The safety of civilians became an important task for EU countries in the 20th century. In addition to military security systems, non-military security systems such as rescue, firefighting and crisis management mechanisms have become key protective institutions. Nowadays, these systems are collectively called “civil protection”. This analysis presents challenges for the civil protection systems of Poland and Hungary.

Introduction

The main goal of this text is to diagnose the civil protection systems of Poland and Hungary in the light of contemporary European challenges. Over the last decade, Europe has experienced several major crises, such as the migration crisis, the pandemic crisis and the war crisis. In addition, fires and floods remain a serious challenge in our region. Numerous crises led to the development of civil protection institutions. However, this process remains unfinished. This short analysis includes a discussion of the general shape of civil protection institutions in Poland and Hungary. Then, the condition of these systems was assessed and key challenges for the future were identified. The analysis also includes final recommendations.

What is civil protection?

Civil protection covers non-military security systems. The dynamic development of these systems began in the 20th century, when European countries began to create institutions in order to protect civilians against the effects of wars and natural disasters[1]. In the second half of the 20th century, such institutions as civil defense, rescue systems and fire brigade were developed. Formations ensuring public order have become separate non-military security systems. Their task is to protect against prohibited activities[2]. These tasks are performed mostly by police formations, intelligence services and various departmental inspections. Modern civil protection is based on the cooperation of these two groups of institutions.

In the 21st century, the issue of civil protection has also gained an important position in the European Union . In October 2001, the European Commission established the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The Lisbon Treaty raised civil protection to the level of EU fundamental rights. The legal basis for EU cooperation in the field of natural disaster prevention is Art. 196 of the Treaty of Lisbon. However, civil protection still remains the responsibility of the Member States. The EU plays a supporting and coordinating role. In 2013-2014, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism was reformed and, among others, was established: Emergency

Materiał pobrany ze strony Instytutu Sobieskiego, sobieski.org.pl[autor].

Response Coordination Center (ERCC)[3]. In Europe, civil protection focuses on supporting countries in issues such as supplies (medicines, shelter items, water purification), organization of rescue support, analytical support and repatriation of EU citizens.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have led to increased cooperation between Member States and strengthened the position of institutions responsible for the protection of civilians. By the end of 2023, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism had been activated over 700 times (including 340 times in Europe). Under the mechanism, states made their resources available to partners because none of them had created a fully self-sufficient civil protection system.

Civil protection institutions in Poland and Hungary

Poland and Hungary inherited their civil protection systems from the communist era. Concern about the possible participation of Eastern Bloc countries in a nuclear war led to the development of civil defense institutions[4]. Civil defense tasks included, for example, alerting the population, evacuating, providing shelters, food and medicine, protecting property, and burying the dead. Civil defense was militarized and its task was to ensure the safety of civilians during increased states of defense readiness. In peacetime, civil defense deals with rescue and planning activities. In communist countries, civil defense did not include, for example, terrorism, the fight against organized crime or epidemics, because it was believed that these threats remained the same both in times of war and peace. As a result, the civil defense system did not gain the same importance as the army and police. It was a system of cooperation between various institutions in states of higher defense readiness, rather than a separate organization[5].

After the end of the Cold War, reforms of the civil defense system began. The subject of civil protection was transferred from the ministries of defense to the ministries of interior affairs. In Poland, reforms of this system ended in failure[6]. The head of OCK (Chief Commander of the State Fire Service) did not receive a separate office and did not become the superior of regional heads (voivodes). Financing and recruitment to protective formations collapsed. As a result, in 2007, a separate “crisis management” system was organized, based on the Government Security Center (RCB)[7]. In each voivodeship, poviat and commune, a crisis management system was organized under the management of local authorities. The Polish state began to develop crisis management plans and critical infrastructure protection plans.

Materiał pobrany ze strony Instytutu Sobieskiego, sobieski.org.pl[autor].

During the pandemic and migration crisis, the crisis management system also failed and the Polish government was looking for various substitute solutions[8]. Currently, Poland does not have effective regulations for times of crisis and natural disasters. In 2022, the old regulations on Civil Defense were abolished. Attempts to pass a new civil protection law have been ongoing for several years, but without success[9]. Prevention in the field of civil protection is basically non-existent (7 educational videos on the RCB website), and the training system works only to a small extent, as indicated by the reports of the Supreme Audit Office [10]. The main problem of the entire system is the dispersion of responsibility and lack of funds for the development of formations and a base of protective materials.

In Hungary, the National Directorate General for Disaster Management (BM OKF, Belügyminisztérium Országos Katasztrófavédelmi Főigazgatóság) was established in 1999[11]. The structure was created in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Currently, it operates on the basis of the reformed Act of 2011[12]. This institution was based on the demilitarized competences of the fire brigades[13]. In the operational structure, the key decision-making bodies are the General Inspectorate of Firefighting and the General Inspectorate of Civil Protection. The local fire brigade structures, supported by the local government and non-governmental organizations, are subordinated to the headquarters. The Directorate General is responsible for fire protection and civil protection and can use a large pool of assets for this purpose (which its Polish counterpart does not have). The directorate is responsible for civilian crisis planning and defense management. It regulates and manages the fire brigade systems, technical rescue, material reserves and public information (prevention and training). It also deals with water protection and the safety of civilian nuclear energy[14]. Controls the preparation of local and company plans.

The National Directorate General for Disaster Management controls numerous regional training bases, the Disaster Management Education Center, the Disaster Management Institute of the National University of Public Services, the Disaster Management Museum and the Disaster Management Research Institute. In addition, it publishes a monthly magazine, teaching materials, organizes education and runs a sports association. Similar structures in Poland practically do not exist or operate independently of the Government Security Center (e.g. at the Fire University in Warsaw). Poland is a large country and therefore its system is decentralized and based on regional crisis management centers. In a crisis situation, local authorities are responsible for managing the network of professional organizations and ensuring the evacuation and alerting the population. The fire brigade has a servant

Materiał pobrany ze strony Instytutu Sobieskiego, sobieski.org.pl[autor].

role in the Polish system. However, conclusions from the Ukrainian war indicate that such a system may be ineffective in the event of an armed conflict. The fire brigade does not have the competence to build shelters, create evacuation places, warn, alarm or transport goods[15]. In the event of a military crisis, firefighters will perform their basic firefighting tasks.

Problems of civil protection systems

There are two types of problems with civil protection systems. These are external and internal problems. The former result from threats, and the latter result from the shape of the security system. Threats in Europe have evolved. In the first decade of the 21st century, EU authorities were mainly concerned about fires and floods. This can be seen when analyzing the competences of rescue authorities in Poland and Hungary. In the second decade, the catalog of threats expanded significantly. In addition to natural disasters and natural disasters, there were problems related to mass population movements (uncontrolled migrations, refugees, mass hospitalization, conflicts). These problems require a response from the ministries responsible for internal security.

Currently, there are at least three main models for organizing the civil protection system in Europe[16]. The first model comes from the Cold War. This model is based on the militarization of civil defense structures. This is an expensive solution and often requires the establishment of a separate ministry and separate protective formations. Structures similar to this model operate today in Spain, France and Russia. The second model is based on expanding the financing and competences of rescue services that have material reserves in case of crises. This model can be observed in Germany, Hungary and theoretically in Poland. The third model is the Scandinavian model, which is based on mass training of citizens to support a few protective formations. This concept is popular in countries with small populations.

The main problem of the Polish system is the lack of current statutory regulations. This means underfunding and heavy burdens on local authorities. The decision-making system during a crisis and higher states of defense readiness is unclear to citizens. The strategic documents are lengthy, over-theorized (KPZK)[17] and imprecise (National Security Strategy), and their assumptions are implemented to a small extent[18]. Polish rescue systems are modern, but they struggle with staffing problems (age, staff salaries). Moreover, the universal training system requires serious reconstruction. Crisis situations in Poland were therefore solved using ad hoc solutions. Due to the size of the country, Poland should consider establishing

Materiał pobrany ze strony Instytutu Sobieskiego, sobieski.org.pl[autor].

separate protective formations within the existing rescue and firefighting system (KSRG) on the basis of the volunteer fire brigade (OSP). These formations will require additional financing, equipment and material base.

Hungary's situation is better than Poland's. The civil protection system is more centralized and has a clear legal basis, competence structure and institutional base. However, the scale of the challenges remains significant because the Hungarian emergency system also deals with nuclear energy, water supply, safety engineering, industrial supervision, training and certification. The system seems well prepared to respond to technical threats and in the event of natural disasters.

The main problem of Hungary, like Poland, is insufficient preparation to respond to mass population movements (mass evacuation or uncontrolled migration). Both Poland and Hungary have had to use military assistance in recent years to address migration and health crises. The army is an external security institution, it is not subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and does not have sufficient police powers. Therefore, there is still space for improvement in terms of developing civil protection personnel and increasing the involvement of NGOs and citizens.

Recommendations

1. Poland and Hungary should review cases of use of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to identify shortfalls and increase the capacity of their emergency services in the future. It should be assumed that crises in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Turkey and the Balkan countries may directly affect the internal security of Poland and Hungary.
2. Poland and Hungary may increase the scope of bilateral consultations on increasing civil protection capacity in connection with migration problems. The catalog of common issues may be expanded in the future (critical infrastructure, river protection, securing railways and roads, the Via Carpathia, development of nuclear energy in Poland).
3. Poland and Hungary can develop training systems and increase the resilience of societies to crises by using good practices to strengthen situational awareness.
4. Poland and Hungary should ensure counterintelligence protection in the area of critical infrastructure, which may be penetrated by actors aimed at potential provocations and triggering further international crises in Eastern Europe.

Materiał pobrany ze strony Instytutu Sobieskiego, sobieski.org.pl[autor].

[1] P. Szmitkowski, System ochrony ludności w Polsce – historia i współczesność, *Colloquium*, no IV/2012, pp. 133-156.

[2]See J. Trocha, *Propedeutyka ochrony ludności w Polsce. Problemy. Możliwości. Perspektywy*. Wydawnictwo Akademii Sztuki Wojennej, Warszawa 2020.

[3] *Civil Protection* , European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, European Commission, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection_en

[4] *Civil protection in Hungary* , June 2009, https://www.iaem.org/portals/25/documents/HungaryEM.pdf

[5] M. Kopczewski, P. Szmitkowski, Civil Defense In Poland – Transformation Process After 1989. Current State And Modernization Proposals, *De Securitate et Defensione*, no. 1 (6) 2020, pp. 75-87. G. Sobolewski, Systemic Approach to Civil Protection in Poland *, Safety and Fire Technology*, vol. 54, 2019, pp. 116-131.

[6] F. Krynojewski, *Obrona cywilna Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej*, Difin, Warszawa 2012; R. Ostrowska, Civil defense in Poland from a historical perspective, *Scientific Journal of the Military University of Land Forces* , 2021, Volume 53, Number 3(201), pp. 496-506.

[7] *Government Center for Security* , https://www.gov.pl/web/rcb

[8] A. Podolski, (et al.) *Wirusowe zarządzanie kryzysowe 2020. Raport IBK, Warszawa 2020.*

[9] H. Izdebski, *Projekt ustawy o ochronie ludności oraz o stanie klęski żywiołowej – uporządkowanie stanu prawnego czy kontynuacja zmiany ustroju bez zmiany Konstytucji?, Fundacja im. S. Batorego,* May 9, 2022, https://www.batory.org.pl/publikacja/projekt-ustawy-o-ochronie-ludnosci-oraz-o-zanie-kleski-zywiolowej-uporzadowanie-stanu-prawnego-czy- continuation-of-system-change-without-changing-the-constitution/

[10] *Polska nie ma skutecznego systemu ochrony ludności,* Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 21.01.2019,

Materiał pobrany ze strony Instytutu Sobieskiego, sobieski.org.pl[autor].

https://www.nik.gov.pl/aktualnosci/polska-nie-ma-skuteczny-systemu-ochrony-ludnosci.html

[11] B*elügyminisztérium Országos Katasztrófavédelmi Főigazgatóság* , 11/08/2024, https://www.katasztrofavedelem.hu/2/bemutatkozas

[12] *2011. évi CXXVIII. törvény – a katasztrófavédelemről és a hozzá kapcsolódó egyes törvények módosításáról* , https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/act_on_disaster_management_CXXVIII_2011_en.pdf

[13] L. Kozári, *System of Hungarian System Management* , Defense Technical Information Center Compilation Part Notice, ADP013436 (Unclassified), https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADP013436.pdf

[14] *Hatósági tevékenység ismertetése* , 10/08/2024, https://www.katasztrofavedelem.hu/78/hatosagi-tevekenyseg-ismertetese

[15] F. Krynojewski, *Obrona cywilna nie może działać jak pospolite ruszenie, Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, 21.09.2022,* [access: 12/11/2023] https://serwisy.gazetaprawna.pl/samorzad/artykuly/8552326,wywiad-franciszek-krynojewski-obrona -ciwilna-straz-pospolite-ruszenie.html

[16] *The national disaster management system* , European Commission, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/national-disaster-management-system_en

[17] *Krajowy Plan Zarządzania Kryzysowego, Rządowe Centrum Bezpieczeństwa*, 09/08/2024, https://www.gov.pl/web/rcb/krajowy-plan-zarzadzania-kryzysowego

[18] See more: T. Pawłuszko, Kryzys Obrony Cywilnej w Polsce. Perspektywa instytucjonalne, *Studia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego – National Security Studies*, vol. 30, 4/2023, pp. 41-62, https://doi.org/10.37055/sbn/175516

graphics: (Unijny Mechanizm Ochrony Ludności, EU Civil Protection Mechanism), source: https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection_en

[1] P. Szmitkowski, System ochrony ludności w Polsce – historia i współczesność, *Colloquium*, no IV/2012, pp. 133-156.

[2]See J. Trocha, *Propedeutyka ochrony ludności w Polsce. Problemy. Możliwości. Perspektywy*. Wydawnictwo Akademii Sztuki Wojennej, Warszawa 2020.

[3] *Civil Protection* , European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, European Commission, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection_en

[4] *Civil protection in Hungary* , June 2009, https://www.iaem.org/portals/25/documents/HungaryEM.pdf

[5] M. Kopczewski, P. Szmitkowski, Civil Defense In Poland – Transformation Process After 1989. Current State And Modernization Proposals, *De Securitate et Defensione*, no. 1 (6) 2020, pp. 75-87. G. Sobolewski, Systemic Approach to Civil Protection in Poland *, Safety and Fire Technology*, vol. 54, 2019, pp. 116-131.

[6] F. Krynojewski, *Obrona cywilna Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej*, Difin, Warszawa 2012; R. Ostrowska, Civil defense in Poland from a historical perspective, *Scientific Journal of the Military University of Land Forces* , 2021, Volume 53, Number 3(201), pp. 496-506.

[7] *Government Center for Security* , https://www.gov.pl/web/rcb

[8] A. Podolski, (et al.) *Wirusowe zarządzanie kryzysowe 2020. Raport IBK, Warszawa 2020.*

[9] H. Izdebski, *Projekt ustawy o ochronie ludności oraz o stanie klęski żywiołowej – uporządkowanie stanu prawnego czy kontynuacja zmiany ustroju bez zmiany Konstytucji?, Fundacja im. S. Batorego,* May 9, 2022, https://www.batory.org.pl/publikacja/projekt-ustawy-o-ochronie-ludnosci-oraz-o-zanie-kleski-zywiolowej-uporzadowanie-stanu-prawnego-czy- continuation-of-system-change-without-changing-the-constitution/

[10] *Polska nie ma skutecznego systemu ochrony ludności,* Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 21.01.2019,

Materiał pobrany ze strony Instytutu Sobieskiego, sobieski.org.pl[autor].

https://www.nik.gov.pl/aktualnosci/polska-nie-ma-skuteczny-systemu-ochrony-ludnosci.html

[11] B*elügyminisztérium Országos Katasztrófavédelmi Főigazgatóság* , 11/08/2024, https://www.katasztrofavedelem.hu/2/bemutatkozas

[12] *2011. évi CXXVIII. törvény – a katasztrófavédelemről és a hozzá kapcsolódó egyes törvények módosításáról* , https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/act_on_disaster_management_CXXVIII_2011_en.pdf

[13] L. Kozári, *System of Hungarian System Management* , Defense Technical Information Center Compilation Part Notice, ADP013436 (Unclassified), https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADP013436.pdf

[14] *Hatósági tevékenység ismertetése* , 10/08/2024, https://www.katasztrofavedelem.hu/78/hatosagi-tevekenyseg-ismertetese

[15] F. Krynojewski, *Obrona cywilna nie może działać jak pospolite ruszenie, Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, 21.09.2022,* [access: 12/11/2023] https://serwisy.gazetaprawna.pl/samorzad/artykuly/8552326,wywiad-franciszek-krynojewski-obrona -ciwilna-straz-pospolite-ruszenie.html

[16] *The national disaster management system* , European Commission, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/national-disaster-management-system_en

[17] *Krajowy Plan Zarządzania Kryzysowego, Rządowe Centrum Bezpieczeństwa*, 09/08/2024, https://www.gov.pl/web/rcb/krajowy-plan-zarzadzania-kryzysowego

[18] See more: T. Pawłuszko, Kryzys Obrony Cywilnej w Polsce. Perspektywa instytucjonalne, *Studia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego – National Security Studies*, vol. 30, 4/2023, pp. 41-62, https://doi.org/10.37055/sbn/175516

The article was created as part of the project entitled “Dual voices of experts in international affairs: Poland and Hungary” implemented by the Sobieski Institute, grant no.: DOF-K/IF/RD12/15/2024. The grantee is the Waclaw Felczak Institute for

Materiał pobrany ze strony Instytutu Sobieskiego, sobieski.org.pl[autor].

Polish-Hungarian Cooperation.

The publication reflects only the views of the author(s) and cannot be associated with the official position of the Wacław Felczak Polish-Hungarian Cooperation Institute.

Materiał pobrany ze strony Instytutu Sobieskiego, sobieski.org.pl[autor].