



Brussels, 22/05/2008

Dear Mr. President,

After having seen many dramatic images and read tens of horrific news reports in the aftermath of the extraordinarily strong earthquake that recently shook China, I feel compelled to write to you in order to draw your attention to the following matter:

The European Commission has issued in the past a number of Communications and has proposed various legislative measures for the effective management of different natural disasters, such as floods, for example. However, no specific action has been taken to date with respect to earthquakes, a phenomenon that occurs in many regions of the EU and directly or indirectly affects the life of all Europeans.

On 14 November 2007, the European Parliament unanimously adopted an own-initiative report on the regional impact of earthquakes, for which I was the rapporteur. I can assure you that the report was received with enthusiasm from different stakeholders as it constitutes the first and only, up to now, political text adopted by a European Institution which is exclusively dedicated to earthquakes. However, this is also the reason why I know firsthand that these stakeholders - the research community, engineers, local actors, and many others - are deeply disappointed and worried about the fact that the European Commission has not done much in the area so far, especially comparing to the attention that has been given to other natural disasters. It seems that the general will is that the European Commission makes an appropriate response to the European Parliament's resolution on earthquakes and puts forward as soon as possible **a Communication specifically and exclusively addressing the effective management of earthquakes.**

I have discussed in the past the issue with Commissioner Mr. Dimas, who has shown sympathy for the problem. However, earthquakes is a complex matter with many parameters and aspects that need to be dealt with, such as environmental aspects, construction and business related matters; research is important; regional and local action and preparation are required, as well as international cooperation; education and public awareness is crucial, etc.

Therefore, I am addressing this letter to you, Mr. President. I hope and believe, given the present international pressure on the topic, that the European Commission will stop neglecting earthquakes and that concrete measures will be put forward, for the first time, under your leadership.

Sincerely,

Nikos Vakalis

Greek Member of the European Parliament