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Emergency management on the island of Ireland – Recent cross-border developments

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Abstract

Emergency management has developed separately in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as a result of the differences in the political, legal, organisational and cultural backgrounds that exist in the two jurisdictions. Good cross-border cooperation has existed at individual organisational level between the principal emergency response agencies for many years. Now that regions in Europe are becoming more connected it is becoming increasingly obvious to agencies with responsibility for emergency management on both sides of the border that we need to be better prepared and ready to work effectively together to deal with any major emergency that may arise along the border. Emergencies and natural or manmade disasters do not respect geographical borders, particularly on a landmass as small as the island of Ireland. It is recognised that there is a need for more formalised joint planning and greater collaboration by the statutory agencies, which will result in a more coordinated and effective response to any possible major emergencies or disasters that may occur along the border areas. This paper reviews the

current emergency management arrangements in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, how the structures, roles and responsibilities of the various agencies involved differ, and how a move to greater collaboration has occurred, as well as examining the drivers for this collaboration, how this has manifested itself so far, and how the potential for pragmatic, flexible and creative solutions will achieve further progress in the coming years.

Keywords: Emergency management, cross-border, collaboration, cooperation, EU, major emergency

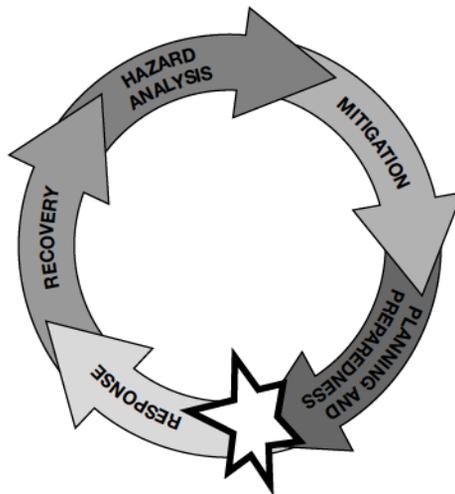
Existing major emergency arrangements

Republic of Ireland

According to McMullan (2010), emergency management arrangements have been established at two levels in the Republic of Ireland, one at a strategic/advisory level through the Office of Emergency Planning (OEP) based in the Department of Defence, and the second at an operational level through the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG). The existing arrangements, however, are not supported by underpinning legislation.

The OEP was established back in October 2001, following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US, to take a lead role in emergency planning, to meet the new threat from international terrorism and to coordinate the responses of the various departments and agencies. The OEP provides guidance and advice at governmental level through the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning. It also exercises an oversight role in relation to ensuring the best possible use of resources and compatibility between national plans, such as the National Pandemic Influenza Plan, National Emergency Plan for Nuclear Accidents and Business Continuity Planning in Severe Weather.

In 2006 *A Framework for Major Emergency Management*, along with a separate book of appendices, was published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG), replacing the 1984 framework document. It was 'designed primarily to provide for the protection, support and welfare of the public in times of emergency'. A series of additional framework appendices and guidance documents have also been produced, and are designed to support specific areas of emergency management (available at www.mem.ie). The framework adopts an all-hazard approach to emergency management based on the five-stage emergency management paradigm in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Five-stage emergency management paradigm

Source: DEHLG (2006a).

The 2006 framework has resulted in many positive changes and improvements in the way in which emergency management has been delivered in the Republic of Ireland. At national level each government department is responsible for ensuring that emergency management arrangements are in place in respect of their own area of responsibility. Individual departments are also responsible for any necessary coordination between departments and/or services where they are designated under the new 2006 framework as a ‘Lead Government Department’.

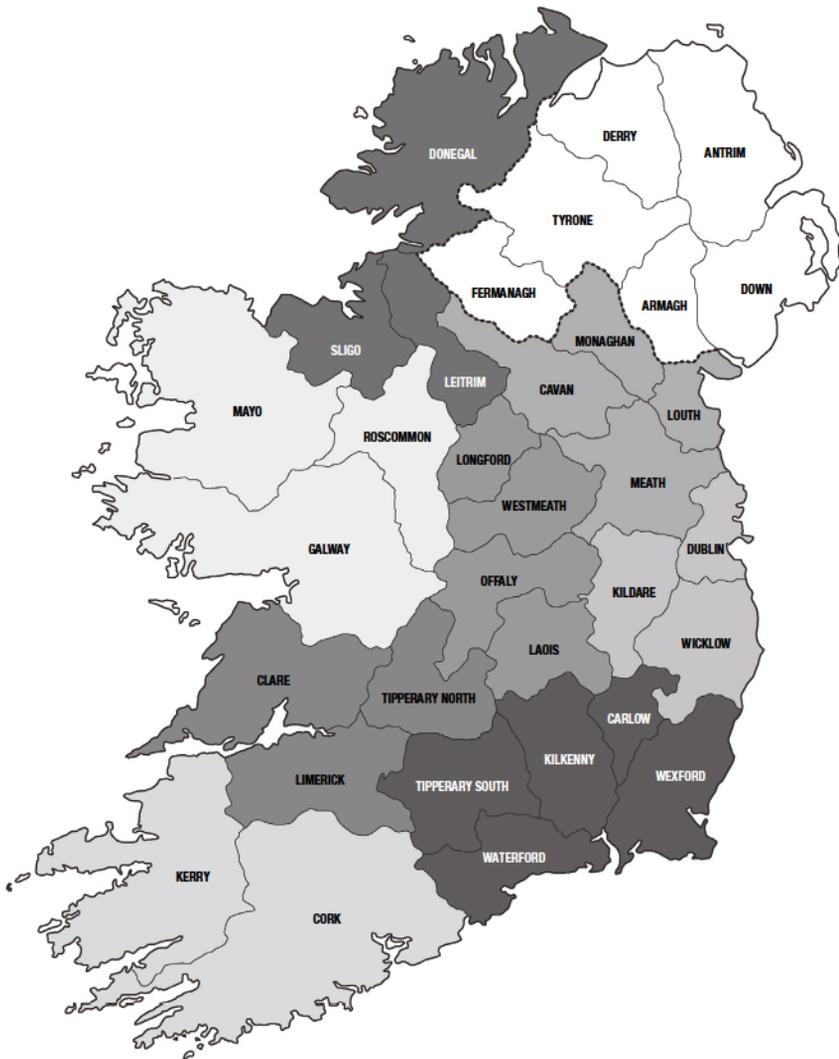
At a regional level in the Republic of Ireland, eight regions have been established to support the work on emergency management (see Figure 2).

Structures – National level

A number of groups have been established at national level, such as:

- i. The Government Task Force on Emergency Planning, chaired by the Department of Defence, which includes representatives of all government departments and agencies and whose aim is to ensure that preparations are in place for a coordinated response to all possible threats.

Figure 2: Major emergency management regions in Republic of Ireland



Source: DEHLG (2006b).

- ii. The National Steering Group, chaired and supported by DECLG and including representatives from a number of government departments and the principal response agencies. Its role is to oversee the implementation, develop and update the 2006 framework, and report on this to the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning.
- iii. The National Working Group implements the annual work programme for the delivery of the framework and reports to the National Steering Group. It includes representatives of each of the regional working groups.

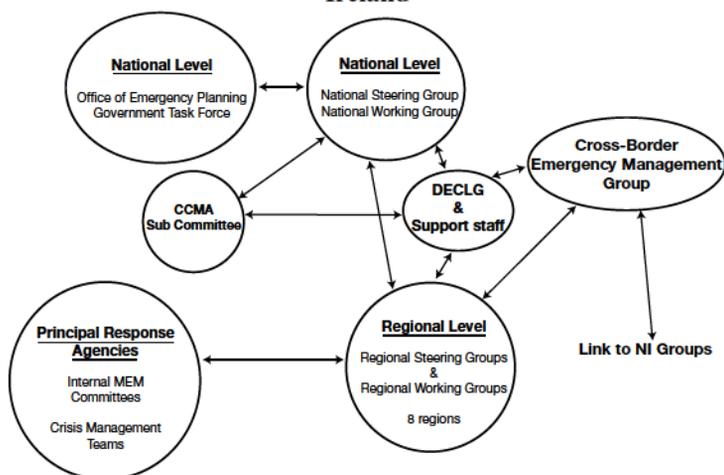
Structures – Regional level

Regional steering and working groups have been in operation in each region since 2008. Each regional group is comprised of representatives from the three principal response agencies, namely An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and local authorities.

Structures – Local level

At the level of individual principal response agency, such as the local authority, internal committees have been established to manage emergency management. The overall structure of all of these groups involved in emergency management in the Republic of Ireland is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Major emergency management structures in Republic of Ireland



The 2006 framework has established mechanisms and protocols to enhance inter-agency responses, such as the ‘lead agency’ concept where responsibility for taking charge at different types of incidents and coordinating the response between the principal response agencies has been clarified. The local authority is the ‘default’ lead agency for major emergencies where responsibility is not immediately obvious (see Table 1).

Table 1: Pre-nominated lead agencies

<i>Emergency incident type</i>	<i>Initial pre-nominated lead agency</i>
Road traffic accident	An Garda Síochána
Fire	Local authority
Hazardous material incident	Local authority
Train crash	Local authority
Aircraft incident	Local authority
Rescue	Local authority
Weather related	Local authority
Biological incident	Health services
Open country search and rescue	An Garda Síochána
Public order (crowd events)	An Garda Síochána
CCBRN ¹	An Garda Síochána
Accidental explosions/building collapse	Local authority
Environmental/pollution	Local authority
Marine emergency impacting onshore	Local authority
Water rescue inland	An Garda Síochána

¹ CCBRN = attacks involving conventional explosives (C), chemical substances (C), biological agents (B), or radiological (R) or nuclear material (N).

Source: DEHLG (2006b, Appendix F7).

The concepts of ‘controller of operations’ and information management systems have become well established since the implementation of the new 2006 framework. In each region local coordination centres have been developed where the local coordination groups meet at a strategic level during a major emergency.

Since the introduction of the new framework, the principles underlying it have been applied successfully on many occasions at national and local level, especially during the flooding and severe weather emergencies of the winters of 2010 and 2011. The 2006 framework has had a very positive impact on emergency management in the Republic, with the result that it has now been given a higher priority in the mindset of all stakeholders involved.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, emergency planning and civil contingency arrangements are underpinned by legislation, namely the UK Civil Contingencies Act, 2004. Only Part 2 of the parent Act applies to Northern Ireland. The *Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework* was first introduced in 2005 and, together with *A Guide to Emergency Planning Arrangements in Northern Ireland*, sets out the principles of emergency planning and outlines the key roles and responsibilities of the main organisations involved in emergency planning in Northern Ireland. The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) issued updated versions of these documents in 2011. A Civil Contingencies Policy Branch (CCPB) operates under the umbrella of the OFMDFM and is responsible for promoting the development of emergency planning and response arrangements throughout the public sector. The CCPB provides support to the Civil Contingencies Group (CCG) and also controls the activation of the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA).¹ The CCG, which comprises representatives from Northern Ireland departments, the Executive Information Service, the Food Standards Agency, the Northern Ireland Office, district councils and the emergency services, is responsible for high-level strategy and policy issues, and for developing links and good working relationships between the public sector organisations involved in emergency planning. The scale of response and coordination arrangements put in place to deal with an emergency under NICCMA is dependent on the classification of emergencies in Northern Ireland (see Table 2).

The guidance in Northern Ireland outlines the scale of emergencies and the corresponding organisational level at which the four different levels of coordination arrangements should be put into operation. In the event of a local-level emergency, where there is no risk to life, the local district councils will take charge of coordinating response arrangements. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) will usually coordinate the multi-agency response when it poses a threat to life. A lead government department will take this responsibility for a

¹ When a major emergency has occurred, or is anticipated, and is likely to have a serious impact either locally or regionally in Northern Ireland, central strategic coordination arrangements can be activated as required – the NICCMA. The Executive, the OFMDFM or the lead department may request the activation of the NICCMA. It may also be activated by escalation of a local/sub-regional response as set out in the protocol for the escalation of the multi-agency response. Cross-departmental coordination and support will be provided by OFMDFM through the activation of NICCMA.

Table 2: Classification of emergencies in Northern Ireland

<i>Level of emergency</i>	<i>Organisational scale of the response coordination</i>
Local level	Emergencies where the outcomes are confined to a relatively small area or number of people, and where local or sub-regional organisations, or the sub-regional offices of regional organisations, deliver the response. Coordination of the response and recovery is facilitated by a local organisation, usually the PSNI or a district council, but may be another lead organisation such as a Health and Personal Social Services board or a government agency.
Level 1: Significant	An emergency is relatively localised in one geographical area or sector, but is of sufficient severity to require strategic coordination. The lead department provides and/or manages the response, including coordination of all organisations within the sector and other departments, agencies and local responders involved.
Level 2: Serious	The extent or severity of an emergency is such that a large number of local, sub-regional and regional organisations are involved in delivering the response and strategic level coordination required. In these cases the Executive, the OFMDFM or the lead department (through its minister, permanent secretary or civil contingencies lead official as appropriate) can ask for the NICCMA to be convened to facilitate strategic coordination.
Level 3: Catastrophic	An emergency has, or threatens, either a catastrophic impact on a particular area of NI or a serious or catastrophic impact across the whole of NI and/or the rest of the UK. Strategic coordination is achieved through the NICCMA.

Source: OFMDFM (2011a, pp. 181–2).

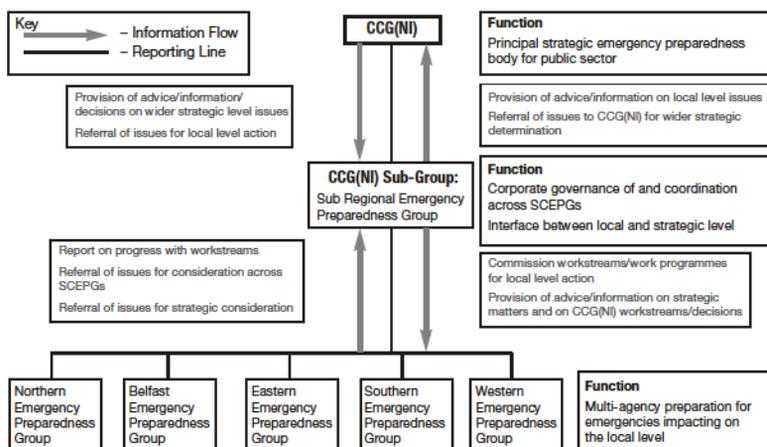
Level 1 emergency, with the OFMDFM or higher-level UK authority taking charge of coordination arrangements for a Level 2 or higher emergency, and may ask for the NICCMA to be convened to facilitate strategic coordination. Usually the coordination arrangements put in place to deal with an emergency under NICCMA take place at Level

2 or 3 emergencies. Provision also exists for the mobilisation of a further grouping, the Crisis Management Group, consisting of ministers and senior departmental officials, to coordinate the strategic response to an emergency.

The lead government department principle is also applied in Northern Ireland in relation to responses to emergencies. The lead government department also has responsibility for the coordination of other agencies. At local-level emergencies, the emergency services, district councils and other local agencies usually assume the lead role. When a strategic-level response is required at Level 1 and above, and no clearly identifiable government department exists, the OFMDFM agrees the lead role with the relevant department. Further guidance on the likely lead organisation is provided in *A Guide to Emergency Planning Arrangements in Northern Ireland* (OFMDFM, 2011a).

In February 2014 the Northern Ireland Executive agreed additional measures to enhance civil contingency arrangements in Northern Ireland. A guidance note entitled *Measures to Enhance Civil Contingencies Arrangements at Local Level* was subsequently issued by the CCPB and contained a provision to establish four sub-regional civil emergency preparedness groups (EPGs) to facilitate multi-agency preparations for emergencies (see Figure 4). These groups are jointly chaired by a chief executive from a district council and a PSNI superintendent.

Figure 4: Northern Ireland emergency management structures



Source: CCPB (2014).

It is interesting to note that the terms of reference for the sub-regional EPGs emphasise that, 'where relevant', they should liaise and coordinate with emergency planning bodies in the border counties of Ireland.

Role of local government

In 2006 the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland issued *Departmental Guidance to District Councils in Relation to Emergencies*, by way of Circular Letter 07/06, and set out the role of local councils in emergencies, and the role of chief executives in particular.

The role of local councils in emergency planning and response remains a 'developing one' according to *A Guide to Emergency Planning Arrangements in Northern Ireland* (OFMDFM, 2011a). There are three main areas where they are involved:

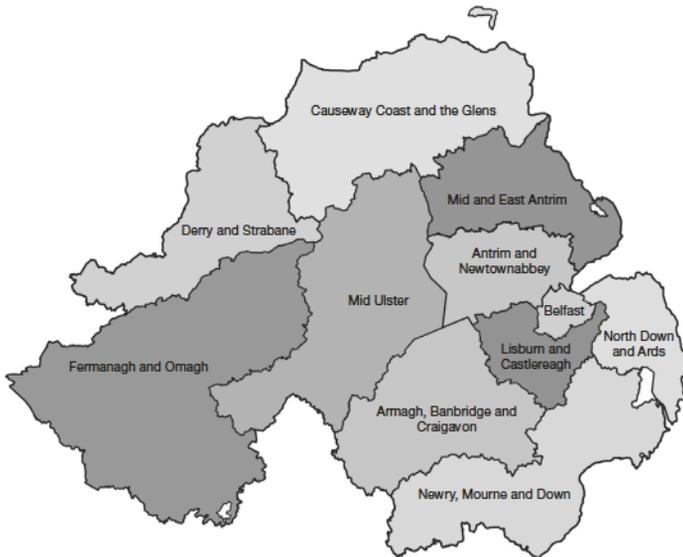
- i. provision of council services and the maintenance of other essential services during an emergency response and recovery operation;
- ii. coordination of local emergency response and recovery; and
- iii. provision of support to other organisations responding to an emergency.

In Northern Ireland the local authority structure has undergone significant changes recently. In April 2015 the twenty-six local authorities in Northern Ireland were reduced to eleven, as illustrated in Figure 5.

This reform significantly changed boundaries and also gave additional powers to strengthen local government. The Local Government Chief Executives Group commissioned a review of local government civil contingencies arrangements to consider their role, particularly in relation to facilitation of multi-agency planning, response and recovery. This review will be published in late 2015. Since the establishment of the new local authority structures, the PSNI have restructured their internal police divisions to make them coterminous with the local authority boundaries and have introduced three coordinating areas across Northern Ireland.

Cross-border cooperation – European context

According to the European Commission (2011), 185 million EU citizens, or 37 per cent of the population, live in border areas.

Figure 5: New Northern Ireland local government structures

Source: www.doeni.gov.uk.

Increasingly, local and regional governments across Europe are cooperating across borders in fields such as health services, transport, education, policing, firefighting, health services and crisis management. Since 2006 the EU has reinforced the legal framework for working across borders, namely the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), via Regulation No 1082/2006 (European Parliament and Council, 2006). This has enabled public authorities to create joint legal bodies across borders to deliver specific services or implement cooperation projects.

According to Wassenberg & Reitel (2015) EU Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Cretu recently acknowledged that ‘Europe has a long history of cross-border cooperation and that the “euroregion” approach has proved very successful’ in Europe. ‘With the support of legal provisions adopted by the Council of Europe,’ she said, ‘it became possible for local and regional authorities to work autonomously across borders.’

Since 2007 European territorial cooperation, or cross-border cooperation as we know it, has become one of the goals of the EU’s regional policy, emphasising the importance of relations between

authorities across national frontiers, and is a cornerstone of a united Europe close to its citizens. It has clear European added value: helping to ensure that borders are not barriers, helping to solve common problems, facilitating the sharing of ideas and assets, and encouraging strategic work towards common goals. Many Europeans share the belief that cooperation is a great European tool with much potential still to be explored. There are many examples of regions around Europe working together to further the ideals of the EU.

There are three strands of territorial cooperation, namely:

- i. cross-border (for areas separated by an EU border);
- ii. transnational (for a specific larger area extending over a number of countries, such as the Alpine area or Baltic Sea region); and
- iii. interregional (for all EU regions).

Cross-border

Up to now, fifty-five cross-border bodies have been successfully created in twenty-one EU member states under the EGTC. These regions are co-financed up to 85 per cent from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). No such regions have been established in either the UK or the Republic of Ireland (but other forms of cooperation exist). The UK and Ireland are involved in two Interreg A cross-border programmes, namely the Programme for Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland, and the Ireland–United Kingdom (Wales) Programme, with the two objectives of economic growth through innovation and through environmental protection. The first programme also focuses on transport and social issues.

Another cross-border programme that exists in Northern Ireland and the border region is the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE). The fourth phase of this programme, called PEACE IV, is running from 2014 to 2020 and focuses on education and training and the pooling of resources aimed at bringing about reconciliation between communities. These programmes are managed by the Special EU Programmes Body.

Transnational

The UK and Ireland are involved in a number of Interreg B transnational cooperation programmes: the North-West Europe Programme, involving eight European countries including Switzerland, the aim of which is to strengthen economic growth, enhance innovation and disseminate knowledge; the Atlantic Area

programme, which links regions in France, counties in Ireland and the UK; and the Northern Periphery Programme, which includes Ireland, the UK, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. There are fifteen transnational cooperation programmes (Interreg VB) planned for 2014–20, three of which, as listed above, are applicable to Northern Ireland and the border region.

Interregional

A total of 204 interregional projects were funded under the Interreg IVC programme from 2007 to 2013. Interregional funding continues under the name ‘Interreg Europe’ for 2014–20. The aim of the programme is to promote exchange and transfer of knowledge and best practice among the European regions.

Based on the above, it would appear that the territorial cooperation policy of the UK and Ireland seems to apply more at transnational rather than at cross-border level.

Examples of EU cross-border cooperation projects

A brief review of the many hundreds of EU cross-border territorial cooperation projects reveals how they have worked in regions in Europe and how the regions have benefited from such cooperation. Further examples can be found in *European Territorial Cooperation – Building Bridges Between People* (European Commission, 2011).

CROSS-BORDER Project

One of the most interesting EU cross-border projects delivered in the emergency management area that may have some resonance for Ireland was the CROSS-BORDER Project undertaken between Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland, aimed at improving civil protection arrangements along shared borders. The project partners were the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, the Danish Emergency Management Agency, the Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning and the Finnish Rescue Services Department of the Ministry of the Interior. This project was financed by the European Commission under the Civil Protection Financial Instrument. Several agreements, networks and structures existed for cross-border assistance on different levels (local, regional and national) in these countries, such as the Nordic framework agreement (NORDRED) and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. It was considered that the mix of agreements resulted in ineffective and insufficient use of cross-border civil protection resources.

According to Bailes & Sando (2014), the CROSS-BORDER Project analysed the current Nordic cooperation arrangements and suggested ways to develop and improve operational cross-border civil protection in the Nordic countries based on the Haga Declaration of April 2009. This called for the Nordic countries to adopt the same strategic approach across borders in the Nordic region.

LABEL Project (September 2008 to February 2012)

This Interreg IVB territorial cooperation project considered the extensive flooding problems that occurred in Austria, Germany, Hungary and the Czech Republic around the River Elbe and adjacent watersheds in August 2002, causing massive damage and taking dozens of lives. The twenty partners involved in this transnational cooperation project successfully developed a single strategy for flood prevention covering the entire river basin.

GEO.POWER Project

The GEO.POWER interregional project, funded by Interreg IVC, helped regions of Europe work together to share experience and best practice in the areas of low-enthalpy energy supply. This resulted in the development of one action plan per each involved region to address their long-term investments strategy. The partnership was composed of ministries, regions, local authorities, universities and R&D agencies in nine countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, Italy, Sweden, Estonia, the UK, Belgium and Slovenia).

Cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland

EU Civil Protection Mechanism

The Civil Protection Mechanism that is established at EU level facilitates the provision of assistance between member states in the event of major emergencies. A request for assistance has never been invoked to date under the Civil Protection Mechanism during a major emergency between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Good Friday Agreement, 1998

According to McClelland (2014), under the terms of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement cross-border cooperation in emergency planning on the island of Ireland was identified as one of the key areas to be developed as part of any future cross-border cooperation.

Republic of Ireland – 2006 framework document

The 2006 framework document refers to efforts being made where major emergencies may occur near the border with Northern Ireland, to ‘support and enhance the existing liaison and cooperation between the principal response agencies in border areas’. It suggests that ‘effective information sharing and co-ordination with corresponding response services in Northern Ireland are required’. Up to recently no inter-agency structures or mechanisms existed for such measures to be put in place.

It also refers to ‘scale, complexity and likely duration of some emergencies being such that significant assistance is required from neighbouring or other regions of the country, or from outside the state’. The decision to seek assistance from outside the region or from Northern Ireland is made by the ‘lead agency’ at the local/regional coordination centre. The request should be made ‘on a mutual aid basis’ (DEHLG, 2006a). No mutual aid agreements have been put in place between the border regions in the Republic or in Northern Ireland, unlike the practice that exists in many other EU countries.

Northern Ireland – Framework documents

Northern Ireland Standards in Civil Protection states that organisations ‘should ensure that their liaison activities cover all relevant parties’, including on a cross-border basis ‘where incidents are likely to have widespread effects’ (OFMDFM, 2001). In addition the *Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework* states:

NI departments and other public sector bodies for which they are responsible will have formal and informal civil contingency liaison arrangements in place as necessary with counterpart departments and agencies in the Republic of Ireland. (OFMDFM, 2011b, p. 65)

It goes on to suggest that the CCPB and the OEP were prepared to act as facilitators in the development of such relationships on a cross-border basis. This facilitation could now be undertaken in partnership with the Cross-Border Emergency Management Group that was established in late 2013.

The recent guidance note entitled *Measures to Enhance Civil Contingencies Arrangements at Local Level* (CCPB, 2014) contains a measure that enhances cross-border cooperation in emergency planning by obliging organisations to liaise with their counterparts in the border counties of Ireland.

Association of border regions and partnerships

Three cross-border regions have been established along the border between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland. These regions have become members of the Association of European Border Regions.

East Border Region

The East Border Region was founded in 1976 and links ten counties and towns in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The aim of the cooperation network is to boost growth in agriculture, industry and trade.

North West Region Cross Border Group

The North West Region Cross Border Group was established in 1975 and links Donegal with parts of Derry and Tyrone.

Irish Central Border Area Network

The Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) is a cross-border local authority led company comprising of eight member councils – five in the Republic (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan and Sligo) and one borough council and two district councils in the border area of Northern Ireland. ICBAN was established in 1995 to promote cooperation and communication on a cross-border basis on common regional development concerns and to respond to the unique economic and social needs of the Central Border Region.

Partnerships

An additional two cross-border partnerships have emerged more recently to complement the work of these three regions, namely the North East Partnership (NEP) and COMET, covering the group of six local authorities around the Belfast metropolitan area.

North East Partnership

The NEP was first established in 2004 to facilitate the sustainable development of the north-east sub-region of Northern Ireland through participation in cross-border, interregional and transnational cooperation initiatives. To date, the NEP has secured EU funding for the delivery of five Interreg IVA projects.

COMET Partnership

The COMET Partnership was set up and launched in April 2005 and is funded under the ERDF. All of these regions and partnerships have

brought local authorities, district councils and social partners from both sides of the border together to promote cooperation in addressing common challenges and taking advantage of opportunities afforded by Interreg funding.

CAWT (Cooperation and Working Together)

This cross-border body was formed in 1992 when the North-Eastern and North-Western Health Boards in the Republic of Ireland and the Southern and Western Health and Social Services Boards in Northern Ireland agreed to cooperate in improving the health and social well-being of their border populations. To underpin this cooperation, the four health boards entered into a formal accord known as the Ballyconnell Agreement. Since then, CAWT has flourished and continued to develop and implement a wide variety of cross-border projects spanning the health and social care area. Some of the more recent cross-border projects that they were involved in, and that were funded under the Interreg or PEACE programmes, include:

- Triangle Project (1998–2000);
- Cross Border First Responder Scheme (2003–5);
- Ambulance Training and Emergency Planning Room (2004);
- Emergency Medical Assistance and Rescue Team (2004);
- North/South Emergency Planning (2004–5);
- Driving Change Project (2010–13).

Practical examples

There is a long-standing tradition of cooperation between the individual emergency services in the border counties and their counterparts in Northern Ireland. This stretches back to war times, and exists largely as a result of the good working relationships and levels of trust that have been built up between key players in each of the agencies. There are numerous practical examples of cross-border cooperation activities in each of the emergency services.

Police/Garda

An agreement in 2002 between the British and Irish Governments provided for a range of cooperative measures between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI. Both services have participated in numerous cross-border emergency exercises.

Fire service

There has been close cooperation between the fire services in the Republic and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS), particularly in Donegal, where they have provided first turnout cover to parts of East Donegal by agreement since 1965. They have also delivered a number of joint initiatives such as National Fire Safety Week, major emergency exercises, memoranda of understanding relating to the response to road traffic collisions and the very successful three-year Interreg IVA Driving Change Project. This project ran from 2010 to 2013 and was a partnership between the NIFRS; the fire services of the six 'border counties' in the Republic of Ireland; the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety; DEHLG; and Public Achievement, a youth-focused civic education organisation based in Belfast. The Driving Change Project set out to improve the health and safety of the people living and travelling in the border area by delivering a range of improvements in relation to road safety.

Health service

The health services on both sides of the border have been involved in delivering a number of cross-border projects in the emergency management area that were funded by the North South Ministerial Council, such as cross-border emergency planning community fora (2003–5) and cross-border major incident plans (2003–5). The NI Ambulance Service and the National Ambulance Service in the Republic signed a memorandum of understanding in 2009 relating to the provision of mutual aid and have participated in many cross-border medical emergency planning exercises.

The G8 Summit that was hosted at the Lough Erne Resort in County Fermanagh in 2013 brought together all of the agencies involved in emergency planning from both sides of the border. It highlighted gaps in the ease of access to available information and the degree of collaboration at local level on both sides of the border. Local authorities and other agencies had to liaise with their equivalent organisations outside their own jurisdiction, with some doing so for the first time.

New Cross-Border Emergency Management Group

In the context of all of these varied and unconnected developments, the Cross-Border Emergency Management Group was established in

late 2013. It evolved as a natural progression to the series of ongoing cross-border initiatives/projects that had taken place, and as a result of the close working relationships and trust built up by the players working in the border regions over a number of years. It is a real example of the 'bottom-up' collaboration, referred to by Princen et al. (2014), between the 'street level professionals' or 'regionauts' involved in emergency management in both jurisdictions.

Drivers for change

One of the main drivers for such cross-border cooperation is the feeling of joint interdependence by all the organisations involved, i.e. the belief that progress in emergency management will only be achieved by joint action in a number of priority areas. There is a willingness to engage in this type of cross-border cooperation. Members see sufficient benefits emerging from their participation in the group to allow them to take up the challenges involved.

Members of the Cross-Border Emergency Management Group acknowledge the need to develop increased cross-border cooperation in emergency management, based on the references contained in the Republic of Ireland's *Framework for Major Emergency Management*, Northern Ireland's *Civil Contingencies Framework* and other recent guidance documents. They are also aware of the great opportunity for improved cross-border collaboration in emergency management afforded in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The Cross-Border Emergency Management Group provides a valuable communications forum where agencies and stakeholders from both jurisdictions can become familiar with the very different emergency management structures, frameworks and legislation that have evolved separately in both jurisdictions. It also offers the potential benefit of pooling scarce resources, which is of particular relevance in sparsely populated parts of the border region. It is also aware that there may be opportunities for attracting EU funding for the promotion of cross-border emergency management initiatives and that these need to be fully explored.

While it affords the opportunity to develop many benefits, it will also require sustained investment in time and effort to establish contacts, develop joint protocols, maintain good communications, and overcome possible legal and cultural differences that exist.

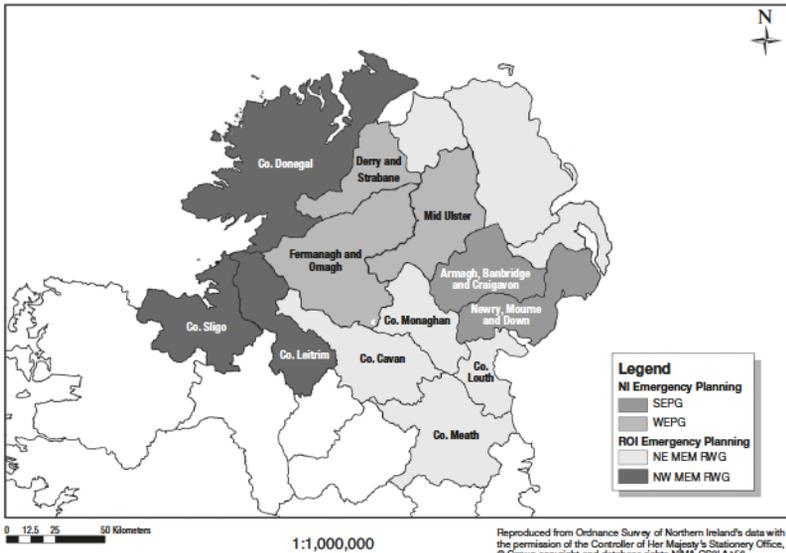
The aim of the Cross-Border Emergency Management Group is to increase cooperation between all of the statutory agencies involved in emergency management on the island of Ireland, with particular

reference to the border areas. Its priorities are to develop strategies and working procedures for emergency and disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation and response.

Area of operation

The area covered by the Cross-Border Emergency Management Group is highlighted in Figure 6. In the Republic of Ireland the counties involved include those in the North West and North East Major Emergency Management (MEM) Regional Working Groups while in Northern Ireland the new council areas making up the Western and Southern EPGs that touch the border are included.

Figure 6: Area of operation of Cross-Border Emergency Management Group



Membership of Cross-Border Emergency Management Group

The Cross-Border Emergency Management Group comprises equal representation from both jurisdictions, with representatives nominated from respective parent government departments and the regional emergency management groups in each jurisdiction.

Membership of the Cross-Border Emergency Management Group contains representatives from the following agencies.

Republic of Ireland

In the Republic membership comprises:

- five representatives of the North West MEM Regional Working Group (representing Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal);
- five representatives of the North East MEM Regional Working Group (representing Cavan, Monaghan, Louth and Meath);
- one nominee of DECLG;
- one nominee from Garda HQ.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland there are ten nominated representatives from the Southern and Western EPGs, comprising:

- local government (representatives from Southern and Western EPGs);
- the PSNI;
- the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service;
- health, including representation from the Public Health Agency and the health and social care trusts;
- NIFRS;
- a nominee from the CCPB;
- a nominee from PSNI HQ.

Mandate of Cross-Border Emergency Management Group

The mandate of the Cross-Border Emergency Management Group is to:

- i. identify and implement best practice in civil protection and emergency management on a cross-border basis in the areas of risk management, preparedness and response;
- ii. develop and maintain procedures for notification, activation and ongoing communications during a major emergency event in the border region;
- iii. develop ongoing cross-border, joint training and exercise programmes;
- iv. participate in cross-border projects as appropriate with a view to improving sustainable cross-border emergency management;
- v. report back to their own respective organisations and to other regional structures on the work of the group;

- vi. prepare an annual report to submit to the relevant cross-border bodies, national bodies or government departments with responsibility for emergency management in each jurisdiction.

Progress achieved

The Cross-Border Emergency Management Group has appointed its first joint chairpersons, namely Finian Joyce, Chief Fire Officer from the Republic of Ireland, and Joan McCaffrey, Emergency Planning Coordinator from Northern Ireland. The group has met regularly and has agreed its terms of reference, including membership of the group. The terms of reference have been considered by the regional groups in both jurisdictions. All agencies have presented an overview of their emergency management capabilities to the group. Relevant cross-border emergency management information has been stored on an external web-access platform for the benefit of the cross-border agencies involved. One of the Cross-Border Emergency Management Group's first practical initiatives was to work with the International Centre for Local and Regional Development and the All-Island Research Observatory to map emergency management resources for fire services and local authorities only along the border area as part of a cross-border mapping pilot project. As part of that mapping pilot project, efforts were made to compile an expanded cross-border multi-agency contacts directory of those involved in emergency management along the border area. The Cross-Border Emergency Management Group has produced its business plan for 2016–18 and is ready to implement the short-, medium- and long-term priorities of part of its annual work programmes.

Next steps

In the short term it is planned to extend the cross-border mapping pilot project to include information for all of the stakeholders involved in emergency management in both jurisdictions as part of the next phase of the project. Discussions are taking place with Land and Property Services (LPS) in Northern Ireland and Ordnance Survey Ireland to progress this, and both organisations have agreed to work in partnership with the group to develop a secure geographical information system, hosted on LPS's Spatial NI platform to map all relevant organisation assets and develop a concise multi-agency contacts directory.

One of the key medium-term issues that the Cross-Border Emergency Management Group will address is the absence of clearly

defined procedures and working protocols for scaling up an inter-agency response to a cross-border major emergency that affects both jurisdictions. This could be provided either as a stand-alone document or be included as an addendum or additional guidance document to the existing framework documents to be issued by the relevant authorities in both jurisdictions.

The Cross-Border Emergency Management Group faces many challenges in its work ahead. It is important that communication is prioritised and that trust between the stakeholders continues to be developed and maintained. The momentum and goodwill gained since the formation of the group are crucial. The sense of urgency must be continued and resources must be directed towards delivering results in the right areas to improve cross-border emergency management on the island of Ireland.

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