

EUROPEAN UNION AND CRISES PERIODS

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***Abstract:** In its development, the European Union has experienced numerous crises which have resulted in better adjustment of Community policies and instruments, contributing to the strengthening of Community values. Over the last decade, the European Union has faced certain situations, such as the waves of immigrants from the East, the covid pandemic, the economic crisis, and the unstable situation in the neighborhood of the Union. In this article, European Union policy has been analyzed in the light of the measures taken in crisis situations and the results of the implementation of these measures.*

Key words: *European Union, crises, measure, politics*

INTRODUCTION

Since the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community after World War II, the European Union has experienced various crises that have had an impact in different areas. All this period has been characterized by evolution, becoming more stable, stronger, European citizens being the center of attention and all actions carried out based on values such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights.

Over time, changes have been implemented at the level of the policy and institutions, various adjustments have been made following events, in order to develop the capacity to cope with future crises [11].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Last century, the European Union focused mainly on the development of Member States and strengthening cohesion, without having to deal with certain negative events. But in 1973, the European Union faced the oil crisis caused by the Arab-Israeli war. Large oil producing countries in the Middle East have imposed high prices along with restricting sales to certain European countries, which has caused economic problems within the European Union.

The year 2008 marked the beginning of a global economic crisis. One of the causes of this economic crisis was mortgage loans in the United States, but there were also repressions of this crisis among European banks. This crisis has significantly affected the economy of many European countries, and has led to stronger economic cooperation between Member States.

However, this crisis has also led to difficulties in public finances in several Member States. In 2010, the 16 Member States using the euro established a plan to help them cope with their deficits. The European Union has provided aid to several States and the foundations of the Banking union have been laid as the framework for safer and more reliable banks.

Many migrants sought asylum in Europe, and till 2016, their number has over 1 million people. Most of them fled the war in Syria and sought international protection. The migrant crisis has led to a better collaboration regarding the external borders of the Union by increasing control and working with neighboring countries to reduce the number of immigrants [7].

The series of events continues with the 2016 United Kingdom vote to leave the Union. After 40 years of being a member of the European Union, in a referendum in 2016, more than half of the United Kingdom population voted to leave the Union.

In addition to the economic, political and social events that have made their mark on the European Union, environmental protection and climate change have taken on importance and December 2019 was the moment when the new strategy called European Green Deal was established, aiming to make Europe climate-neutral in only three decades.

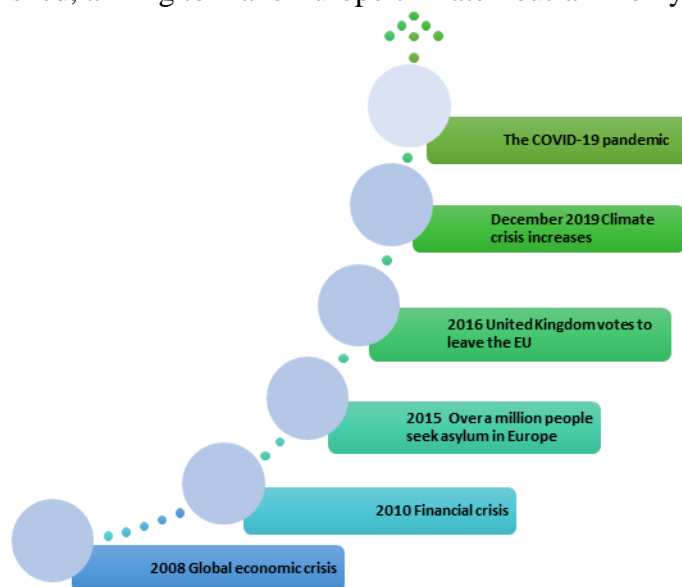


Figure 1. Main crises in European Union

The succession of crises took on a much more dynamic pace and the Covid-19 pandemic led to an unexpected economic slowdown. The medical crisis has shown high vulnerability to such unforeseen situations, but the response at the level of each Member State and at the level of the Union has not been delayed, proving a very good work to support the medical system, stop the spread of the virus and provide vaccines for population.

RESEARCH RESULTS

With 27 Member States, the European Union has an area of over 4 million km² and in 2020, the population was about 450 million people, representing about 9.78% of the world's population [9, 15]. In 2020, the European Union had a gross domestic product of \$15,300,000 millions, about 18% of the world gross domestic product.

A set of rules and instruments are currently being implemented at EU level, the purpose of which is crisis management and strengthening resilience. In figure 2 are remembered there instruments.

Recent events have shown that the occurrence of such events is unforeseen, their management is very complex and the borders of countries are of very little importance in their management. The European Union has facilitated cross-border cooperation and the implementation of solidarity mechanisms for effective crisis management and population protection.

The Covid 19 pandemic and the economic crisis, if I were to mention only the latest events, stressed the need for the Union to be able to cope with events of a different nature, events that can happen simultaneously and which can have different implications and multiple effects, even in cascades.

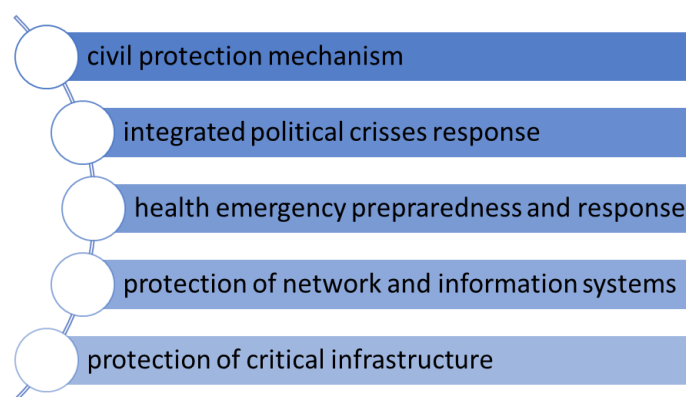


Figure 2. The EU instrument and mechanism for crises management

Source: European Council, How the EU responds to crises and builds resilience, 2022

A very important role is played by crisis management, targeting multi-sectoral and cross-border development, supported by good communication and continuously fighting against disinformation [8, 10].

In order to response to natural or human made crises or disaster, European Union has developed a range of response mechanisms to help and resolve emerging situations.

At Union level, the Civil Protection Mechanism was set up to coordinate the response to natural and human-made disasters [12].

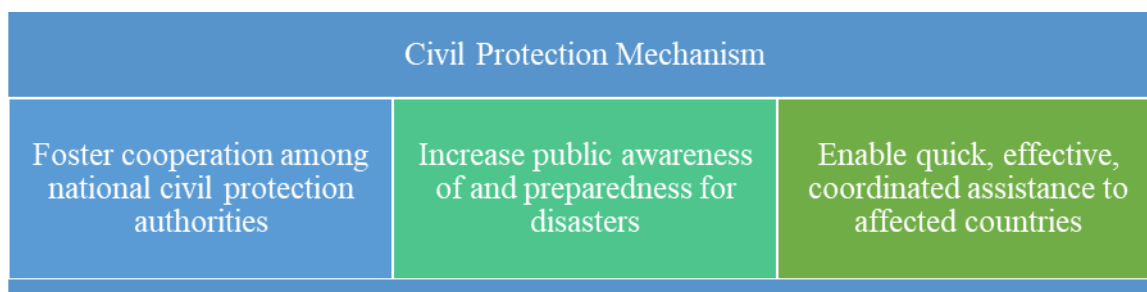


Figure 3. The EU Civil Protection Mechanism

Source: European Council, How the EU responds to crises and builds resilience, 2022

The European Civil Protection Pool is included in the civil protection mechanism and is formed by voluntary assets employed by the different states to take place within or outside the borders of the European Union when the situation so requires.

Climate change and its events, which are increasingly frequent and intense, have led to the adoption by the Council of civil protection systems to increase resilience to climate change. In figure 4 are presented the main action in order to mitigate the climate change [3, 4].

Another EU instrument for crisis management is integrated political crisis response, which makes it easier to quickly and coordinated decisions at Union level to respond to complex or major crises [6, 11]. At the same time, in the case of terrorist acts, this instrument is the first to be activated.

This mechanism is used to coordinate the response to the crisis, especially at the political level, bringing together European institutions, Member States and other key players who can help solve the crisis.

It has recently been used to respond to the migrant crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, currently being active due to military situation in Ukraine. It can be activated by the

presidency of the Council or by a member state invoking the solidarity clause [2, 5]. It represent the framework for the response at highest political level for cross-sectorial crises



Figure 4. Action towards climate change

Source: European Council, *How the EU responds to crises and builds resilience*, 2022

Events that have taken place since 2000, such as the 9/11 attacks in the United States of America, the bombings in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, as well as the 2004 Indian ocean tsunami, have highlighted the need for such a tool at Union level.

At its base, it stands emergency and crisis coordination arrangements (CCA), which is a platform for the exchange of information and coordination of crisis actions used by union states.

The integrated political crisis response mechanism assures concrete tools for streamline information sharing, also it aims to facilitate collaboration and coordinate crises at political level [1, 11].

Between the tools used by the IPCR, are:

- the roundtable, usually informal, chaired by the Presidency and to which participate different key actors:
- analytical reports, presenting a clear picture of the current situation and used in decision making;
- a web platform used to collect and also, to exchange information;
- a contact point 24 hours, 7 days, in order to ensure a permanent connection with key actors [10, 13]

Depending on the nature, emergency and intensity of the situation, there are three operational modes, as shown in the following figure.

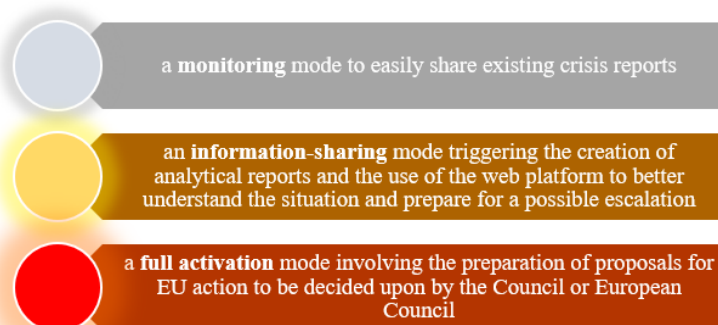


Figure 5. The ICPR operational modes

Source: European Council, *How the Council coordinated the EU response to crisis*, 2022

For the migration crisis and for the Covid-19 pandemic, the mechanism was used in the information sharing mode. But after March 2, 2020 the mechanism has been activated in full mode due to the deteriorating situation and different sectors affected.

CONCLUSIONS

The crises European Union overcome help for better cohesion and the strengthen collaboration capacity in critical situations, contributing to better resilience. The immediate and sustained response as well as the very prompt actions have in many cases helped to mitigate the negative impact of the crisis.

Compared with emergency and crisis coordination arrangements, the integrated political crisis response arrangements have several benefits, being more flexible, more scalable and being built on the existing resources, structures and capabilities.

In order to be better prepared for the future crises or disasters, there are several activities developed with the aim to ensure that the integrated political crisis response mechanism works well when activated. Among these activities are trainings for stakeholders, exercising, sharing information referring to risks and planning activity, and also a network of experts from each member states and European institutions.

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