

Creating a European Critical Infrastructure Warning Information Network (CIWIN)

On 31 March 2009, the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) adopted with a large majority¹ an amended report on the creation of a Critical Infrastructure Warning Information Network (CIWIN) tabled by a European Commission proposal in October 2008. The European Parliament is involved under the consultation procedure, and prior to a Council decision the subject is scheduled to be discussed in plenary on 23 April 2009.

The Definition of Critical Infrastructure:

"Critical infrastructures shall mean those assets, systems or parts thereof located in Member States which are essential for the maintenance of vital societal functions, health, safety, security, supply chain, economic or social well-being of people, and the disruption or destruction of which would have a significant impact in a Member State as a result of the failure to maintain those functions." (Report voted by the LIBE Committee on 31 March 2009.)

Political Context

CIWIN is part of the European Union's strategy, starting in 2004, to create a horizontal and cross-sectoral framework for Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) in Europe, covering sectors such as transport, telecoms, information technology, energy, financial services, health services and the provision of food and safe drinking water. CIWIN, which is concerned specifically with the information sharing process between EU Member States, is one of the measures accompanying the European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection (EPCIP) proposed by the Commission in December 2006.

According to the voted Report, drafted by Italian MEP Luca Romagnoli (Non-attached Member), CIWIN would not longer be a voluntary system with two distinct functions (a platform for information sharing and exchange of best practice combined with a Rapid Alert System/RAS) as initially proposed by the Commission, but a compulsory system, by that involving all the Member States - without the RAS functionality. The reason for this split is that Member States seem not yet ready - from a political and technical point of view - to implement such a European rapid alert system.

Problem Definition

Certain infrastructures and the services they provide are crucial for the security and economy of the European Union as well as the well-being of its citizens. Critical infrastructure extends across many sectors of the economy, including banking and finance, transport and distribution, energy, utilities, health, food supply, communications, and key government services. Critical infrastructure can be damaged, disrupted or destroyed by natural disasters, accidents, criminal activity or acts of terrorism. In the last years, the dramatic experiences caused by natural or man-made disasters showed clearly to what extent modern

¹ 32 votes in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention.