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BILATERAL AND CROSSBORDER CIVIL PROTECTION COOPERATION IN SHAPING SAFETY OF SOCIETY IN DISASTER AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Abstract

Author conducted research of bilateral and cross border polish civil protection legal acts and national operational centre operational procedures in area of monitoring and conducting international humanitarian and rescue operations coordinated by the national Headquarter of the State Fire Service.

The article also supports the analysis of several case studies – the flood in Germany in 2002, where the author was a liaison officer of the Polish group of high-efficiency pumps based on regional Agreement with the Saxon Interior Ministry (there were no module standards developed in the European Commission in the newly formed Civil Protection Mechanism), the flood in 2010 r in Poland, when Poland for the first time activated European Union Civil Protection Mechanism and bilateral Agreement with Ukraine or the forest fires extinguish in Russian Federation based on bilateral agreement.

From a praxeological and utilitarian point of view, not without significance in the cognitive process over the study area was also the function of the author of the

article in the Headquarters of the State Fire Service supervising operational international cooperation, including the preparation of Polish experts and modules for international activities, such as USAR Poland¹, who took part in the operation after the 2023 Turkish earthquake.

Key words

disaster, safety, crisis, security, cooperation

¹ DSFS (2009) Decision of the chief commandant of the State Fire Service No. 22 of 25 May 2009 on the establishment of a search and rescue team.

Introduction

The elements of the research process consist of the researcher's interests, idea, and theory². In the scientific process, the researcher first conceptualizes and operationalizes, and thus answers the questions about what is to be researched in his area of interest and how to do it. In the research in this article, I focused on a certain, selected research area – organizational, legal, and functional regulations regarding the provision and acceptance of rescue and humanitarian international aid. I have been conducting research in this field for two decades, analyzing the processes and procedures responsible for receiving and sending humanitarian and rescue aid to international institutions and formations in the country (State Fire Service) and outside it in selected countries neighboring Poland (Federal Republic of Germany, Ukraine, Republic of Czech Republic or the Russian Federation) with 24-hour command posts in their structures that launch and coordinate humanitarian and rescue aid. The results of the research and the conclusions drawn here are the result not only of my observations made during the internships carried out in the German Federal Board of Technical Rescue Services subordinate to the Federal Ministry of the Interior as part of a nine-month scholarship, where I had the opportunity to get acquainted in detail with the organization of sending international humanitarian and rescue

aid by Germany, including the preparation of experts and international groups of SEEBa and SEEWa (search and rescue group with dogs and a group for water purification) for operations abroad. The results of participant observations and conclusions from long-term regional – inter-voivodship national and international exercises generating the need to submit a request for assistance for interstate bilateral neighbourly assistance are also important (e.g. EU – Carpathex 2011 as a preparation of Polish and Ukrainian partners for the jointly organized EURO 2012), where the author was key functions, including the head of the assessment team or exercise manager or key personnel responsible for the conduct of EU exercises preparing Ukrainian structures for cooperation with civil protection partners of EU Mechanism Member States in Ukraine³. Thanks to such exercises, our neighbours know how to effectively ask the Emergency Response Coordination Center in Brussels through its national contact point for international humanitarian assistance and how to coordinate it efficiently, which has been effectively used many times after February 24, 2022.

Content

Security includes internal security with particular emphasis on public security. It concerns natural threats, as well as those created by man and threats related to his activities or conduct⁴. Threats,

2 R. Kolman, K. Szczepańska, *Doctorates and habilitations*, Toruń 2011, p. 110.

3 <https://civil-protection-knowledge-network.europa.eu/stories/ukraine-500-experts-take-part-first-exercise> (access: 03.03.2023 r.).

4 See: J. Wolanin, *Engineering in internal security*, Warszawa 2020.

and above all, the unpredictability of the impact of the forces of nature seriously affect the subjective sense of security of the subject, who will require survival measures in the event of a threat. This will also apply to the entity in the institutional sense – the organization of the state at the local and national level. The state will be forced to verify the methods (procedures) of dealing with crisis situations⁵.

Rescue and humanitarian assistance in the field of civil protection implemented on the basis of bilateral agreements is definitely faster and much easier to coordinate for the affected country than multilateral assistance. In order to provide assistance in the event of a natural disaster or a natural disaster to another country, legal acts regulating the possibility of providing assistance are necessary. Below is the current list of international bilateral agreements between states regarding cooperation and mutual assistance during catastrophes and natural disasters or other serious accidents that our country has. First, they were negotiated and signed with our neighbours. These are:

- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Russian Federation on cooperation in the field of preventing industrial failures, natural disasters, and liquidation of their effects,⁶
- Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany on mutual assistance during catastrophes and natural disasters or other serious accidents,⁷
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Slovak Republic on cooperation and mutual assistance during catastrophes, natural disasters, and other serious accidents,⁸
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on cooperation and mutual assistance in the event of catastrophes, natural disasters, and other serious accidents,⁹
- Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Czech Republic on cooperation and mutual assistance in the event of catastrophes, natural disasters, and other extraordinary events., signed on June 8, 2000,¹⁰

5 K. R. Zieliński, *Civil Protection. Crisis management*, Warszawa 2021, p. 48.

6 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Russian Federation on cooperation in the field of preventing industrial failures, natural disasters, and liquidation of their effects, signed in Warsaw on August 25, 1993 (Journal of Laws No. 185 of 2002, item 1536).

7 Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany on mutual assistance during catastrophes and natural disasters or other serious accidents signed in Warsaw on April 10, 1997 – ratified (Journal of Laws No. 22 of 1999, item 201).

8 ASR (2000) Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Slovak Republic on cooperation and mutual assistance during catastrophes, natural disasters and other serious accidents signed on January 24, 2000, in Bratislava (Journal of Laws No. 36 of 2004, item 327).

9 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on cooperation and mutual assistance in the event of catastrophes, natural disasters, and other serious accidents, signed on April 4, 2000 (Journal of Laws No. 38 of 2004, item 341).

10 Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Czech Republic on cooperation and mutual assistance in the event of catastrophes, natural disasters, and other extraordinary events, signed on June 8, 2000 (Journal of Laws No. 36 of 2004, item 325).

- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on cooperation and mutual assistance in the field of preventing catastrophes, natural disasters and other extraordinary events and removing their consequences.¹¹

It is easy to see that the first two agreements on mutual assistance in the event of catastrophes and natural disasters were signed with the largest neighbours of our country. In Poland, the competent authority to receive and request such assistance is in all bilateral agreements the Minister competent for Internal Affairs through the 24/7 operational centre located in the national Headquarters of the State Fire Service in Warsaw.

On the basis of the Agreement with the Russian Federation, during the flood in Poland in 2010, we received equipment assistance (18 high-capacity pumps, 34 flat-bottomed boats or 5 high-power power generators, from whose 2 were transferred last year to

fighting Ukraine by SGSP). On the same basis, the offer of Polish rescue assistance in 2010 after catastrophic forest fires near Moscow was accepted (6 th of August). Based on general Decision of the Minister of the Interior and Administration No. 121 of August 6, 2010 on the creation of a rescue group to participate in a rescue operation on the territory of the Russian Federation¹² the detailed Order of the Commander-in-Chief of the State Fire Service No. 9 on delegating firefighters to serve in a rescue group outside the country¹³ was realised. On this basis, 159 rescuers and 45 vehicles in the period of August 7-21, 2010, took part in the action of extinguishing forest fires, gaining valuable experience for the country. The firefighters battalion operated in the area of Spas-Klepiki, Ryazan Oblast, 170 km to the south-east. from Moscow. The size of the fire that the Polish rescuers struggled with was the area of 3580 ha, circumference of 35.7 km.

11 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on cooperation and mutual assistance in the field of preventing catastrophes, natural disasters and other extraordinary events and removing their consequences, signed in Warsaw on July 19, 2002 (Journal of Laws No. 166 of 2004, item 1737).

12 Decision of the Minister of the Interior and Administration No. 121 of August 6, 2010, on the creation of a rescue group to participate in a rescue operation on the territory of the Russian Federation.

13 Order of the Commander-in-Chief of the State Fire Service No. 9 on delegating firefighters to serve in a rescue group outside the country.

Figure 1. Map of the assigned area of Polish firefighters during the forest fires in Russia in 2010



Source: National Headquarters of the State Fire Service.

Due to the different structure of the German state (federation) from Poland (Republic) and different competences in the field of rescue and protection of the population of federal states in relation to Polish voivodeships, detailed legal acts (agreements) of the minister responsible for internal affairs were developed on the basis of the Polish-German agreement of 1997 that help in the performance of the tasks provided for in the above. contracts. These are:

- Agreement between the Minister of the Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry

of the Interior of Brandenburg on mutual assistance during catastrophes, natural disasters, and other serious accidents,¹⁴

- Agreement between the Minister of the Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of the Interior of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern on mutual assistance during catastrophes, natural disasters, and other serious accidents,¹⁵
- Agreement between the Minister of the Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland and the Saxon Ministry of the Interior on mutual

¹⁴ Agreement between the Minister of the Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of the Interior of Brandenburg on mutual assistance during catastrophes, natural disasters, and other serious accidents, drawn up in Slubice on 18 July 2002 (Official Gazette No. 15 of 2003, item 207).

¹⁵ Agreement between the Minister of the Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of the Interior of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern on mutual assistance during catastrophes, natural disasters, and other serious accidents, drawn up in Slubice on 18 July 2002 (Official Gazette No. 15 of 2003, item 209).

assistance during catastrophes, natural disasters, and other serious accidents.¹⁶

Based on the last one, at the request of the Ministry of the Interior of Saxony, order of the chief commandant of the State Fire Service from August 16, 2002, on the provision of rescue aid by the State Fire Service in connection with the catastrophe of flooding in the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is interesting to note that, in accordance with the provisions of Order No. 16, the activities of Polish firefighters were reported from Warsaw to UN OCHA in Geneva.

The above-mentioned texts of agreements and agreements regulate issues related to international cooperation in the field of understood rescue, civil protection, and fire protection. They provide the basis for determination in the so-called "Methodological instructions" of practical preparatory activities for accepting and providing international assistance in the event of a natural disaster or catastrophe, aimed in particular at:

- defining the rules for requesting assistance and accepting requests for assistance, including the exchange, and updating of data on addresses and telecommunications connection numbers of contact points necessary to perform this task,
- determination of the forces and means intended to provide and receive international assistance,
- developing and agreeing with the other party on the principles of cooperation during the action and the principles of providing information,

- defining cooperating entities and procedures related to providing assistance.

The parties to the agreements also undertake to inform each other about potential and actual threats and their effects, as well as to exchange monitoring data and inform each other about actions taken in the border area. Implementation agreements and agreements facilitate the development and spread of international rescue cooperation by exchanging experiences, organizing conferences, working visits of specialists, specialist courses, organizing and conducting joint exercises, as well as mutual participation in sports and cultural events. All this has a comprehensive impact on building the trust of residents and increasing the sense of security of citizens who, in the event of an emergency, can count on the rescue assistance of a neighboring state.

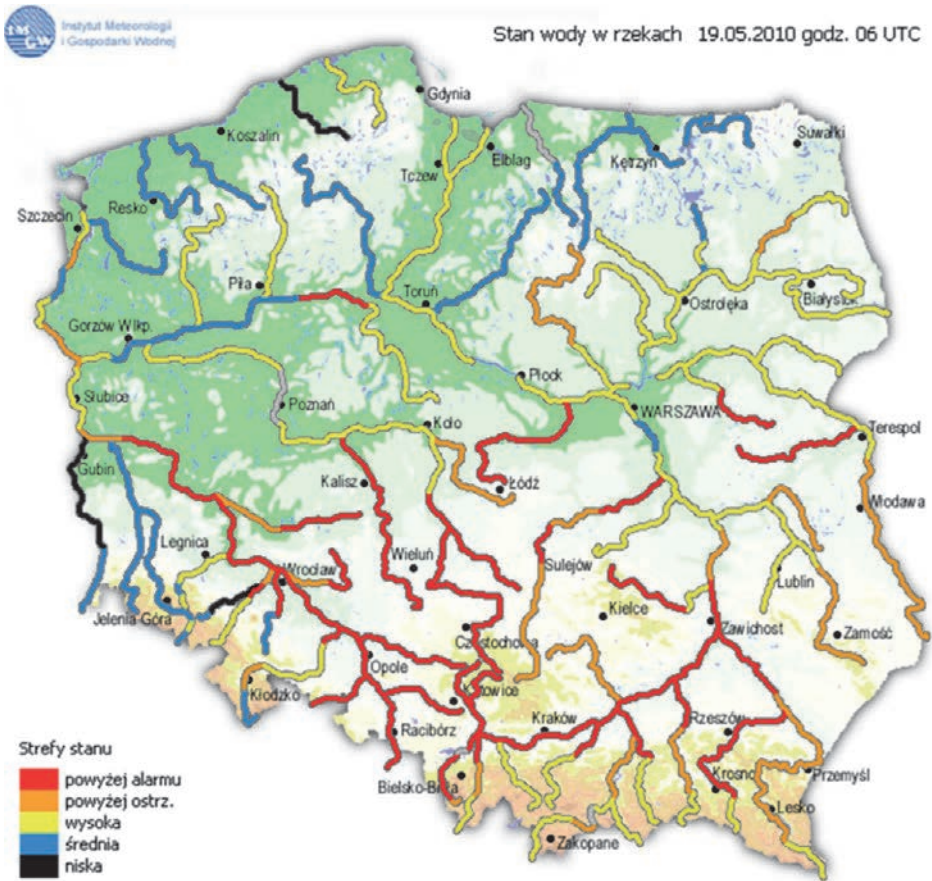
However, in a situation where the scale of the event exceeds the possibilities provided for in the provisions of bilateral agreements (examples from natural disasters in Russia Federation or Germany above), multilateral cooperation mechanisms coordinated regionally by the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (EUCPM) are necessary to launch. We used such a regional solution during the 2010 floods when we activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism asking for High-Capacity Pumping modules. In such case the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) is the heart of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. It

¹⁶ Agreement between the Minister of the Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland and the Saxon Ministry of the Interior on mutual assistance during catastrophes, natural disasters, and other serious accidents, drawn up in Slubice on July 18, 2002 (M.P. No. 15 of 2003, item 211).

coordinates the delivery of assistance to disaster-stricken countries, such as relief items, expertise, civil protection teams and specialised equipment. The centre ensures the rapid deployment of

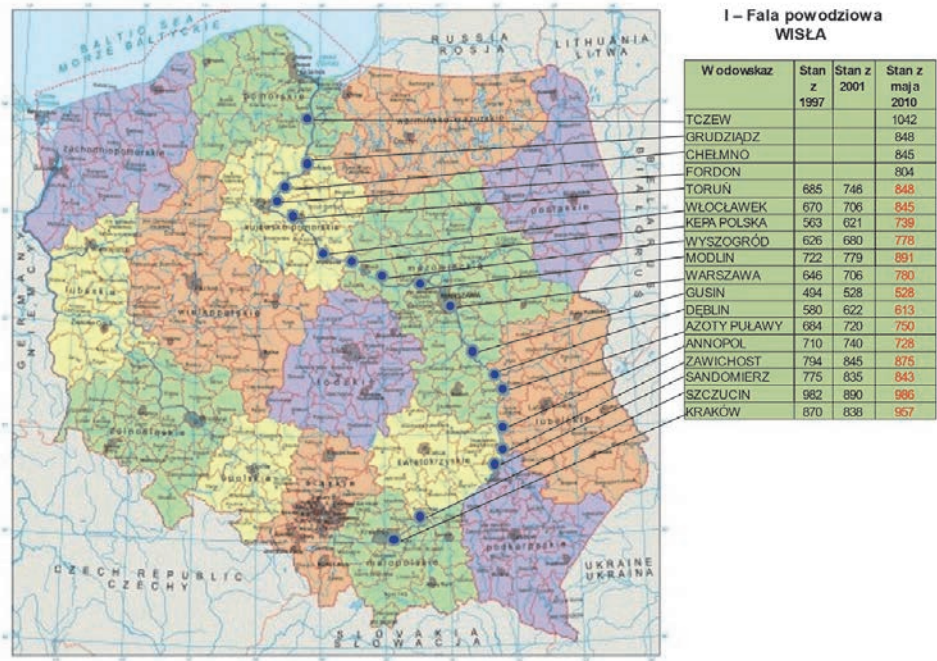
emergency support and acts as a coordination hub between all EU Member States, the 8 additional participating states, the affected country, and civil protection and humanitarian experts.

Figure 2. Alarm and warning states (colour code) in Polish rivers during the first days of the flood in 2010. Source web page of Institute of Meteorology and Water Management



Source: National Headquarters of the State Fire Service.

Figure 3. The water level on water gauges during the floods in 1997 and 2010



Source: National Headquarters of the State Fire Service.

During the flood in Poland in 2010, the levels and exceedances on the main water gauges were much higher than during the millennium flood of 1997. Damage cracks in many places on the Vistula and Odra rivers and high levels on the Warta River led to a situation that 6 high-capacity pumps to protect critical infrastructure were needed. Poland tried to use 2 bilateral agreement – with German THW and Czech Republic). Based on talks at the level of directors of departments of the main fire brigades headquarter from Poland and the Czech Republic on 18.05, under an annex to bilateral Polish- Czech agreement¹⁷, 2 high-performance pumps from

the Czech Republic were dispatched. Duty officer from THW Germany answered that they prefer to reply by EUCPT that via bilateral agreement from 1993 between director of Federal Agency for Technical Relief and chief Commandant of the State Fire Service. Due that the Ministry of the Interior agreed with chief Commandant of the State Fire Service that Poland activated for the first time European Mechanism for Civil Protection Mechanism by placing in Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS) on 19 May 2010 at 03:39 local time, via coordination of Monitoring and Information Centre in Brussel (now ERCC) request

17 ACR (2000) Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Czech Republic on cooperation and mutual assistance in the event of catastrophes, natural disasters, and other extraordinary events, signed on June 8, 2000 (Journal of Laws No. 36 of 2004, item 325).

for high capacity pumps (10 pumps each 600 m³/h each 19.05 at 3:39 Poland activates the Community Mechanism of the European Union.

As the result on the request:

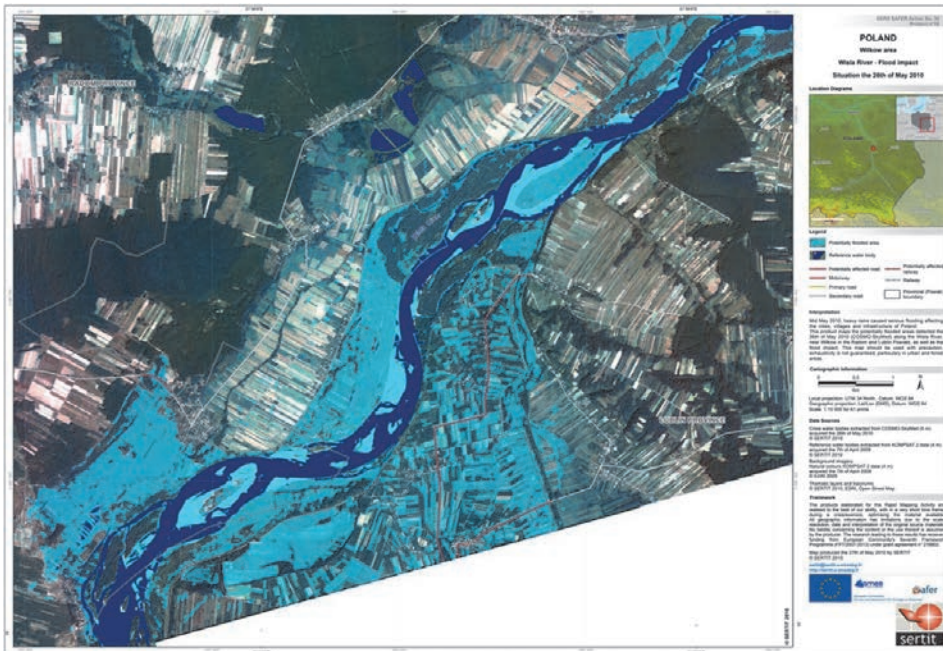
- from 20 May 2010 international groups from EU Member States arrive in Poland (from Germany, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Balt Flood Module from Lithuania/Latvia/Estonia),
- 23.05 arrival of the first group from Ukraine (the second group on 24/25.06)
 - Intergovernmental Agreement¹⁸,
- on May 27, an additional 1 high-performance pump from the Netherlands was approved by Poland via UCPM,

- on May 30, on the basis of a bilateral agreement on regional, not national level, the Germans sent a group with 5 pumps to operate in the province of Lubuskie.

At the end of May 2010, the flood situation seems to be stabilised and on 01 June some foreign groups leave the territory of Poland.

Due to the formation of the 2nd climax and flood wave, 5 groups continue their pumping activities. Additionally based on a bilateral agreement, on 14 June Germany delivers 5 modules (15 pumps).

Figure 4. Satellite photo of the flood pool in Wilków during the 2010 flood in Poland



Source: SAFER project, GMES, European Commission – 26 May 2010.

18 AU (2002) Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on cooperation and mutual assistance in the field of preventing catastrophes, natural disasters and other extraordinary events and removing their consequences, signed in Warsaw on July 19, 2002 (Journal of Laws No. 166 of 2004, item 1737).

If bilateral or regional assistance is not sufficient, an analogous to EUCPM multilateral coordination mechanism called International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), where the UN OCHA played a leading role is used. It was activated during the provision of rescue aid, including by

the Polish Rescue Urban Search and Rescue Team (USAR Poland) during the missions after the earthquakes in Haiti (January 2010), Nepal (April 2015), or Turkey (February 2023). The same mechanism and EU CPM were parallely used during Beirut in Lebanon blast in 2020.

Figure 5. USAR sectorisation in Lebanon 2020 mission



Source: UN OCHA.

Summary

In the conducted research on the preparation of PSP structures for international operations, receiving and sending aid, theoretical research methods such as analysis, synthesis, inference, comparison, or analogy were used.

Methodological instructions for cross-border rescue and humanitarian cooperation are the fastest in everyday use but depending on the scale of the incident and the need for assistance,

they are not always sufficient. Then, assistance is provided on the basis of intergovernmental bilateral agreements to which the minister responsible for internal affairs is a party in Poland. It is important to monitor the events by duty officers of the SFS Headquarters. Help is always provided to the coordinating authorities at a given level of administration – the Local Emergency Management Authority (LEMA).

Host Nation Support of requested country from bilateral agreements

versus obligation for self sufficiency in EU CPM or INSARAG seems to be different approach. Much better seems for affected country is to receive fully self-sufficient support.

In research into the possibility of rationalizing activities and further optimizing national procedures, it is worth considering the method of organizing global aid according to methodology of organizing activities for Search and Rescue Groups specialized in foreign operations. Striving for the praxeological application of the utilitarian conclusions from the conducted research and participant observations, the author considered articles and reports on international exercises as particularly valuable.

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About Author

Mariusz Feltynowski – Polish firefighter, brigadier, high-altitude rescuer, specialist in rescue operations, including the issues of operations and functioning of specialized search and rescue groups directed to operations after construction disasters and earthquakes. Multiple participants in international rescue operations in response to crises and natural disasters, also within the UN structures. Rector-Commandant of the Main School of Fire Service in Warsaw.