



PRESS RELEASE

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Public Entities and Policies

PUBLIC RISK MANAGEMENT

Public risk management covers a wide range of issues, organisational methods and actions relating to the State and local authorities. It differs from crisis management, which is required once the risks have occurred; here, it is necessary to implement mitigation measures and reaction capabilities in advance. Public authorities are required to manage many “external” risks, i.e. to prevent them from occurring and protect the public against their effects, but they also need to protect themselves against “internal” risks; for example, by ensuring the continuity of their actions towards the public. The report published today sets out to analyse the governance of public risk management, the processes it uses and the conditions required to enable it to be tailored to ever-changing risks.

Operational risk management systems now require a thorough overhaul, to ensure a clearer prioritisation of the risks covered

Risks affecting the public, both current and major, have long been divided into broad categories according to their nature. At operational level, public management of these risks is focused on specialised departments formed mainly around the ministries responsible for ecological transition, the interior and health. These systems have been built around the activities of these ministries associated with current risks, as well as the major disasters that France has experienced. New measures have also been introduced or tuned to keep pace with changes in the risks and the discovery of related risks. The result is a maze of rules, procedures and documents, the overall coherence of which is now difficult to discern or even understand.

The State must develop a strategic vision of the risks it bears, in order to better coordinate stakeholders in each sector and more explicitly distribute the resources it allocates to them

The management of the most serious risks and the effective coordination of local and national stakeholders require a strategic view of public risk management, but this remains seriously flawed. At regional level, the departmental prefect – who is responsible for coordinating the various actions taken by the State – is responsible for prioritising preventive measures and for preparing crisis management strategies via the civil protection response organisation (Orsec). However, there are multiple levels of coordination between prefectural authorities, which makes these prerogatives more complex to exercise. In order to coordinate with some agencies and local authorities, it is also necessary for prefects to implement some form of collegiate management system. Lastly, the expertise of the prefectures has suffered as a result of staff cuts in the regional administration. At national level, each sector exercises autonomous control over

the organisational structure of its own systems. They also share neither an overall vision nor a method for analysing and prioritising risks, and the central body responsible for national security (SGDSN, which responds to the cabinet office) exerts little coordination on these. As a result, coherence emerging from initiatives seems to remain scarce, and national authorities fall short of a truly integrated vision of the scope of risks and actions taken to mitigate them. Lastly, public resources are allocated to those various risk management measures in multiple and various ways, which also hinders the evaluation of their cost and overall efficiency. This should be an essential prerequisite to the State's decision whether or not to cover those risks, and therefore to any informed allocation of public resources.

Sector-specific mechanisms must take account of the multi-dimensional nature of risks and the consequent need for resilience

New cross-sector risks are emerging or becoming more pronounced, with the potential to produce ripple effects and affect society in a multitude of ways. The State must now take this into account as it rethinks its own work at global level, extending the risk management strategies to address the challenges posed by its own dependencies and vulnerabilities. With this in mind, crisis preparedness needs to be improved in a wider sense by feedback from experience, and continually updated as knowledge of the risks evolves. In addition, the Court notes that public services must also consider these risks in their own operations, as part of the new *national resilience* strategy. However, their business continuity systems are implemented very unevenly. The recent Covid-19 pandemic also demonstrated their inadequacy in managing cumulative and diversified crises.


The interaction between public authorities and society in response to risks needs to be considered and presented more explicitly, aiming for an equitable distribution of the burden

To improve public risk management, it is essential to involve civil society which expresses many needs in this regard, and also performs an important part of concrete mitigation measures. Consequently, the main challenges for effective public action are as follows: disseminating risk awareness and knowledge as widely as possible, reviewing central government methods of communicating with the public, and seeking to involve the public more closely in the implementation of public risk management systems. Lastly, too little socio-economic analysis is used to assess the cost of public risk management policies. As a result, it remains difficult to estimate the costs incurred by all the stakeholders concerned by central government's regulatory intervention in the name of risk reduction, in response to social demand.


[Read the report](#)


PRESS CONTACTS:

Julie Poissier ■ Head of Media & Social Networks ■ T +33 (0)6 87 36 52 21 ■ julie.poissier@ccomptes.fr
Eran Guterman ■ Press Relations & Social Media Officer ■ T +33(0)6 11 41 46 64 ■ eran.guterman@ccomptes.fr

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