

This should be encouraged, and the Commission should use the insights gained from such research to create effective working relationships with private entities.

Making Europe safer

The expansion of EU policy competences used to be accompanied by much fanfare. In the 1980s and 1990s, scholars seized upon EU treaty negotiations as evidence of a remarkable regional integration process taking shape. Politicians burnished their credentials by widely publicising how EU agreements ensured peace, improved prosperity and benefited European citizens in their daily lives.

That fanfare seems to have all but disappeared, replaced by the clouds of concern that currently hover over Brussels. The 'No' votes to the Constitutional Treaty in the French and Dutch referenda, along with 'enlargement fatigue', have raise doubts in the minds of many about the future of the European project.

This Working Paper shows that despite current pessimism, European integration has not ground to a halt. The EU is moving ahead with the creation of a multilateral and multilevel system for emergency management in Europe. No other organisation in the world has matched this either in a similarly concrete fashion or at the speed with which it is evolving in Europe.

Could the EU's success in forging ahead with what we call 'societal security' provide a way out of the current gloom? It could indeed, if communicated properly and responsibly to the European public.

Opinion polls suggest that there is widespread support for EU actions related to protecting lives. A concerted push to improve Europe's societal security would not only show that the EU is still relevant, but also that it is capable of meeting new challenges in a complex and insecure world. The next threat is already on the horizon, and much work needs to be done.

Executive summary

The EU's role in providing for the safety and security of its citizens is steadily increasing, but lacks coherence and a strategic direction.

This Working Paper aims to inject fresh thinking into the debate about 'societal security': a new way of thinking about, and acting on, threats to individuals and society, reflecting the complexity of modern threats and the resources required to manage them.

It acknowledges that the growing array of threats in today's society come from a wide range of sources and recognises that the nature of modern threats demands an 'all hazards' approach, mobilising capacities across the policy spectrum to address the challenges of protecting individuals and society's critical systems.

The EPC's Task Force on Managing Emergencies identified four key challenges in developing the EU's societal security role: problems related to coherence, national involvement in the process, international cooperation and the role of public/private partnerships.

The essays in this publication offer three alternatives for the EU's future development in this critical area. Each identifies the pros and cons of the proposed solution, and provides short-term and long-term policy advice for moving in that direction.

Option 1: 'muddling through' under existing institutional and political constraints, building on existing EU strengths.

The authors argue that the EU has two distinct advantages in societal security: the formal policy instruments at its disposal and the generic, inherent properties that characterise EU cooperation. Officials should leverage these advantages, rather than risk casting them aside in a major reform effort. But some 'patches' are needed to improve its operation, with greater attention paid to potential threats in all policy sectors, perhaps by 'mainstreaming' the central precepts of societal security.

Option 2: an EU agency to assume societal security responsibilities.

The authors argue that the creation of a quasi-independent agency might help to solve a number of functional, political, and institutional challenges

facing the EU in developing its societal security role. Consolidation could produce efficiencies, enhance the effectiveness of decision-making and provide a reference point for national officials working with the EU. However, there is a risk that a single agency could damage the Union's inherent strengths. The creation of new structures may lower some barriers to cooperation but raise others, new hierarchies risk undermining flexibility and the consolidation of decision-making authority does not always lead to good decisions.

Option 3: new forms of cooperation akin to the Open Method of Coordination (OMC).

Noting the uneven participation of Member States in societal security cooperation, the author suggests that a lack of confidence in the traditional 'Community Method' might be the cause. Member States see the value of working together to protect Europe's population, but do not want the type of oversight and compliance mechanisms that can stifle cooperation. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) would enable them to work together under less formal pressure, with policies formulated and decided upon through a voluntary process of information sharing, standard setting and peer evaluation. This might not, however, solve all the problems involved. Some issues require a neutral third party to enforce decisions and shape behaviour, and without legal leverage, dangerous inefficiencies and self-interested behaviour could develop.

These three alternatives are not mutually exclusive; instead, they offer a rich set of ideas that policy-makers can draw on in planning the future development of the EU's role in 'societal security'.

Annex

Managing Emergencies Task Force

List of speakers

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Andrea Servida	DG INFSO, European Commission
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Alison Weston	Council of the European Union

List of participants

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