



# Az Európai Unió katasztrófavédelmi politikájának elemzése és lehetséges irányai II.

## Examination and Possible Directions of the European Union's Civil Protection Policy II.

---

Lieutenant Gergely Takács  
National University of Public Service, Doctoral  
School of Law Enforcement  
PhD student  
Email: gergely.takacs@katved.gov.hu  
ORCID: 0009-0003-2232-5041 

Ret. Major General Dr. Árpád Muhoray, PhD  
National University of Public Service, Doctoral  
School of Law Enforcement  
Professor  
Email: muhoray.arpad@uni-nke.hu  
ORCID: 0000-0003-3832-293X 

---

### Absztrakt:

A szerzők előző cikkükben összefoglalták és bemutatták az Európai Unió katasztrófavédelmi szakpolitikájának fejlődését a 80-as évektől napjainkig, külön fejezetben szóltak az akkori kihívásokról, és az azokra potenciálisan adható rendszerszintű válaszokról. Az azóta eltelt közel egy évben több olyan fontos változás is érintette nem csak a szakterületet, hanem tágabb értelemben az európai biztonságot és védelmet is. Megtörtént az új veszélyhelyzet-kezelésért felelős uniós biztos kiválasztása, összefoglaló jelentés készült az EU polgári-katonai felkészültségéről, a NATO legerősebb tagja a szövetségből való kilépés gondolatával játszik, mindezen felül a természeti katasztrófák klímaváltozás miatti növekedésével és szélsőségesebb hatásaival is számolnunk kell. Bár mindezek az események egy egyre kiszámíthatatlanabb jövő képét festik fel, a jelenleg rendelkezésünkre álló információk sokkal pontosabb támpontot tudnak adni arról, hogy várhatóan mi fogja meghatározni az Európai Unió katasztrófavédelmi szakpolitikájának irányait.

**Kulcsszavak:** Európai Unió, katasztrófavédelem, polgári védelem, szakpolitika, civil-katonai felkészültség, Niinistö jelentés

### Abstract:

In their previous article, the authors summarized and presented the development of the European Union's civil protection policy from the 1980s to the present day. In a separate chapter, they discussed the challenges and the potential systemic responses. In the nearly one year since then, several important changes have affected the field and European security and defense in a broader sense. The selection of a new EU Commissioner for Emergency Management has taken place, a summary report has been prepared on the EU's civil-military preparedness, NATO's most powerful member is toying with the idea of leaving the alliance, and we must also reckon with the increase and more extreme effects of natural disasters due to climate change. Although all these events paint a picture of an increasingly unpredictable future, the current information can provide a much more precise clue as to what is expected to determine the directions of the European Union's civil protection (disaster management) policy.

**Keywords:** European Union, civil protection, policy, civil-military preparedness, Niinistö report

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The protection of people, the environment and property against disasters cover a broad set of emergencies – a complex topic that requires the active effort of both institutional and individual actors. As a consequence, protection means ongoing measures and actions to maintain a status most desirable for continuous development. In view of recent environmental and man-made, political events, member states of the European Union seem to be in need of cooperation in the field of emergency management more than ever.

According to the European Climate Risk Assessment [1, p. 11.], the European continent has been warming twice as fast as the global average since the 1980s, becoming the fastest-warming continent on Earth. As 2023 was the warmest year on record and the first to exceed 1.5°C, this is foreseen to lead to an increase of number and extremity of heat waves, forest fires, droughts and floods. Though the EU has been occupied with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and started to re-evaluate its own defence capacities, the expected increase in number of natural disasters and their extremity is to be tackled in comprehensive approaches that integrate disaster management and civil protection into a broader security strategy that addresses not only the immediate impacts of disasters but also their potential to become hybrid threats as well.

To effectively manage these challenges, the EU has started to actively focus on strengthening its emergency management – both natural, man-made, and hybrid – capabilities. As past developments was the main focus point of the previous article [2], now the topics of present and future will be touched upon: the overall financial framework, the newly appointed head of the EU emergency management, and the guidelines and recommendations set out in a current comprehensive report.

## 2. FIANCIALISING THE QUESTION

The EU budget for civil protection is part of the broader Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which sets out the EU's long-term budgetary priorities. The total EU budget for the current period 2021-2027 is approximately €1.2 trillion [3]. Within this framework, the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) currently has a budget of around €3.71 billion [4] for this period. This budget is made up of two main parts: €1.263 billion from the MFF allocation and €2.056 billion from the Next Generation EU (NGEU) [5], the latter specifically aimed at addressing recovery needs in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. The remaining budget is from voluntary donations of other countries and entities (see fig. 1).

The NGEU funds are used to expand the rescEU mentioned in the previous article, i.e. to build strategic reserves such as firefighting and MEDEVAC aircraft, emergency medical teams, medical and CBRN stockpile, etc. The European Commission has achieved this financial “freedom” (since it is a loan) to directly procure and deploy rescEU capacities in the logistics hubs [6] where they will reach their destination as soon as possible after their mobilisation via the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC). By practically tripling the budget, the EU's civil protection system has become much more proactive and therefore more effective.

As the current multiannual financial framework ends in 2027, the European Commission is already preparing [7] for the next MFF, starting in 2028, through public discussions. The value or importance assigned to a service is given by its budgetary weight, the financial framework intended to be spent on it. In light of the above, it is likely that in the future, in addition to ad-hoc additions, the financial support proportion of the UCPM fund will increase – which currently barely exceeds one thousandth (!) in percentage terms.

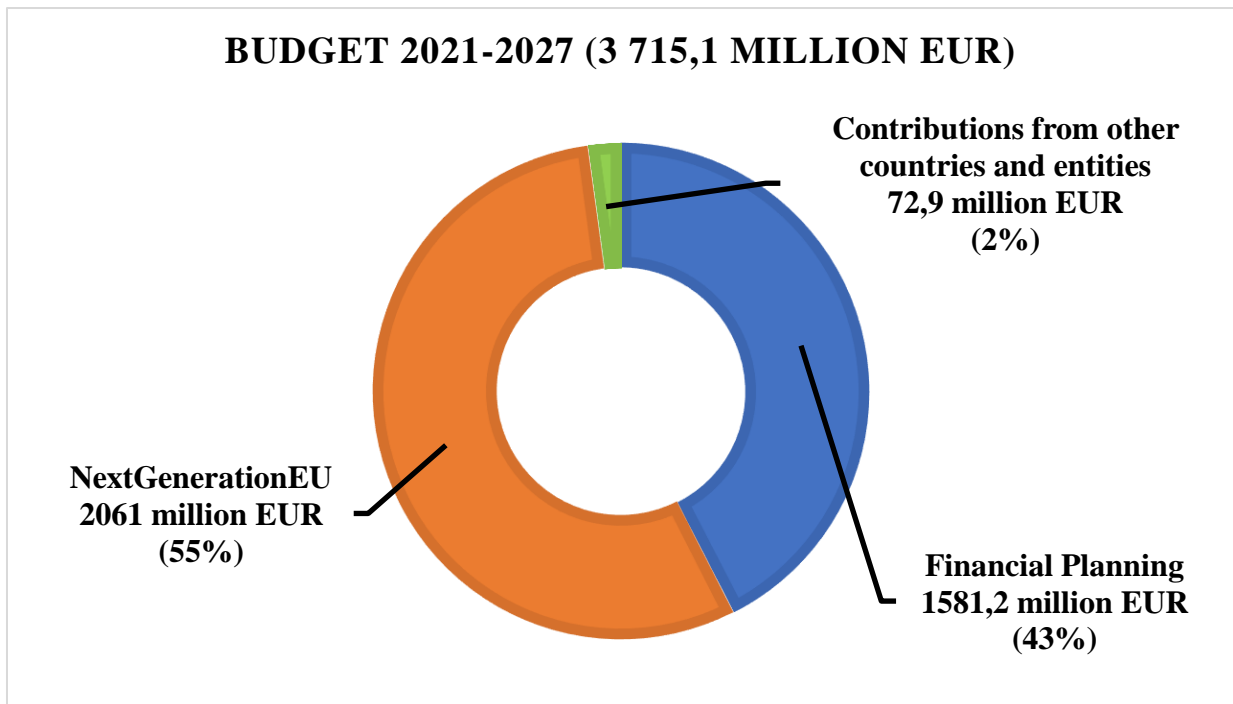


Fig. 1: Civil protection budget distribution. [made by the authors]

### 3. NEW COMMISSIONER, NEW TASKS

The current European Commission, which took office on 1 December 2024, has been given the portfolio of preparedness and emergency management to Hadja Lahbib [8]. Interestingly, the portfolio has also been supplemented with the topic of “equality”, which includes both challenges and opportunities in the next five-year term. While President Von der Leyen outlined her responsibilities in seven points in her mandate for the previous Commissioner, Janez Lenarčič [9], this was explained in 25 (!) points for the new Commissioner – 11 of which deal with the new portfolio<sup>1</sup>.

As the scope of tasks expands, the management of challenges goes beyond their quantity. Since the focus required to complete the increasingly complex tasks of civil protection may shift and lose its priority status, its role may decrease disproportionately in the absence of adequate (not only financial) resources. By placing the tasks of the two previously separate portfolios under one commissioner, this can of course also be said from the “other side”, i.e. the equality portfolio, and is even more pronounced [10, 11]. It can be interpreted as a positive that strengthening narratives related to equality, inclusion, and vulnerable groups<sup>2</sup>, and increasing awareness as widely as possible, can have a positive impact on the resilience of society in the spirit of preparedness and a whole-of-society approach. At the same time, associating the two portfolios may pose dangers in terms of specific interventions and assistance. Although the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance<sup>3</sup> have not changed, the value of gender equality or the idea of inclusion is not uniform across Europe, Africa, or the Middle East. Accordingly, targeted support of these values (besides the main humanitarian principles) for further deployments, missions, or support, assistance may take on an ideological edge that is difficult to reconcile with customary practice.

<sup>1</sup> An interesting fact that the letter of mandate primarily names Ms. Lahbib as the Commissioner responsible for equality, and only secondarily as the Commissioner for preparedness and emergency management.

<sup>2</sup> women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities etc.

<sup>3</sup> mainly humanity and impartiality

The three main questions for the future are what priorities the Commissioner, with a much more expanded mandate, will apply in her work, whether she intends to link the two previously separate portfolios, and to what extent this will maintain or increase the current effectiveness of European civil protection policy. The latter question is nuanced by the fact that several points of her mandate are included in the recommendations set out in the so-called Niinistö report.

#### 4. NIINISTÖ REPORT WITH A FINNISH TWIST

On 30 October 2024, former Finnish President Sauli Niinistö published a report on enhancing Europe's civil and military preparedness and readiness [12]. The main objective of the report is to assess the challenges and make proposals for enhancing the EU's preparedness for future crises. It points out that the Union's emergency management has so far been reactive, and therefore it is essential to develop a comprehensive, proactive preparedness strategy and approach. It considers it essential to ensure continuous operations in all circumstances, in particular to preserve infrastructure, security of supply and social cohesion. This requires civil-military cooperation, coordinated planning and action by the EU and NATO, and public-private partnerships. In addition, the EU needs a comprehensive stockpiling strategy that enhances resilience to crises, in particular in terms of protecting supply chains and the availability of critical resources. He also recommended the development of a legal framework for preparedness, and emphasized the role of citizens in creating security, strengthening social resilience, and increasing social trust.

The Niinistö report builds on Finland's resilience culture [13] and seeks to elevate it to the EU level. Finland already proposed an EU preparedness strategy in March 2024 [14]. The Finnish model [15] is fundamentally civil and adaptive, designed to address threats on all possible levels. The Finnish model takes into account severe weather events, high-impact accidents, water and food supply disruptions, CBRN preparedness, cyberattacks, supply chain protection, migration, etc. Following the example of his country, Niinistö highlights the need for a whole-of-government approach to security and preparedness. Rather than seeing resilience as an isolated policy area under the responsibility of a single government agency, preparedness and security considerations should serve as the basis or benchmark for all public policies and legislation. It is equally important to facilitate formal and effective channels of communication and cooperation between (non)government agencies, both in the planning and implementation of preparedness measures and during emergency management activities. This type of governance model is envisioned to build consensus and trust between stakeholders by making them "part of the system" without enforcing them directly. The link between security and economic growth is a key concept to be embraced to ensure the common goal of the well-being of citizens.



Fig. 2: The building blocks of a fully prepared Union [12, p. 31.]

#### 4.1 EU-NATO, civil-military cooperation

In terms of security, the report honestly takes stock of the shortcomings at EU level: “We do not have a clear plan on what the EU will do in the event of armed aggression against a Member State (...) We do not have a comprehensive capacity to bring all necessary EU resources together in a coordinated manner across institutional and operational silos, to prepare for – and if needed, act – in response to major cross-sectoral and cross-border shocks and crises” [12, p. 7.]. However, it notes that it is in the area of civil protection that the EU has “developed preparedness capabilities in individual sectors, in particular in the fields of civil protection and disaster management,” i.e., this is an area that can set a good example for other sectors. Perhaps this is why it is recommended that an operational crisis management centre be established, building on the already functioning ERCC and using it as a platform between different sectors (this proposal is specifically mentioned in two places in the report [12, p. 18., 66.]). Although it states that it must continue to perform the tasks required by civil protection, disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, its "redesign" can also help resolve cross-border, multiple crisis situations.

Another proof of the effective functioning of the UCPM so far is that, in addition to the ERCC, rescEU also emerges as a model for the development of cross-sectoral strategic reserves, which could connect the private sector, Member States and the EU level to „jointly identify a comprehensive set of categories of essential inputs (e.g. foodstuffs, energy, critical raw materials, emergency response equipment, medical countermeasures) and define targets to ensure minimum levels of preparedness in different crisis scenarios, including in the event of an armed aggression or the large-scale disruption of global supply chains” [12, p. 101.].

The report also links the multiple security threats posed by extreme weather and climate change, pandemics and war, and argues that as different crises and threats are experienced differently by different countries, the EU needs to respond more coherently to mitigate and eliminate their impacts. A coherent approach leads to increased resilience, as the EU is only as secure as its weakest member state. The report recommends the development of European preparedness baselines, similar to NATO’s seven baseline requirements but covering a much broader range of actors, sectors and threats to reflect all the areas in which the EU is active.

Addressing emergencies within a unified security approach, as the report suggests, is critical to addressing the growing frequency of hybrid threats in the region. The open societies of EU Member States are increasingly targeted by disinformation and sabotage operations, as well as threats to disrupt social peace. In order to combat the rise of hybrid activities, the report recommends that the gaps be closed through enhanced dialogue between the EU and NATO, in particular building on the resilience norms introduced by NATO. A practical element of this is the continuation of the joint command and field exercises with NATO, covering different sectors and actors, within the framework of PACE, with a special focus on the interoperability of decision-making mechanisms (such as in the case of the IR2024 exercise).

Despite the above, the report states that most crises are not military in nature and do not require an exclusively military response, because the nature of hybrid threats is inherently a gray area - therefore, preparedness is given serious emphasis in order to more effectively prevent worst-case scenarios.

## **4.2 Enhancing Preparedness**

According to Niinistö, the EU has adapted to the crises of recent years and is fundamentally prepared to face the challenges. However, their complexity and diversity have over time exceeded the EU's capacity to act, which requires more effective preparedness. While the EU can be considered prepared in individual sectors, it does not have the capacity to combine all available EU resources in a coordinated manner across different institutions in the event of a major, multi-sectoral shock.

Therefore, in addition to expanding the existing response infrastructure, the creation of a new instrument is also proposed within a so-called “European Preparedness and Readiness Investment Framework” [12, p. 29.]: the Defending Europe Facility (DEF) and the Securing Europe Facility (SEF). The former aims to bring together all instruments and programmes related to civil security (e.g. law enforcement and border management) on the one hand, and civil protection and other disaster response operations, as well as relevant critical infrastructures, on the other. In the spirit of preparedness, a certain amount should be allocated in all instruments and programmes, so that the EU could spend 20% (!) of its entire budget on security and emergency situations. The report emphasizes that this also aims to expand the idea of necessary preparedness as widely as possible. To support this, it also urges the development of an improved and comprehensive risk assessment process, building on existing national and EU-level sectoral risk assessments, which, in addition to

natural hazards, also includes security threats - such disaster scenarios are already being developed within the framework of the PreparEU [16] programme.

In line with the seemingly unrelated security threats, one of the central challenges is to change the attitudes and mindsets of citizens. Even after two years of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, many Europeans do not seem to feel that they are ever in danger of a lasting crisis – a kind of “collective cognitive dissonance” [12, p. 31.] the report calls it. For Europeans, NATO has provided sufficient security without them meeting the minimum defence spending requirements set by the Alliance. It is necessary to shake the population and organisations out of the mindset that security is a natural part of life, otherwise they will see no reason to participate in the prevention of crises.

It is a specific suggestion that, in the spirit of bottom-up, i.e. individual-based social resilience, “EU should strive to further raise household preparedness to ensure that every EU citizen is equipped to provide for themselves for a minimum of 72 hours in case the normal provision of basic services is disrupted in a crisis” [12, p. 76.]. According to the results of the EuroBarometer survey published on 30 September 2024 [17], nearly 60% of those surveyed do not feel prepared, and nearly half of them (46%) admit to not knowing what to do in the event of a disaster.

Since government institutions rely on their work in many Member States, the idea of supporting volunteers and also NGOs with EU funds, so that citizens actively participate in voluntary activities from a young age [12, p. 78.]. It should also be noted that according to this survey citizens’ rely on the help of their families and friends first, and emergency services (firefighters, police, emergency health care, civil protection etc.) the second, while local authorities or governments are only in the 5<sup>th</sup> place.

In light of the above, active citizen participation and rising risk awareness is the way to equip citizens with the necessary knowledge and skills to overcome challenges during disasters and crises. This contribution of resilience encouraged to form from the bottom builds resilience through trust in governance and public authorities, while having the potential of focusing less resources from governmental agencies.

This is expected to be a direct support to NGOs and volunteers from the EU through tenders, educational and awareness rising or preparedness programmes that are not only targeting professionals, but – keeping in mind the new tasks Mrs. Lahbib has been tasked with – with civilians and vulnerable groups in its focus. To be effective, the mindset is to be shaped from the constant feeling of security to the understanding that well-being experienced is a condition that has to be maintained constantly and by working together.

As a side note in terms of preparedness, it is interesting that Niinistö proposes strengthening European intelligence cooperation. This includes not only information sharing, but also the development of a common situational awareness so that the entire Union perceives common threats in the same way to minimise the risk of contradictory (duplication of) responses to crises.

By preparing for a disaster or emergencies, you will be able to better cope with the situation



You need more information to be able to prepare for disasters or emergencies



You know how emergency services will alert you in the event of a disaster



It is easy to find information on how to prepare for disasters or emergencies from public authorities and emergency services in (OUR COUNTRY)



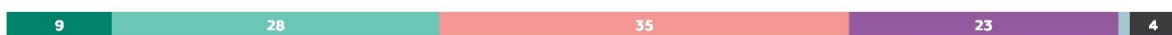
You know what to do in the event of a disaster



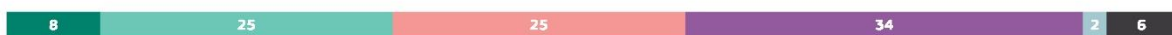
You do not have time or financial resources to prepare for disasters or emergencies



You feel you are well prepared for disasters or emergencies that may happen in the area where you live



Emergency services or authorities (e.g. police, firefighters, civil protection, local and national authorities) encourage you to take training or prepare for disasters or emergencies



Your employer or school encourages you to take training or prepare for disasters or emergencies



● Totally agree ● Tend to agree ● Tend to disagree ● Totally disagree ● It depends on the type of disaster (SPONTANEOUS) ● Don't know

Fig. 3: The „Personal preparedness in the event of a disaster” answers in the EuroBarometer

The report calls for strengthening the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC), including a general deepening of intelligence exchange between EU member states. Although a certain level of trust is part of international cooperation (and in this case, its enhancement), the idea of setting up an EU-level agency for joint information sharing and intelligence does not seem viable. Member states do not have common intelligence, espionage, national security standards, and due to the nature of the activity, their ad-hoc or ongoing sharing (e.g. a country’s nuclear security portfolio) is (can) not necessarily based on trust.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In parallel to war, even peace is difficult to start with no money. In view of the trend regarding future spending, the funds needed to be allocated to mitigate consequences of natural disasters and climate change is definitely on the rise (see fig. 4.). Since these events can be viewed of direct causes or elements of hybrid emergencies, other means of financial support is foreseen to be linked.

Since civil protection constitutes many different fields, there is hardly any stakeholder that cannot be involved voluntarily – or based on the threat defined, otherwise.



Billion EUR (2023 prices)

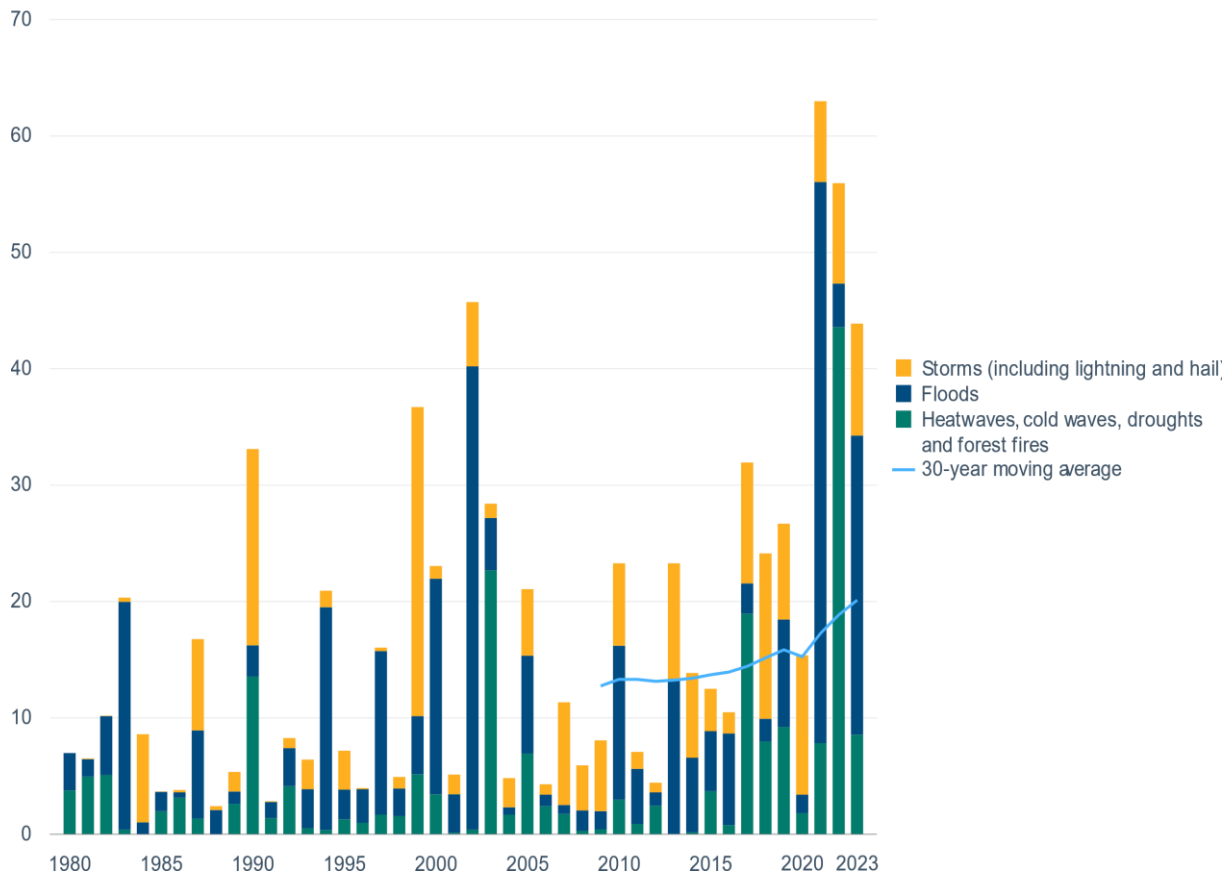


Fig. 4: Annual economic losses caused by weather-and climate-related extreme events in the EU Member States [18] (billion EUR)

As the need for civil-military cooperation increases, a kind of “militarisation” of non-military actors and a “awareness-raising” of the military towards civilian actors can be expected at the same time. The former can be achieved first in the form of mandatory measures and procedures prescribed by law for strategic and critical infrastructure sectors, and the latter by ensuring the most transparent possible provision of logistical and human resources. Although the nature of the response to an incident may require a lack of transparency, such cases can be offset by the long-established civilian trust in state actors and organisations.

The authors suggested in their previous article that the next step in the EU-level response is likely to be a (centralised) institution operating within a supranational framework, due to the fundamental respect of national sovereignty, which goes beyond the purely voluntary assistance of the Member States [12, p. 13.]. The same idea is also reflected in the Niinistö report: “Far from their original purpose, vetoes can be abused as bargaining chips for unrelated policy negotiations, based on national interests. In a more extreme scenario, the veto mechanism may even be instrumentalised by foreign competitors and rivals who could exploit the dependencies and vulnerabilities of individual Member States to interfere with and undermine EU decision-making through targeted pressure. A hostile actor could use a single Member State’s strategic dependencies or other forms of leverage and prevent the whole EU from taking decisions that would impose consequences on a hostile actor” [12, p. 62.]. Since “the veto right can be abused”, in our opinion, this suggests the establishment of a qualified majority decision-making mechanism in the event of future complex emergencies.

## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] European Environment Agency, *European Climate Risk Assessment*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/european-climate-risk-assessment> (17.03.2025.)
- [2] G. Takács and Á. Muhoray, "Az Európai Unió katasztrófavédelmi politikájának elemzése és lehetséges irányai I. rész," *Védelem Tudomány a Katasztrófavédelem online szakmai, tudományos folyóirata*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://ojs.mtak.hu/index.php/vedelemtudomany/article/view/16103> (17.03.2025.)
- [3] European Centre for Development Policy Management, *Inside the EU's Long-Term Budget: Multiannual Financial Framework Explained*. [Online]. Available: <https://ecdpm.org/work/inside-eus-long-term-budget-multiannual-financial-framework-explained> (17.03.2025.)
- [4] European Commission, *Civil Protection Performance*. [Online]. Available: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/civil-protection-performance\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/civil-protection-performance_en) Accessed: (17.03.2025.)
- [5] European Commission, *Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027 Commitments*. [Online]. Available: [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/multiannual-financial-framework-2021-2027-commitments\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/multiannual-financial-framework-2021-2027-commitments_en) (17.03.2025.)
- [6] European Parliament, *New UCPM 2021–2027 Report*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/carriage/new-ucpm-2021-2027/report?sid=8501> (17.03.2025.)
- [7] European Commission, *Communication COM(2025) 46 final*. [Online]. Available: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0046> Accessed: Mar. 17, 2025.
- [8] European Commission, *Hadja Labbib – Commissioner Profile*. [Online]. Available: [https://commission.europa.eu/about/organisation/college-commissioners/hadja-lahbib\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/about/organisation/college-commissioners/hadja-lahbib_en) (17.03.2025.)
- [9] European Commission, *Janez Lenarčič – Commissioner Profile*. [Online]. Available: [https://commissioners.ec.europa.eu/janez-lenarčic\\_en](https://commissioners.ec.europa.eu/janez-lenarčic_en) (17.03.2025.)
- [10] The Brussels Times, *What Makes Labbib Right for EU Crisis Management and Equality?*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.brusselstimes.com/1232677/what-makes-lahbib-right-for-eu-crisis-management-and-equality> (17.03.2025.)
- [11] Eurac Research, *The Difficulties of a Double Mandate: Competing Equality Portfolios in the European Union*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.eurac.edu/en/blogs/eureka/the-difficulties-of-a-double-mandate-competing-equality-portfolios-in-the-europea> (17.03.2025.)
- [12] European Commission, *Safer Together: The Path Towards a Fully Prepared Union*. [Online]. Available: [https://commission.europa.eu/topics/defence/safer-together-path-towards-fully-prepared-union\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/defence/safer-together-path-towards-fully-prepared-union_en) (17.03.2025.)
- [13] Finnish Institute of International Affairs, *The Niinistö Report on Preparedness*. [Online]. Available: <https://fiia.fi/en/publication/the-niinisto-report-on-preparedness>. Accessed: (17.03.2025.)

- [14] Finland Abroad, *Finland Proposes EU Strategy for Preparedness Union*. [Online]. Available: [https://finlandabroad.fi/web/eu/current-affairs/-/asset\\_publisher/cGFGQPXL1aKg/content/finland-proposes-eu-strategy-for-preparedness-union-1/384951](https://finlandabroad.fi/web/eu/current-affairs/-/asset_publisher/cGFGQPXL1aKg/content/finland-proposes-eu-strategy-for-preparedness-union-1/384951) (17.03.2025.)
- [15] Finnish Government, *Valtioneuvoston Julkaisuja 2025:3*. [Online]. Available: [https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/166026/VN\\_2025\\_3.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/166026/VN_2025_3.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y) (17.03.2025.)
- [16] Civil Protection Knowledge Network, *PREPAREU Project*. [Online]. Available: <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/projects/prepareu>. (17.03.2025.)
- [17] European Commission, *Eurobarometer Survey on Public Perception*. [Online]. Available: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3228> (17.03.2025.)
- [18] European Environment Agency, *Economic Losses from Climate-Related Events*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/indicators/economic-losses-from-climate-related>. (17.03.2025.)