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SECTORAL INTEGRATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICE OF GEORGIA ¹

Abstract

European Integration is number one priority for the government of Georgia and therefore implementing obligations under existing cooperation frameworks and establishing new areas of cooperation is always active issue. Civil protection sphere is important both for Georgia, as well as for the EU. This Article relates to the establishment of the Emergency Management Service of Georgia (EMS), underlines the sectoral integration into the European institutions, and their role in the reforming process of the EMS by implementing EU standards as well draws on the signature of the Administrative Arrangement with respect to Disaster Risk Management between EMS and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations of the European Commission (DG ECHO). Conclusion of the Administrative Arrangement is one more step forward made in terms of European integration. It will promote cooperation between relevant agencies during the crisis, and support ongoing reforms as well as introduction of European standards in this field. Conclusion of Administrative Arrangement will also promote more integration of emergency management system of Georgia into the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).

Keywords: *EU, Georgia, Sectoral Integration, Eastern Partnership, Civil Protection, EU Commissioner, Union Civil Protection Mechanism, DG ECHO, Emergency Management, Disaster Risk Management.*

Introduction

One of the important legal instruments for Georgia's European integration and establishment of European standards in the country is the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part (hereafter Association Agreement) and the cooperation mechanism created by it.² Association Agreement by its overarching character relates to the all spheres of social life, which itself can be separated by sectors. The close cooperation of the relevant Georgian Ministries and agencies with the agencies, programs and sections of the relevant sectors of the EU, approximation and adaptation of the European standards in the Georgian legal sphere and their implementation will make Georgia's partnership with the EU more effective and advanced. Therefore, one should attach a great importance to the sectoral integration on the way to the European integration. The article aims to outline that emergencies and crises, taking into account the necessity of prompt response to them, requires the existence of one single agency, which is in charge to react effectively, manage risks as well as conduct preventive measures.

¹ The views expressed in this article does not reflect the position of the Government of Georgia and solely belongs to the Authors

² See the official website of the European Union at [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0830\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0830(02)).

Sectoral integration with the European Union through the establishment of the Emergency Management Service of Georgia

On the bases of the analysis of the past practice and August-September massive wildfires of 2017¹, the new service, Emergency Management Service of Georgia (hereafter the Service) was established which replaced the State Security and Crisis Management Council of Georgia. Ongoing Important institutional and functional reforms have been taking place at the EMS the purpose of which are outlined as follows: creation of an effective system of civil protection, strengthening of an interagency coordination in terms of response, as well as prevention, preparedness and recovery, simplification of emergency management and increasing mobility, developing fast and effective international cooperation, establishment unified system of planning and response and offering multiple services to the community during emergencies.

The Service initially was a special governmental agency directly subordinated to the Prime Minister of Georgia – (According to the structural changes within the Government of Georgia from the 1st January, 2018 Emergency Management Agency and State Material Reserves Department were separated from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, merged to the Service). From 1 January 2019, EMS is under the Ministry of Internal Affairs as state subordinated entity, with its own budgeting, resources, HR system. The head of the EMS is nominated by the Minister of Internal Affairs and appointed by the Prime Minister of Georgia.²

However, the above mentioned were only the initial steps towards formation of the new Service³ (the so called “first stage of reforms”). The first stage of reforms was mainly related to the structural changes of the Service uniting different State entities responsible for strategic, operational and tactical level functions of emergency management and civil protection. Whereas, the second stage of reforms formed the Service based on special legislation and vested it with the functions, competencies in the field of emergency management and also introduced other innovations related to the system. On May 3, 2018 Government of Georgia approved the legislative package,⁴ that was positively assessed by NATO and EU experts.⁵ Later on, the Law on “Civil Protection” was adopted by the Parliament of Georgia on June 27, 2018, which entered into force on the 1st of August, 2018. These are the legislative changes of the second stage of reforms, which were elaborated on the basis of the best international practice.

The Law on “Civil Protection” creates a solid and effective legal ground to introduce essential changes in the sphere of emergency management and further institutional development of the service.

In particular, the Service ensures prevention, preparedness of the entire system, response to the emergencies, recovery activities in the affected areas and implementation of the national civil protection plan. In fact, a new institution has been created which will play effective role in the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery of the results of natural and man-made disasters.

The Service is currently working intensively on the elaboration of five-year institutional development plan. The five-year plan focuses on four main areas: institutional/functional development, development of technology/technical modernization, upgrading infrastructure and development of human resources.

From 2018 the service has started upgrading the auto park of special vehicles and this process is irreversible. The old soviet vehicles will be replaced step-by-step with the vehicles of European standards in the way that after implementation of five-year plan, each municipality will have the new modern infrastructure and fire fighting vehicles.⁶ This is also a priority direction for the Georgian Government, where the Government has its own investment plans.⁷

¹ For more info on EMS establishment and its functions and future plans see the official website <http://rdfg.ge/conferences/> and materials therein. See also official web page of the Ministry of Internal Affairs at <https://police.ge/en/shss-s-tkis-khandzrebisa-da-samoqalaqo-usaftrtkhoebis-sakitkhebsi-ivrokavshiris-eqsperti-etsvia/11128>.

² See official web page of the Ministry of Internal Affairs at <https://police.ge/en/2019-tslis-1-ianvridan-sagangebo-situatsiebis-martvis-samsakhuri-shinagan-saqmeta-saministros-saqveutskebo-danakofi-iqneba/12030> (in Georgian).

³ See webpage of legislative herald of Georgia <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3954233> (last visited 25.02.2019).

⁴ See webpage of the Government of Georgia http://gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=geo&sec_id=491&info_id=65300 (last visited 25.02.2019).

⁵ The Legislative package prepared by the EMS was discussed by the representatives of the State agencies, NGOs, NATO and EU funded Project PPRD East II experts on May 29, 2018 in the Liaison Office of NATO Tbilisi.

⁶ See <http://kvira.ge/413669> (last visited 25.02.2019).

⁷ See <http://bfm.ge/delta-sakhandzro-manqanebis-warmoebas-iwyebis/> (last visited 25.02.2019).

Integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures as a top priority goes side-by-side with that of integration in the EU for the Government of Georgia, hence implementation of obligations under existing cooperation frameworks with EU and NATO and establishment of new areas of cooperation remains of the utmost importance for the Service. All of these are also clearly indicated in the international relations strategy of the Service, which was adopted on 7 September, 2018.⁸

Implementation of the European standards and regulations in the establishment and development of the Service has significant importance. Rightly for this purpose, there is an ongoing project financed in the Eastern Partnership format since 2010 named Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and Man-made Disasters in the Eastern Partnership Countries (PPRD East),⁹ with the participation of six countries: Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine.

The first phase of the program was implemented during 2010-2014. The second phase of PPRD-East-2 has been conducted from 2014 to 2018 with the aims to strengthen capacities of the civil protection and emergency management of the countries in the region including in the following spheres: flood risk management and approximation to the EU flood directives¹⁰; approximation to the industrial risk and SEVESO¹¹ directives; sharing of information, data and approximation to the INSPIRE¹² directives; disaster risk assessment and development of the regional digital risk atlas; collection and processing of the disaster loss data; inclusion of the disaster risk reduction in the state expenditure funds; strengthening of the civil protection capabilities, including filed organizational activities and host nation support regulations. There are ongoing consultations with the EU Commission for the prolongation of the PPRD-East-2 program for four years.

Internationalization of the Emergency Management Service of Georgia

The conclusion of the Administrative Arrangement between the Emergency Management Service of Georgia and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations of the European Commission (DG ECHO) with respect to Disaster Risk Management Cooperation can be assessed as the significant step for the Service in the way of sectoral integration with the EU. The mentioned Arrangement was signed on 13 July, 2018 in Tbilisi during the visit of EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides.¹³ This was EU Commissioner's first visit to Georgia. One can also say, an historic visit, since this visit was the EU Commissioner's first visit in this field ever conducted in Georgia.¹⁴

Administrative Arrangement enshrines cooperation between the parties with respect to prevention of, preparedness to and response to natural and man-made disasters.

In accordance with the Arrangement, the parties shall regularly share information and best practice, organize joint seminars, workshops and visits, expert missions and carry out trainings in the field of disaster risk management, with regard to the following: Disaster risk assessments; Disaster risk tools, including early warning systems; Disaster risk management planning; Assessments of risk management capability; Response operations; Assessment of accidents resulting from explosions or fires; Assessment of possible environmental impacts of emergencies; Risks linked to major industrial accidents involving dangerous chemicals (SEVESO Directive); Management of risks relating to mass human gatherings due to natural and man-made disasters; Emergency numbers, drawing upon Europe's experience with emergency number 112; Other areas of mutual interest.

⁸ See the Strategy on EMS facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/EmergencyManagementService/> (last visited 25.02.2019).

⁹ See the program webpage <http://pprdeast2.eu/en/about-pprdeast2> (last visited 25.02.2019).

¹⁰ For the directives, see the webpage of the EU Commission http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/flood_risk/index.htm (last visited 25.02.2019).

¹¹ For the directives, see the webpage of the EU Commission <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/seveso/index.htm> (last visited 25.02.2019).

¹² For the directives, see the webpage of the EU Commission <https://inspire.ec.europa.eu> (last visited 25.02.2019).

¹³ See webpage of the EU Commission https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/48342/eu-and-georgia-strengthen-cooperation-civil-protection-and-disaster-risk-management_enhttps://ec.europa.eu/avservices/photo/photoByReportage.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=037628 (last visited 25.02.2019).

¹⁴ The EU has 28 Commissioners in different sphere and competences. See webpage of the EU Commission https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019_en (last visited 25.02.2019).

The following six EU Commissioners have visited Georgia since 2014: Jean-Claude Juncker – President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini – High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission, Maros Sefcovic – , Vice President, Energy Union, Johannes Hahn –European Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Cecilia Malmstrom - Trade, Dimitris Avramopoulos - Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship.

Pursuant to Administrative Arrangement, European Commission support Emergency Management Service in order that the latter had access to Copernicus - the satellite program, by which the monitoring of the Earth and taking satellite pictures are possible, based on which the relevant maps are drawn up¹⁵. Likewise, in case of disasters, the relevant maps will be drawn up.

With the purpose of international deployments of relevant experts', European Commission shall promote the training of experts' skills subject to the availability of places on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism training programme. The parties shall cooperate in the following fields: floods and earthquakes response; Forest fire fighting with the help of aerial means; Medical assistance; Search and rescue; Medical aerial evacuation; Search and rescue in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) conditions, in cooperation with the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centre of Excellence (CBRN CoE); Structural damage assessment following earthquakes.

One of the most important aspects of cooperation is the cooperation between the parties in terms of forest fire fighting with the help of aerial means. Likewise, the parties shall also cooperate to host the nation support, including during the early warning, this is in order to facilitate acceptance of international assistance during emergencies proposed through Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Therefore, in accordance with Administrative Arrangement, during large-scale emergencies, EU will facilitate provision of assistance to Georgia through taking available resources into consideration.

Signing of this Administrative Arrangement is an obligation enshrined in Action Plan for the implementation of the Association Agreement between Georgia and EU.¹⁶ Both for the EU, as well as for Georgia, emergency management field is of utmost importance, therefore signing of the aforementioned Arrangement is one step made towards effective partnership on the road to European integration. It will promote development and enhancement of cooperation between the parties with regard to emergency management.

Conclusion of Administrative Arrangement likewise will promote more integration of emergency management system of Georgia with Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Union Civil Protection Mechanism (which is established in 2001) unifies 28 member states of EU, as well as, the non-member states: Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Republic of North Macedonia and Turkey. The main purpose of the Mechanism is to coordinate assistance to victims of natural and man-made disasters.¹⁷ Membership of this Mechanism is outlined among the main strategic aims of the Emergency Management Service of Georgia.¹⁸

One of the priorities for new Service will be international cooperation, particularly international cooperation based on reforms and best practice, which also includes fast and effective coordination of operative and strategic cooperation with neighboring and partner countries, enhancement of cooperation and capacity building with EU, NATO and UN in the field of disaster management (joint exercises, trainings, expert missions, etc.). One of the important priorities of the Service represents active involvement in international missions and operations.

Introduction of international standards and accreditation of INSARAG¹⁹ (International Search and Rescue Advisory Group) for the rescue team, which will enable it to be actively involved in international missions.

On August 16, 2018 the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Georgia and the Disaster Management Country Team (DMCT) was signed.²⁰ The purpose of the MoU is to establish the flexible mechanism in Georgia, activating of which will make it possible to assess the needs coming from the emergencies and to quickly

¹⁵ See the details on the webpage of European Commission at: https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/space/copernicus_en.

¹⁶ See the official webpage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia at <http://www.mfa.gov.ge/%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9E%E1%83%A3%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98-%E1%83%93%E1%83%90-%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%90%E1%83%A2%E1%83%9A%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%98%E1%83%99%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98-%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90-%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/NAP-for-the-implementation-of-the-AA-and-AA.aspx?lang=ka-GE> Georgian version of the excel file 2018 Action Plan and action N. 289.1 therein (last visited 25.02.2019).

¹⁷ See the official webpage of European Commission at http://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/mechanism_en (last visited 25.02.2019).

¹⁸ This information was provided by the International Relations Division of the EMS on 20.09.2018.

Also on 07.09.2018 the Strategy of the International Relations of the EMS was approved by the Order N. 61057 of the Head of the EMS. On 23.11.2018 the action plan of the Strategy for 2019-2020 was elaborated outlining the priorities of the EMS.

¹⁹ See the details on the official webpage of INSARAG at <https://www.insarag.org/> (last visited 25.02.2019).

²⁰ See the details at <http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/sazogadoeba/508206-gaero-da-katastrofis-marthvis-qveynis-jgufi-saqarthvelos-sagangebo-situaciebis-marthvis-samsakhurs-krizisuli-vitharebis-dros-daekhmareba.html?ar=A> (last visited 25.02.2019).

mobilize humanitarian aid – from both the resources available in the country, as well as, from outside. Coordination of the aforementioned will be ensured by UN permanent representation to Georgia.²¹

Emergency Management Service of Georgia is planning to become a member of International Association of Fire and Rescue Services (CTIF)²² in the nearest future and.²³ This organization unifies the majority of European countries and represents one of the oldest and successful organizations, which has been existing since 1900. This organization will be a good platform for capacity building of the firefighter-rescuers, for their awareness raising and for sharing best practice and experience of other countries.

International legal cooperation is one of the priorities of Emergency Management Service. Georgia already has international agreements in the field of emergencies with twelve countries²⁴ and international agreements with another six countries are under negotiations.²⁵ In the nearest future, international agreement in the field of emergencies will be signed with Austria.²⁶ International agreements in the field of emergencies represent solid legal basis for cooperation with partner countries and for international assistance, therefore the EMS of Georgia actively cooperate in this direction with relevant countries.

Conclusion

²¹ See the official webpage of the UN at http://www.ungeorgia.ge/eng/news_center/media_releases?info_id=608.

²² See the details on the official webpage of the organization at <https://www.ctif.org/> (last visited 25.02.2019).

²³ This information was provided by the International Relations Division of the EMS on 15.05.2018.

²⁴ Georgia has concluded international agreements in the field of emergencies with the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Russian Federation and Ukraine. This information was provided by the official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on 15.05.2018.

²⁵ This information was provided by the official of the International Relations Division of the EMS on 15.05.2018.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ By Prof. Dr. Shalva Kvinikhidze (Dr. Iur); Head of International Relations Division, MIA State Subordinated Agency-Emergency Management Service of Georgia; Professor of Law at East European University. And by Tamar Mtchedlidze, Deputy Head, International Relations Division, MIA State Subordinated Agency-Emergency Management Service of Georgia; Invited lecturer at MIA academy.