

## European Red Cross Societies host IDRL workshops

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This year, with support from the European Commission, the IFRC and the National Red Cross Societies of Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom launched a joint project to study the regulatory frameworks of the European Union and in each of the six case-study countries with regard to international disaster assistance.

In early December, the British, Bulgarian, French and German Red Cross Societies each co-hosted a workshop with the civil protection authorities of their national governments to discuss preliminary findings from their research and to solicit views on key issues.

Drawing on the findings of the IFRC of regulatory problems encountered in other regions as well as on the IDRL Guidelines, the workshops looked to how national legal frameworks would address common regulatory problems in international disaster operations.

Each workshop gathered officials from the national and regional levels of government as well as civil society organizations active in disaster response. Participants discussed the advances in regional cooperation at the European level, notably through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and NATO, and how these might be used in the case of a disaster at home. They also examined potential disaster scenarios under which such assistance might be requested, how it would likely be handled under existing rules, and what improvements might be helpful for the future.

In his opening address to the Paris workshop, Colonel Philippe Nardin, Head of the International Relations Office of the French Civil Security Directorate, highlighted that cross-border solidarity in disaster response is now anchored in EU law, thanks to the Treaty of Lisbon. From now forward, he noted, "when one European state is affected by a disaster, all European states are affected."

"The United Kingdom is in the fortunate position of traditionally being a provider of disaster relief to other states, and is normally self-sufficient in relation to its domestic disaster response," noted Michael Meyer, head of international law at the British Red Cross. "Our joint workshop with the UK Cabinet Office helped officials and other relevant personnel to consider the reverse scenario, and the measures necessary for the UK to deal efficiently and effectively with potential aid from outside our national borders. We hope it will have practical results."

Drawing on the results of these workshops, the National Societies will finalize their studies in early 2010. A regional study of EU regulations will likewise be published in January. Further workshops in Austria and the Netherlands are planned in December and January.