



SCIENCE FOR POLICY BRIEF

Cross-Border and Emerging Risks

HIGHLIGHTS

- The European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) recently published a comprehensive report addressing cross-border and emerging risks that Europe faces.
- These risks, ranging from wildfires and floods to food security and geopolitical threats, are increasingly interconnected due to global interdependencies.
- To enhance preparedness and resilience, it is essential to address these risks through integrated approaches and better cross-border cooperation.
- This brief outlines the key findings and recommendations from the JRC report, providing insights for policymakers on the necessary steps to mitigate these risks effectively.

CROSS-BORDER RISKS

Cross-border risks stem from disasters or incidents that impact multiple countries and require coordinated action. 37% of the EU population live in border areas along 38 internal borders made up of both geographic and linguistic barriers. Most natural and man-made disasters present cross-border risks due to their geographical nature, for flooding around 70% of the European continent's freshwater bodies form at least part of a trans-boundary river basin. The JRC report identifies 11 key traditional cross-border risks, including wildfires, floods, droughts, earthquakes, chemical and nuclear accidents, health risks Natech (natural hazard-triggered technological) events and impacts on critical networks. Each of these hazards requires international coordination to prevent and mitigate their effects.

EMERGING RISKS.

Emerging risks are seen as the shift in risk, attributable to one or more of the underneath factors: (1) the novelty of the type of hazard e.g. the situation of a new process or understanding of a process or phenomena that was not considered before (2) increases in either vulnerability and/or exposure and (3) decrease in the coping capacity. The

emerging risks covered in the report are food security, energy risks, hybrid threats, biodiversity loss, financial risk, armed conflicts, and disinformation

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS.

To address these cross-border and emerging risks, the JRC offers several key recommendations for EU policymakers:

Enhance International Cooperation: Risks such as floods, wildfires, and industrial accidents require improved transboundary coordination. Establishing shared monitoring systems and data-sharing platforms is essential for timely response and mitigation

Adopt a Multi-Sectoral Approach: Emerging risks like hybrid threats and biodiversity loss span multiple sectors. Integrated policies that combine environmental, energy, and security considerations will be critical.

Improve Data Sharing: The lack of harmonized risk data poses a challenge to cross-border cooperation. Expanding the role of the Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre and the Union Civil Protection

Knowledge Network will improve data access and support evidence-based decision-making.

Invest in Foresight and Risk Anticipation: The EU must prioritize anticipatory governance, integrating

horizon scanning and strategic foresight into its risk management frameworks. These tools can help detect and mitigate emerging risks before they materialize or turn into critical risks.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS.

The JRC report underscores that while Europe has made significant progress in addressing cross-border risks, the increasing complexity of these threats calls for an even more coordinated and proactive approach. By leveraging science, improving cross-border cooperation, and investing in foresight, the EU can better anticipate and manage the risks of the future. The insights from the report are instrumental for the Union Civil Protection Mechanism's efforts to anticipate disasters and enhance the overall resilience of the Union. They represent a significant contribution to the implementation of Union Disaster Resilience Goals by providing a robust scientific foundation for anticipating and mitigating potential risks proactively. They reflect also the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network's vision of a collaborative and informed civil protection community, where the sharing of scientific knowledge is an integral component of our collective capacity to face the challenges ahead.

With changing risks, it is important to keep the Union Civil Protection Mechanism up to date. The JRC is working closely with DG ECHO to bring the findings of this work into a Communication for the EC President's 100-day initiatives. This will explore how the EU Risk Overview can be updated, by conducting a thorough analysis of critical risks, including new threats like AI, cyber threats, pollution, and climate tipping points, using a new edition of our report.



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