

## NEW SYSTEM OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN SERBIA

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### ABSTRACT

Although Serbia become in a certain way a synonym for crisis, crisis management as a system and as a function of the local and central government (state) level was not defined for almost two decades. After the dissolution of SFR Yugoslavia, one system of crisis management was left behind, and the new one was not built. Due to the lack of crisis awareness, and conflict of interests in fragile political coalitions, Serbia in sense of crisis management mechanisms was in a kind of vacuum, so the crisis were resolved in an ad hoc manner. In the late 2009 new Law on emergency situations was adopted in Parliament, defining the key principles and basic terms and concepts, precisising the mandate and responsibility of different ministries, agencies and institution, establishing mechanisms of coordination and shaping the system of rescue and protection.

**Key words:** crisis, crisis management, Serbia, transition

### INTRODUCTION

In Republic of Serbia during the period of building socialist regime (1945-1989) existed the "system of social self-protection" that was ideologically based, but rather functional. Within this system managing different kinds of crisis on all levels of organizing the state and society had important place.

In 1990s, after abandoning socialist project and making first steps into transition this system is crashing, while the new one has not yet been built, so the country is this regards in specific vacuum. Practitioners in various areas from the politics, economy, environment protection etc. on all levels (local, regional and national) responded to the

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crisis solely ad hoc in reactive and hectic manner havin no strategic vision or any short or long-term plan. Consequences for the state, nation and the citizens were disastrous.<sup>3</sup>

For two decades crisis management as a system and as a function of the local and central government (state) was not defined. Crisis management was not regulated with single and comprehensive law. Different kinds of crisis were regulated with particular laws. Besides the general provisions in the constitution, the most important laws for crisis management area were: Law on fire protection, Law on explosive materials, inflammable liquids and gases, Law on distribution of explosive materials, Law on transport of dangerous materials, Law on protection from natural disasters and other major accidents, Law on defense, Law on state of emergency, etc.<sup>4</sup> Many of these laws were exceeded and outdated, as they passed 20 or even more than 30 years ago in completly different domestic and foreign social circumstances and different political system and organisation of the state. They have not been harmonized with the constitutions that in the meantime were adopted. This also refers to international conventions. At the same time sublaws were not adopted. Some of the provisions in these laws were not practilcaly aplicable. Besides that in the meantime in practice emerged new situations that were completly unregulated. Finally, due to the lack of the comprehensive law that would regulate whole area of crisis management, in practice colision of mandate and jurisdiction often have occured. Somethimes there were situations in which it was not clear who is in charge, or, on the other hand, the responsible agency (organisation) did not have proper resources and capacities for adequate response within its mandate. This specially refers to division of mandate between the Republic (ministries) and local government. There was also confusion about the mandate and responsibility between state bodies and agencies (police, army, etc.).<sup>5</sup> Due to lack of awareness and political consensus those issues were neglected.

## 1 NEW SYSTEM

During 2009, crucial changes happened in the disaster management system in Serbia. The Serbian Government acknowledged the importance of establishment of an integrated emergency and disaster management system. Therefore, following the Conclusion of the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted on 5 March 2009 on establishing an integrated emergency management system within the Ministry of Interior, and the Conclusion of the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted on 25 June 2009 on establishing new working posts in the Ministry of Interior, the Protection and Rescue Sector was reorganised into the Sector for Emergency Management (SEM). an independent body within the Ministry of Interior, and the Head of the SEM is directly responsible to the minister. SEM merged the Protection and Rescue Sector (PRS) of MoI, Department for Emergency Situations of MoD and a

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<sup>3</sup> KEŠETOVIĆ, Ž., "The Serbian Approach to Shaping National Crisis Management Mechanisms" in Prezelj, I. (ed), *The Fight Against Terrorism and Crisis Management in the Western Balcans*, IOS Press: Amsterdam 2008, s. 173-180.

<sup>4</sup> Having in mind the mandate and responsibility of certain subjects for crisis management, the most important among these laws are: Law on fire protection, Law on protection from natural disasters and other major accidents and Law on defense.

<sup>5</sup> KEŠETOVIĆ, Ž., "Crisis management as a part of Serbian security system", *Political review*, forthcoming

number of employees from the Ministry of Environment. The reorganisation of the Protection and Rescue Sector into the Sector for Emergency Management aims at implementation of an integrated disaster and emergency system in Serbia.

Sector for Emergency Management (SEM) integrated Protection and Rescue Sector of the Ministry of Interior, Department for Emergency Situations of the Ministry of Defence and a number of employees from the Ministry of Environment (from department for chemical accidents). The obligation of SEM is to further develop capacities in the two existing departments – Department for Prevention and Department for Fire and Rescue Units, and two newly established departments – Dept. for Risk Management and Dept. for Civil Protection as well as National Training Centre for education and training of professional and volunteer fire and rescue units, and citizens participating in civil protection.

The main tasks of the Sector are to protect lives and property in the event of natural or man-made disasters, also to work in the field of emergency prevention and prompt first response in the event of emergencies (natural disasters - earthquakes, floods, storms, heavy rainfall, electric discharges, hailstorms, atmospheric disasters, drought, rock and snow avalanches, accumulations of ice on flowing water, landslides; man-made disasters - fires, explosions, severe damage, traffic accidents, accidents in mines and tunnels, severe damage and accidents that occur in electricity power plants, oil and gas power plants, and facilities where radioactive substances are kept and used i.e. nuclear power plants, and in telecommunication and information systems; hazards for human life and health and the environment due to the effects of hazardous materials, epidemics of contagious diseases, epidemics of contagious diseases for livestock, pests and other vegetable diseases, and similar large scale phenomena that can endanger human life and health and the environment or that can cause extensive damage).

Sector for Emergency Management has four departments - Department for Prevention, Department for Fire and Rescue Units, Department for Risk Management and Department for Civil Protection, and National Training Centre.

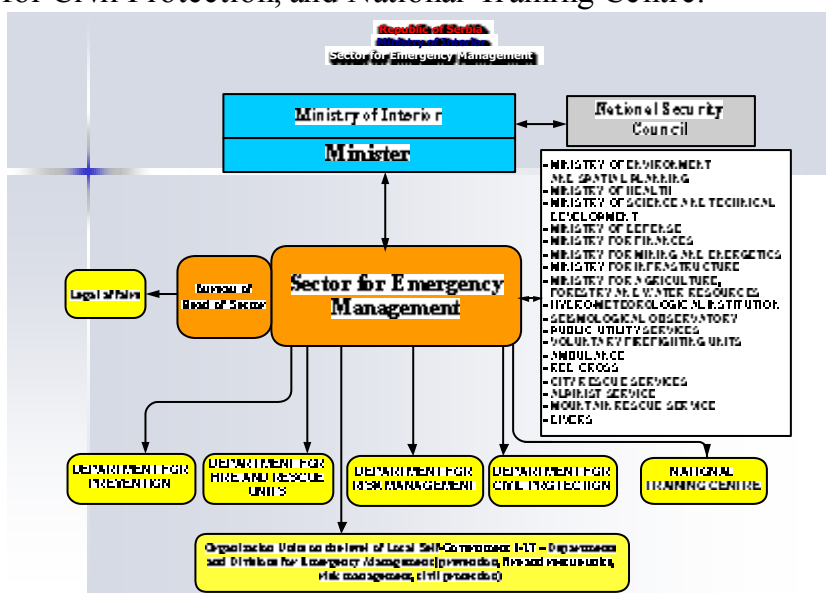


Figure 1<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Source <http://www.prezentacije.mup.gov.rs/sektorzazastituispasavanje/orgsema.html>

The headquarters of the SEM is in the Ministry of Interior. Head of the SEM is also Assistant Minister of Interior. There are 27 regional departments for emergency management in the Republic of Serbia. All 27 regional departments have the same structure as the SEM and the Heads of these 27 departments are directly responsible to the Head of the SEM.

The Department for Prevention is authorised to carry out fire inspections of objects in relation to fire protection, which includes activities regarding the issuing of permits for premises, confirming technical documents, and granting technical approval for objects under construction, inspection of objects in relation to fire and explosion protection, transport and traffic control of hazardous materials, and the investigation of the causes of fires and explosions.

The Department for Fire and Rescue Units coordinates the work of fire and rescue units for the whole territory of the Republic of Serbia. Its fire and rescue units deal with first response, elimination and relief in the event of disaster or emergency. Fire and rescue units work closely with other departments within the ministry if there is a need for coordinated response in the event of a major disaster - Helicopter Unit, Gendarmerie, divers etc.

During 2008, the specialised teams for first response in case of major floods and water rescue were formed. They consist of the members of the Sector and Gendarmerie (divers). These teams completed the training course in Serbia, France and Russia with the experts from French Ministry of Interior, its Civil Protection Department and Ministry for Emergency Situations of the Russian Federation (EMERCOM).

The most important step of the Sector toward the establishment of an integrated emergency management system was the setting up of a legal framework in this area. On 28 December 2009, the Serbian National Assembly adopted the new Law on Emergency Situations. It is expected that the new Law on Explosives will be adopted in 2010. In accordance with this Law, the Sector shall coordinate the activities of all state institutions involved in emergency and disaster management.

This Law defines activities, declaring and management in emergency situations; system of protection and rescue of citizens, material and cultural goods from natural and man-made disasters; rights and obligations of citizens, state agencies, autonomous provinces, local self-governments, companies and other legal persons and entrepreneurs; inspection and supervision, international cooperation and other issues relevant to organisation and functioning of the protection and rescue system.

Following the adoption of the Law on Emergency Situations, the strategic documents should be adopted – National Risk Assessment, National Strategy for Protection in case of Emergency, Emergency Plan. National Strategy should define goals and modalities for implementation of prompt response activities in case of emergency. Emergency Plans shall be developed and implemented. These plans are developed in most of Serbian local self governments meaning that they will only be revised. These plans have been developed with the assistance and in cooperation with USAID Program. PPES has been active for the past two years in education and training

on the local level, and one of the main activities was certification of towns and municipalities for development of emergency plans.

There is an ongoing project within the Ministry of Interior led by the Sector for implementation of a single European emergency call number 112 with the aim of going along with the European tendencies.

The Sector has also initiated the project on improvement of operational capacity of fire and rescue units in case of technical and technological accidents along international highway and railroad corridor 10.

## **1.1 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

SEM participates actively in the activities of regional and international cooperation in the field of disaster and emergency management. The Sector has a close cooperation with all neighbouring countries and also takes part in and organises regional and international seminars, specialised trainings, courses and workshops in the field of disaster and emergency management and disaster risk reduction. The Sector participates in the activities of international institutions and organisations, such as United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction UNISDR, EUR-OPA of the Council of Europe, Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI) of the Regional Co-operation Council for the region of South East Europe, United Nations Development Programme UNDP, United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs UN-OCHA, Civil-Military Emergency Planning (CMEP), PfP of NATO, OSCE, USAID, BSEC, Balkan Fire-fighting Sport Federation (BFSF) etc.

Memorandum of Intention for Cooperation in the field of prevention against natural and man-made disasters and removal of consequences, firstly signed on 25 July 1996, was renewed between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and EMERCOM Russia on 20 October 2009.

The Sector and Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) signed Memorandum of Understanding on 21 December 2007. In accordance with this MoU, the financial means of the donation are being spent for purchasing equipment, for trainings, seminars, regional and international cooperation in the field of disaster and emergency management in the period of five (5) years or till the end of 2012. In 2010 the MoU was prolonged until the end of 2013 on mutual agreement.

Agreement between the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Ukraine and the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on cooperation in the field of prevention of emergency situations and removal of consequences, entered into force on 2 June 2004.

By implementing the lessons learned and by exchanging experience and knowledge with other relevant services, the Sector aims to become a modern European service which would also be the leading service in the region with the capacities to also assist neighbouring countries in times of need.

## 2 CONCLUDING REMARKS

By adopting new Law on emergencies in Serbia, legal basis for establishing integrated system for managing emergency and crisis situation is provided. It is probably that legal text, rapidly adopted after decades of indifference, suffer from "different deficiencies and even serious lacks".<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, advantages and merits of its adoptions are predominant and more important. Now it is possible to address responsibility, clear the mandate and allocate the resources for resolving crisis situation and avoid the situations that during crisis and emergencies different agencies and bodies negotiate who should be in charge, and playing "blame games" in the aftermath of the crisis.

In the next period focus of the activities should be on providing institutional and other system and material-technical preconditions for implementation of the new Law.

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