

2 Component task 2 - Implementation of Main International Warning Centres for transboundary communication

The International Warning and Alarm Centres set up in Minsk, Vilnius and Kaliningrad are the centrepiece of the warning system. The functionality and effectiveness of the system is based on a clear definition of responsibilities and procedures for the professional assessment of possible major accidents and for the transmission of the associated information to the countries concerned. These are basic conditions for taking the necessary measures to protect the population and the environment in the event of major accidents. The individual operational levels (communication, expert assessment and political decision-making) have been defined and administratively implemented for the Main Warning Centres in Minsk, Vilnius and Kaliningrad. In Belarus and Lithuania, the MIWCs were set up in subordinate institutions of the environment ministries (at the Centre for Radioactivity Control and Monitoring and at the State Environment Inspectorate, respectively), whereas in the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation, the MIWC is situated in the Kaliningrad branch office of the Ministry of Extraordinary Situations. Project funds were used to procure communications equipment for the MIWCs to meet minimum requirements. Alarm exercises have been conducted successfully by responsible authorities of the three countries to test the operation and effectiveness of the International Warning and Alarm Plan.

Redundant (i.e., multiple simultaneous) reports are transmitted to MIWCs situated downstream to insure a high degree of reliability in international transmission of information. The MIWCs perform various functions at several levels, which can be summed up as follows: 1. expert assessment, 2. decision-making and 3. communication (see figure below).

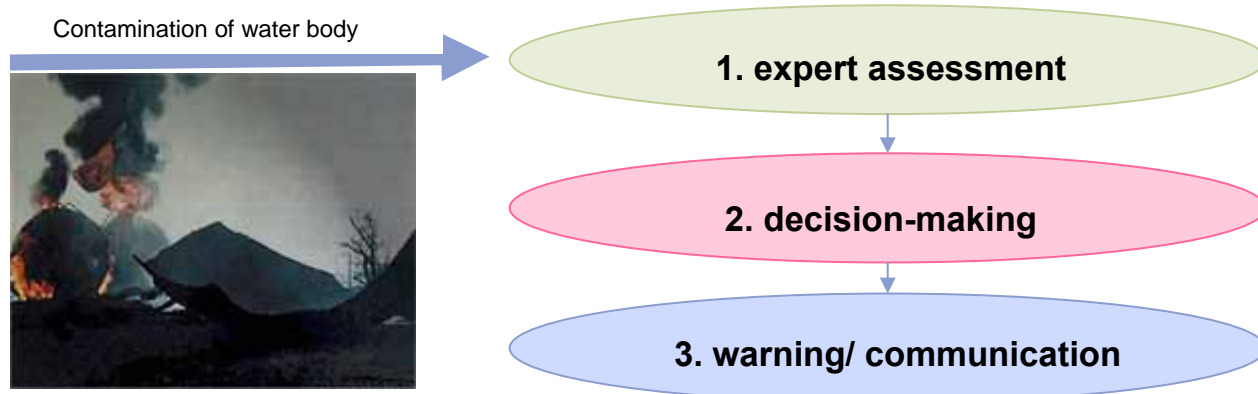


Fig. 2: Functions/levels of Main International Warning Centres

In Figure 2 it is shown where the various levels (blue – communication level, green – expert assessment level, red – decision-making level) are performed in the three countries concerned:

Republic of Belarus:

The MIWC in Minsk is located at the Centre of Radioactivity Control and Monitoring (RZRM). It operates round the clock and provides both expert assessment and communication services. The decision-making level is located at the Ministries of the Environment and

Extraordinary Situations and at the Hydrometeorological Service. The RZRM takes over this function, when there is no staff on duty in these institutions. The expert assessment level is provided with the necessary support by subordinate national offices (Hydrometeorological Service, environmental offices, specialist stations). The legal framework of the operation of the MIWCs is provided by a bilateral agreement between Lithuania and Belarus entitled "Information Exchange in the Event of Extraordinary Situations of Technogenic Origin". An special authorisation decree was drawn up in the course of the project and recently confirmed by the minister for the environment.

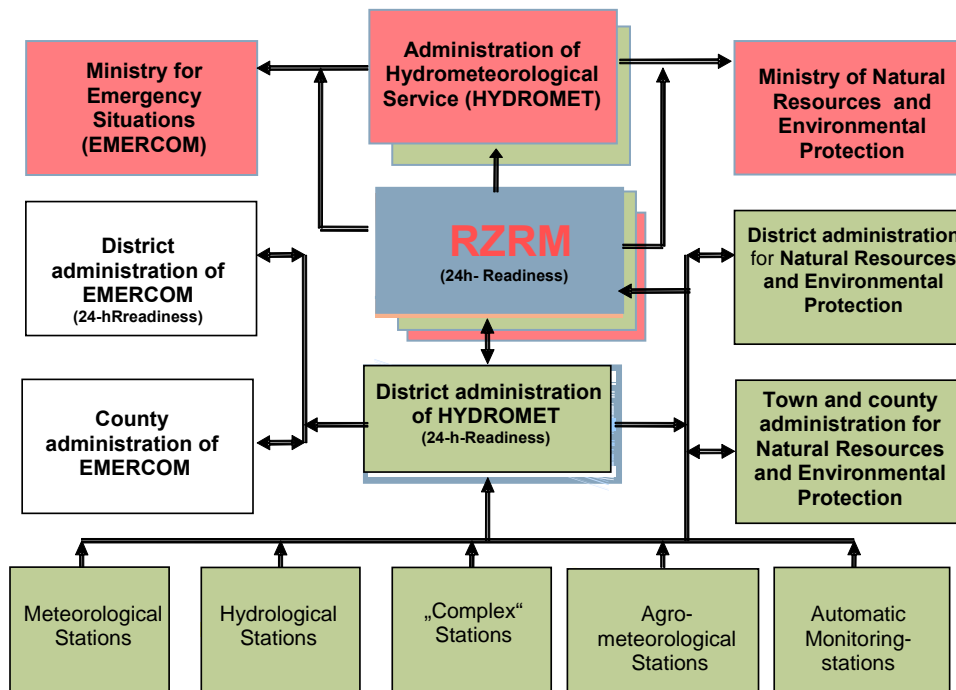


Fig. 3: Functions and levels of the Main Warning Centre in Minsk (Belarus) (blue – communication level, green – expert assessment levels, red – decision-making level)

Republic of Lithuania:

In the Republic of Lithuania, the Main International Warning Centre is based at the State Inspectorate of Environmental Protection of Lithuania (specialist body of the Ministry of the Environment). It works in close concert with the Department of Environmental Quality of the Ministry of the Environment of Lithuania having the decision-making authority. Emergency service staff is on duty 24 hours a day and can be reached by mobile phone and SMS. The State Inspectorate of Environmental Protection of Lithuania has its own experts and the necessary know-how, but it works closely with other departments of the ministry such as the Department of Forestry, Department of Landscape Conservation, with regional environmental authorities forming part of the Ministry of the Environment (Regional Environmental Protection Departments, Environmental Protection Agency) and other specialist authorities such as the Hydrometeorological Service, the Marine Research Centre and the Geological Survey.

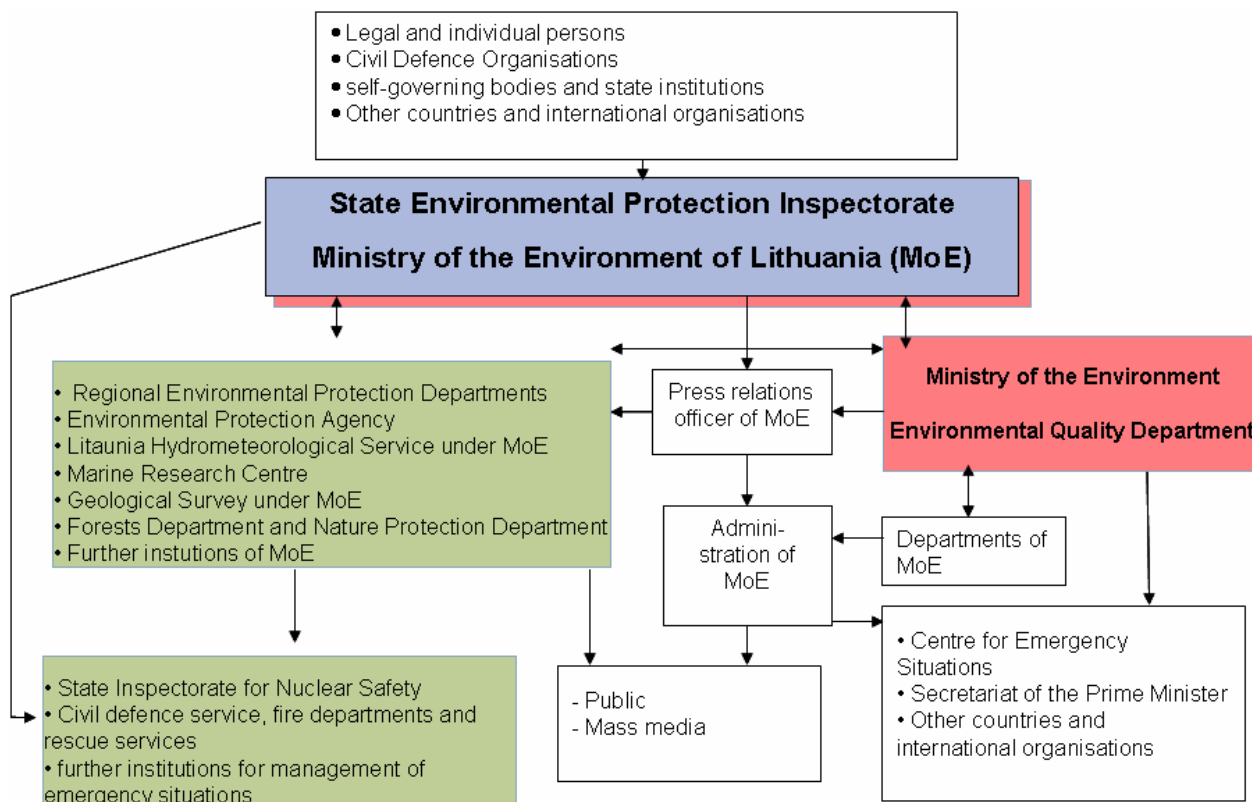


Fig. 4: Functions and levels of the Main Warning Centre in Vilnius (Lithuania)
(blue – communication level, green – expert assessment levels, red – decision-making level)

Other state institutions such as the State Inspectorate of Nuclear Energy Security, Civil Defence Service, Fire Department and Rescue Service participate in averting danger and, for that reason, form an integral part of the national warning system. The emergency services responsible for averting danger on the spot are the fire department and the rescue service. The legal basis of the MIWCs are the bilateral agreement between Lithuania and Belarus on "Information Exchange in the Event of Extraordinary Situations of Technogenic Origin" and protocols drawn up by the Commission for Extraordinary Situations formed by the Council for Long-Term Cooperation between Lithuania and the Russian Federation.

Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation:

Kaliningrad's MIWC is domiciled at the Prevention Department of EMERCOM (Civil Defence and Emergency Main Department of Kaliningrad Region), (see figure below). EMERCOM coordinates all important tasks in the fields of disaster relief and civil defence. It provides a round-the-clock service and has decision-making authority. The MIWC of the Civil Defence and Emergency Main Department of Kaliningrad Region works in close coordination with the Emergency Fire Department Centre and the Unified Emergency Office for Civil Defence and Extraordinary Situations of the regional administration of Kaliningrad.

The Civil Defence and Emergency Main Department of Kaliningrad Region receive professional support from the following environmental authorities: RusPrirodNadsor and ROSHYDROMET in water monitoring (immission monitoring, control points, gauging weirs, etc.), ROSTECHNADSOR (discharge monitoring, issuing permits to enterprises, monitoring

of enterprises in matters relating to the protection of waters), and the Kaliningrad department of the water resources agency „Neva-Ladoga“ in implementing tasks in line with the Water Framework Directive (establishment of river basin administrations and management plans).

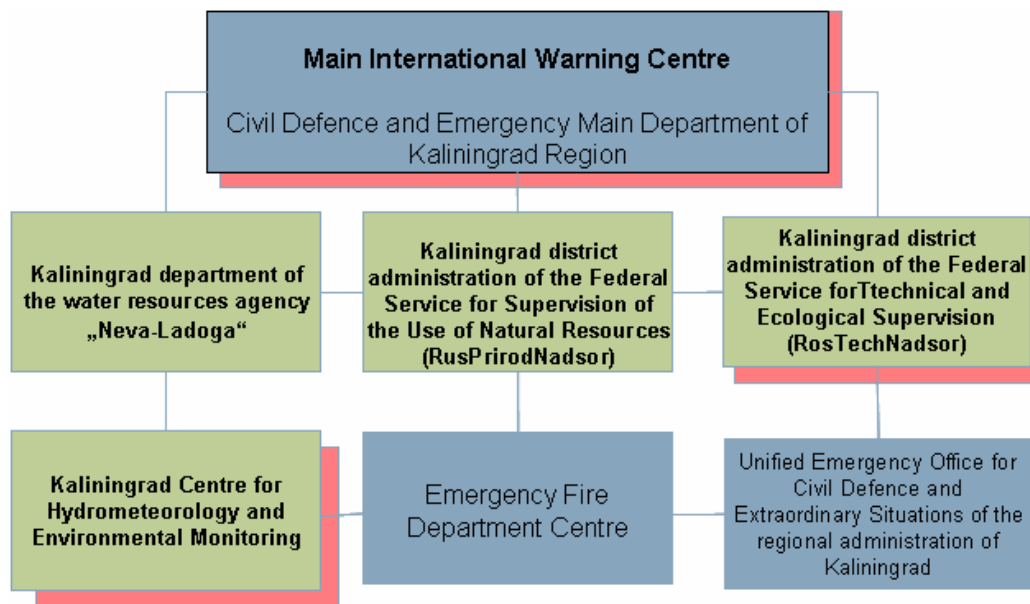


Abb. 5: Functions and levels of the Main Warning Centre in Kaliningrad (RF)
(blue – communication level, green – expert assessment levels, red – decision-making level)