

## **THREAT ASSESSMENT IN THE NATIONAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANS IN POLAND AFTER 2010**

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### **Abstract**

The article discusses threat assessment in consecutive National Crisis Management Plans in Poland after 2010. The scope of the article is limited to the assessment of those threats that may have an impact at the state level and which are included in the National Crisis Management Plan. A general approach to threat assessment for the purposes of national crisis management plans has been taken. A reference to the accuracy of consecutive threat assessments in the context of the occurrence of real crises is included later in the article. In the final part of the article, the perspectives for threat assessment are discussed. Due attention is paid to threats which have an increased likelihood of occurring and the severest consequences.

**Key words:** threat, assessment, National Crisis Management Plan, Poland, 2010-2020

### **Introduction**

Threat assessment is one of the most important planning stages for crisis management activities in Poland. It allows identification, assessment and prioritisation of threats, all of which are crucial for further planning, preparations and operations in the field of crisis management. Based on the threat assessment, a summary of relevant elements of the risk assessment at national level is prepared to provide focus on further activities in the field of crisis management. The objective of risk assessments is to reduce the likelihood of threats occurring and to limit their negative effects. Periodical assessment of threats results in the Report on Threats to National Security which is approved by the Council of Ministers. In Poland, threat assessment is included in the National Crisis Management Plan and because of that, its accuracy plays a significant role in both the state's response to crises as well as the development of other crisis management plans. As natural hazards have been rapidly changing in Poland in recent years because of climate change, it makes sense to explore how the assessment of threats reflected those changes and how accurate those predictions

have been when compared with the real world situations. The article examines results of threat assessments that were included in the consecutive National Crisis Management Plans between 2010 and 2020. The article aims to explore how relevant threat assessments have been that were included in the consecutive National Crisis Management Plans in Poland after 2010. The analysis is based on official governmental documents related to the assessment of threats to national security and consecutive versions of the National Crisis Management Plans.

### **General framework for the assessment of threats for the purposes of crisis management at the national level**

The legal status and the most important assumptions regarding the assessment of threats that could impact the crisis management actions at state level in Poland were determined in the Act of 26 April 2007 on crisis management<sup>1</sup>. At the national level, the most important institutions responsible for assessing threats relevant to crisis management are the Council of Ministers and the Government Centre for Security. The Centre provides services to the Council of Ministers, the Prime Minister, the Government Crisis Management Team and the minister competent for internal affairs in crisis management, and acts as the national crisis management centre. The tasks of the Centre include civil planning at the national level, the development and updating of the National Crisis Management Plan (Krajowy Plan Zarządzania Kryzysowego - KPZK), gathering information on threats as well as analysing and assessing those threats. The National Crisis Management Plan applies to the crisis events for which neither the voivodship level of administration or individual ministers could respond in a timely and effective way due to the inadequacy of the resources they held. National plans for crisis management contain an assessment of threats with the highest probability of occurrence and the most severe consequences for the country. It must be noted that they do not deal with regional or local threats that might be addressed by the lower levels of state and self-government authorities.

The risk assessment process for the needs of the National Crisis Management Plans is carried out as part of the preparation of the report on national security threats. The report on threats to the national security is prepared for the national level by the Government Center for Security and is approved by the Council of Ministers. In order to prepare this report, the ministers managing government administration departments, heads of central offices and the governors of voivodships prepare partial reports on threats to national security containing the most important threats along with a risk assessment. The procedure for preparing the partial reports for the purposes of the report on threats to the national security requires the addressing

<sup>1</sup> Ustawa z dnia 26 kwietnia 2007 r. o zarządzaniu kryzysowym, t.j. Dz. U. 2019 poz. 1398 z późn. zm.

of both the probability of hazard occurrence and the severity of the effects within a specified period of time. A five-level qualitative scale has been used to determine the probability of occurrence for events that require crisis management efforts at the national level. Probability of occurrence is defined as: very rare, rare, possible, probable and very likely. The probability of occurrence is then confronted with the severity of consequences caused by a specific hazard. The severity of consequences for every single hazard is defined, taking into account the effects on: citizen's life and health, the economy and/or property and the natural environment. The severity of consequences of hazards that are relevant to the crisis management at the national level may be defined as insignificant, small, medium, large and catastrophic. By determining both the probability of occurrence and severity of the consequences, the value of a risk is assessed. The risk value for threats is indicated on a risk matrix showing the relationship between probability and effects. The risk values defined for the crisis management at the national level in Poland can be minimal, small, medium, large and extreme. There are also four categories of risk acceptance: acceptable, tolerable, conditionally tolerable and unacceptable. The institutions responsible for preparing partial reports are required to justify the proposed risk acceptance levels. In order to standardise the information provided to the Government Centre for Security by the ministers managing government administration departments, heads of central offices and the governors of the voivodships, detailed procedures for preparing a partial report were established and implemented<sup>2</sup>. Partial reports contain a risk map in electronic form, which additionally presents the geographical scope of every hazard with an assigned probability of occurrence and assessment of the consequences for the population, the economy and the environment<sup>3</sup>. In order to properly assess hazards, institutions which prepare partial reports must perform an analysis of statistical data on the past, perform expert estimations and case studies, carry out environmental reconnaissance and determine development trends.

Based on the partial reports, the risk assessment is determined for the state level and included in the report on threats to national security. The consolidated assessment is then included in the National Crisis Management Plan. According to the legal framework established by the act on crisis management of 2007, the threat assessment process is regularly repeated and the planning cycle cannot be longer than two years. On average, about fifty threats are identified and assessed in the report on national security threats in a single planning cycle. Around nineteen of them are then incorporated into the respective National Management Plan<sup>4</sup>. Due to the fact that the disclosure of information contained in both the report on threats to the national

<sup>2</sup> Rządowe Centrum Bezpieczeństwa, Procedura opracowania raportu cząstkowego, Warszawa 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 30 kwietnia 2010 r. w sprawie Raportu o zagrożeniach dla bezpieczeństwa narodowego, Dz. U. Nr 83, poz. 540, § 4 i § 5.

<sup>4</sup> Rządowe Centrum Bezpieczeństwa, Ocena ryzyka na potrzeby zarządzania kryzysowego. Raport o zagrożeniach bezpieczeństwa narodowego, Warszawa 2013, s. 16.

security and partial reports may have detrimental effects on the execution of tasks in the field of crisis management by public administration, the results of assessments are classified.

The above mentioned national regulations are complemented by the European Union member states decision of the European Parliament and the Council that has been applicable since 2014 regarding the EU Civil Protection Mechanism<sup>5</sup>. In addition to disaster prevention and disaster response improvement, the mechanism considers risk assessment to be particularly important, including the process of risk identification, risk analysis and risk assessment at national level. To sum up, due to the definition of the governmental responsibilities aimed at reducing the likelihood of threats occurring and limiting their effects, there is a legal requirement to conduct a regular, cyclic threat assessment at the national level. Existing legal acts impose that obligation on the Council of Ministers and the Government Center for Security. They are responsible for preparation of the plans and reports containing a description of threats that may occur on the territory of the Republic of Poland, assessing the probability of their occurrence as well as classification and description of the consequences.

### **Threat assessment in consecutive National Crisis Management Plans between 2010 and 2020**

The first national-level document containing provisions on the assessment of threats caused by natural forces and human activity was developed in 2010 and was called the National Crisis Response Plan. This document, under legal regulations regarding classified information, was given the security classification of “restricted”. It was considered that its unauthorised disclosure could have had a detrimental effect on the fulfillment of crisis management tasks by public authorities or other organisational entities. Keeping national crisis management plans classified did not last long and they soon became publicly available. Seventeen threats were defined in the National Crisis Management Plan of 2012<sup>6</sup>. Most prominent among them were, at that time, floods, epidemics, hurricanes, forest fires, infectious animal diseases and drought. However, the crisis management plans developed up to 2012 did not contain any risk assessment. It was the National Crisis Management Plan of 2013 that discussed eighteen threats along with the risk assessment<sup>7</sup>. Compared with previous plans, the 2013 edition added a discussion on the threats in cyberspace. Risk assessment was

5 Decyzja Parlamentu Europejskiego i Rady NR1313/2013/EU z dnia 17 grudnia 2013 r. w sprawie Unijnego Mechanizmu Ochrony Ludności, Dz. U. UE.L.2013.347.924.

6 Rządowe Centrum Bezpieczeństwa, Krajowy Plan Zarządzania Kryzysowego 2012, Warszawa 2012, S. 7-32.

7 Rządowe Centrum Bezpieczeństwa, Krajowy Plan Zarządzania Kryzysowego 2013, Warszawa 2013, s. 7.

based on the risk matrix from the procedure for preparing partial reports to the report on national security threats. The 2013 plan considered floods and social protests as likely threats caused by both natural forces and human activities. In turn, in the context of severity, floods, epidemics and chemical contamination were classified as those with the most serious consequences.

The next version of the National Crisis Management Plan, approved in 2015, took into account the partial reports of individual ministries<sup>8</sup>. However, there were no changes from the 2013 Plan both in the context of types of threats and their risk assessment. Some changes were included in the next update of the national crisis management plan in 2017<sup>9</sup>. Nineteen threats were included in the 2017 National Crisis Management Plan based on an assessments from partial reports. The prolonged hot periods were added to drought in the discussion on natural hazards that should be considered for crisis management at the national level. The plan of 2017 also added one completely new threat to the list. Hybrid activities aimed at achieving political goals, conducted in a secretive manner, making it difficult to attribute responsibility for them to the perpetrator, made their way to the national crisis management plans for the first time. The risk assessments in the 2017 version saw some changes to the probability of occurrence as well as the severity of the consequences for some hazards. Floods, disruptions to the energy system, hybrid operations, a marine disaster and terrorist attacks were considered as threats with major effects on the national security of Poland. For epidemics, the level of severity of consequences was changed from high to medium, for chemical pollution from high to low, and for hurricanes from medium to low. Floods, epizootics, disruptions to operations of networks and information systems, and collective disruption of public order were considered the most likely. Prior to 2017, only floods and social protests had been assessed as such.

The latest update of the National Crisis Management Plan in 2020 did not bring substantial changes to the assessment of threats to the national security. The same nineteen types of threats in the previous report were included in the latest version of the document. The assessment did not change in the context of the general impact on the country's security. On the other hand, due to the probability of occurrence, disturbances in the functioning of telecommunications systems and services, which were previously approved as possible, were added to the probable list in the 2020 plan.

The issue of the quality of risk assessment has been raised in professional discussions about crisis management in Poland in recent years. The risk assessment may have been affected by flaws in the activities of the authorities and institutions responsible for its development. In 2017, the Supreme Audit Office stated that the

<sup>8</sup> Rządowe Centrum Bezpieczeństwa, Krajowy Plan Zarządzania Kryzysowego 2015, Warszawa 2015, s. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Rządowe Centrum Bezpieczeństwa, Krajowy Plan Zarządzania Kryzysowego 2017, Warszawa 2017, s. 44.

update of the National Crisis Management Plan 2013 which led to the next version of this document being approved in 2015 was not thoroughly prepared. It was also the case later on. The Supreme Audit Office pointed out that the preparation of the National Crisis Management Plan and the report on threats to the national security threats were taking place in 2017 in parallel, despite the requirement for preparation of the report before developing the plan. As a result, the Supreme Audit Office observed a lack of consistency between these two government planning documents, which might have had negative consequences for further planning of crisis management activities at the national level as well as preparation of other crisis management plans. During preparation of the 2017 crisis management plan, an unapproved draft of the report was treated as a binding document<sup>10</sup>.

To sum up, the subsequent editions of the National Crisis Management Plan have considered floods to be the threat with the highest probability of occurrence and consequences. Two new threats relevant to the crisis management activities at the national level, namely threats in cyberspace and hybrid activities, have been added in recent years. Climate change resulted in there being more emphasis on drought and related prolonged heat waves. The assessments between 2010 and 2020 did not change significantly in the risk assessment for individual hazards. Changes in this aspect have been rather rare. Ultimately, the threats that cause major effects include floods, disruptions in the energy system, hybrid operations, marine disaster and terrorist events. An epidemic, the severity of which was considered medium, and chemical contaminants, the effects of which were assessed as low, were excluded from the group of hazards with a major impact on the national security.

### **Accuracy of threat assessment in the context of the occurrence of crisis situations in Poland after 2007**

Taking into account available data on natural disasters in Poland after 2007 and their effects, the threat assessment prepared for the crisis management at national level should be considered accurate. The last decade has been a period when floods often occurred in Poland. Data made available by the Government Centre for Security indicates that over 90% of losses caused by adverse effects of nature in Poland were caused by floods<sup>11</sup>. Over the past thirteen years, floods have resulted in the deaths of several dozen people and burdened public finances with billions of losses. National floods have been the most severe. During the 2010 flood on the Vistula River, 25 people were killed and property losses (mainly roads and bridges) amounted to

<sup>10</sup> Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, *Ochrona ludności w ramach zarządzania kryzysowego i obrony cywilnej*, Warszawa 2018, s. 37.

<sup>11</sup> K. Mąka, *System ochrony przeciwpowodziowej w Polsce. Zadania organów administracji publicznej w fazach zapobiegania i reagowania na zagrożenia powodziowe*, Poliarquia Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 02.2014.03.02, s. 8.

approximately PLN 13 billion<sup>12</sup>. 2% of Poland's territory was flooded, which caused significant losses to the economy and natural environment. A significant amount of flooding after 2007 constituted the so-called rapid floods caused by local, short and heavy rainfall. They occurred every year in almost all voivodships. They caused losses in infrastructure, mainly bridges and roads, of the order of several dozen million zlotys. They charged the budgets of communes, poviats and voivodships. For example, in the Jelenia Góra poviat, the flood from June 23 to July 6, 2009 caused losses of roads and bridges worth approx. PLN 35.85 million. In June 2013 in Warsaw, a two-metre wave flooded Toruńska Route, Wisłostrada and shut down four metro stations. In 2014, the Wisła flooded Krakow's boulevards. In 2019, in the Podkarpackie province, municipal infrastructure losses due to excess water were estimated at approx. PLN 380 million, and 282 families whose homes were flooded were paid over PLN 1 million in compensation. Although none of those local floods required a response from the national level crisis management system, their cumulative effects on the state's economy has been clear.

The consecutive crisis management plans between 2010 and 2020 considered infectious animal diseases as probable. Such assessment seems to have been quite accurate as Poland has been fighting African Swine Fever (ASF) since 2014. This infectious disease has occurred in the eastern part of the country, Warmian-Masurian, Podlasie and Lubelskie voivodships<sup>13</sup>. Because of ASF between 2015 and 2019, 150,000 animals were slaughtered in Poland, and the number of animals fell by 34% to 154,000<sup>14</sup>. Again, although there has been no requirement for the national level crisis management to act, the impact on the state's economy has been visible. The compensation paid to farmers and difficulties with exporting meat products as a direct effect of ASF are estimated at tens of millions of PLN. Although their costs are not as big as in the case of floods, the risk assessment for their effects closely reflects the reality. Drought and heat and also epidemics were recognised as threats caused by natural forces, possibly with medium effects in the national crisis management plans between 2010 and 2020.

Recent years have seen extremely high temperatures in Poland, especially the months of July and August in 2018 and 2019 which were significantly different from the norm. Recent years, in line with global trends, should be classified as extremely warm with an average annual air temperature for the area of Poland in 2018 of 9.8 ° C, i.e. about 1.5 ° C higher than the average from 1981-2010. Extremely high temperatures have had negative effects on human health, vegetation and the economy. In 2020, farmers submitted 355 thousand applications for state assistance in connection with drought, which caused losses on their farms in 2019 of PLN

<sup>12</sup> P. Gromek, M. Misterka, *Ratownictwo powodziowe w Polsce – założenia systemowe*, Szkoła Główna Służby Pożarniczej w Warszawie nr 57 (1) 2016, s. 7 i 30.

<sup>13</sup> <https://bip.wetgiw.gov.pl/asf/mapa/> (3.06.2020 r.).

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.rp.pl/Rolnictwo/308059912-ASF-wybil-wlasnie-w-Polsce-12-tys-zwierzat-To-nie-koniec.html> (3.06.2020 r.).

2.3 billion<sup>15</sup>. Since the beginning of March 2020, the Polish state has been facing an unprecedented crisis, an epidemic of the Sars-CoV-2 virus causing COVID-19 disease. As at June 21, 2020, there were 31,931 infections and 1,356 deaths. Direct losses to Poland's economy caused by restrictions are assessed as being more than 148 billion PLN<sup>16</sup>.

In addition, hurricanes and large-scale fires have been included in consecutive national crisis management plans as possible natural hazards with a low impact on the national security. In recent years, the storms of August 11 and 12, 2017, which were accompanied by the hurricane of the century, caused the biggest losses to property in Poland. The winds in excess of 150 km per hour killed only six people. However, material losses mainly caused by the damage to buildings, crops, municipal infrastructure facilities such as roads, bridges, power lines and water treatment plants, and forests were estimated at about PLN 5 billion<sup>17</sup>. In the Pomeranian Voivodeship, damage to the forests included destruction of 79.9 thousand hectares of forest, and the economic loss was estimated at approx. 2 billion PLN<sup>18</sup>. There were more examples of high winds causing death and large material losses. As a result of a white squall in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodship in 2007, twelve people were killed. Tornadoes in the Opolskie, Śląskie and Łódź voivodships in 2008 killed only three people, but inflicted significant losses to property. Whirlwinds hit the Masovian Voivodeship in 2012 and the Lubelskie Voivodship in 2019. Strong winds in February 2020 caused the death of three people under a broken roof in Bukowina Tatrzańska. With climate change, the severity of hurricanes will probably increase and they may become more frequent.

Poland has not avoided large-scale fires in recent years. As a result of a fire of the Biebrza National Park, 280 hectares of the park burned in 2020, which is 9.5 percent of its territory. Many valuable animal and plant species were killed. The cost of fire fighting operations must be added to the losses to property and the natural environment. The entire fire fighting action in Biebrza National Park was financed from the state budget, including the funds of the Ministry of the Environment and State Forests. Almost PLN 8 million was allocated for this purpose<sup>19</sup>. Prolonged droughts and heat waves add to the forests' vulnerability to large scale fires.

To sum up, the assessment of hazards, their probability of occurrence and their effects in relation to real life crisis situation has proved quite accurate in consecutive

**15** [https://www.tygodnik-rolniczy.pl/articles/aktualnosci\\_/ponad-200-tys-rolnikow-czeka-na-pomoc-suszowa-za-2019-ile-doplat-arimr-wyplacila/](https://www.tygodnik-rolniczy.pl/articles/aktualnosci_/ponad-200-tys-rolnikow-czeka-na-pomoc-suszowa-za-2019-ile-doplat-arimr-wyplacila/) (3.06.2020 r.).

**16** <http://straty-covid.pl/> (3.06.2020 r.).

**17** Informacja Marszałka Województwa Kujawsko-Pomorskiego nt. nawałnicy która przeszła 11/12.08.2017 r. przez obszar północno-zachodniej Polski.

**18** A. Sarnowska, *Nawałnica w województwie pomorskim, 11–12 sierpnia 2017 r. Sytuacja społeczno-gospodarcza gmin dotkniętych żywiołem*, Urząd Statystyczny w Gdańsku, Gdańsk 2018, s. 21.

**19** <https://www.gov.pl/web/srodowisko/pozar-w-biebrzanskim-parku-narodowym---podsumowanie-i-dalsze-dzialania> (3.06.2020 r.).



versions of national crisis management plans. Floods have been correctly assessed as the most likely threat and their impact has also been estimated accurately. Animal diseases, drought and heat, hurricanes and fires have been addressed in the threat assessments in a relatively accurate manner. The exception seems pandemics, the effects of which on Poland's economy in general have been underestimated with a large margin of error.

### **Perspectives of the assessment of threats for the national crisis management plans in Poland**

Climate change has been resulting in the increased number and severity of hydrometeorological hazards that may affect the national security of Poland and require national level crisis management efforts. The risk to human life and health will probably rise. There are credible estimates available that point at increased economic costs of natural disasters in Poland. Finally, the risk of natural disasters increases environmental degradation. Therefore; in the future, threat assessments for crisis management should further prevent and mitigate effects of hydrometeorological hazards. Future assessments of threats to the national security tied to the development of national crisis management plans should thus take into account environmental factors. According to information from the Institute of Meteorology and Water Management, the number of days with extremely high air temperature is steadily increasing in Poland, while the number of extremely cold days is decreasing and the minimum temperature is increasing. In Poland, therefore, we observe a tendency for the frequency and violence of extremely high temperatures and the associated droughts to increase. It will be similar with hurricanes<sup>20</sup>. There will probably be more of them due to global warming. For African Swine Fever, both the number of new cases and the increase in the range of the disease have been taking place. While in 2018, the area in which ASF cases occurred was limited to four voivodships, this number doubled at the end of 2019. If the disease increases, the losses may go not into millions, but into billions PLN.

In the next few years, the change in the threat assessment for the epidemic should be considered. A more detailed assessment is needed, as the recent national crisis management plans changed the assessment of its impact on the national security from high to medium. Despite the fact that the COVID-19 disease in Poland has not stopped its severity in the context of human health and life, the direct losses in the economy are incomparably greater than other threats. There are also many indications that in 2020, a second wave of increased number of COVID-19 cases may come. The Minister of Health has repeatedly stated in public statements that

<sup>20</sup> H. Lorenc, *Kłęski żywiołowe a bezpieczeństwo wewnętrzne kraju*, Instytut Meteorologii i Gospodarki Wodnej, Państwowy Instytut Badawczy, Warszawa 2012, s. 4.

a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic will be accompanied by flu in autumn and winter<sup>21</sup>. Due to the fact that the problems caused by COVID-19 will mount, it is necessary to develop a new threat assessment which will include a more thorough analysis of the epidemic threat. There is probably a need to reassess the probability of its occurrence and then recalculate the severity of its effects.

## Conclusions

Risk assessment for the purposes of national crisis management in Poland was included in consecutive versions of the National Crisis Management Plan between 2010 and 2020. Threats have been assessed based on their probability of occurrence and the effects they can have on the life and health of people, property and the environment. In Poland, flood is considered to be the most probable threat with the greatest effects on national security. The flood threat seems to be permanently inscribed in the conditions of the national security of the Republic of Poland. Threats in cyberspace and hybrid activities have been added to the list of threats over the years. In recent years, the number and type of probable threats and those that can have large effects have increased. Considering the losses caused by floods, droughts, strong winds and fires in Poland after 2007, their effects were adequately assessed. The scale of economic losses caused by the COVID-19 epidemic has been underestimated with a significant margin of error. The rising number and severity of hydrometeorological hazards tied to climate change should be included in the assessments of threats to national security tied to the development of future national crisis management plans. It is highly probable that climate change will multiply the number of hurricanes, extremely high temperatures and droughts. COVID-19 seems to likely to continue well into the future as there are signs that a second wave of infections will come. In this context, the epidemic threat assessment should also be changed to describe real-world conditions more accurately.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://polskatimes.pl/minister-zdrowia-lukasz-szumowski-na-jesien-i-w-zimie-bedzie-druga-fala-pandemii-koronawirusa-a-do-tego-dojdzie-jeszcze-grypa/ar/c1-14930862> (5.06.2020 r.).

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