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**EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT  
(EUR-OPA)**

**MEETING OF EXPERTS**

**REPORT AND EUROPEAN GUIDELINES ON DISABILITY INCLUSIVE DISASTER RISK  
REDUCTION (DIDRR)**

**OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, ROOM 3  
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**8 JULY 2013**

**REPORT**

## **1. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

The meeting was opened at 10.00 on 8 July 2013 by Ms Mechthilde FUHRER, Deputy to the Executive Secretary, EUR-OPA, on behalf of the Secretariat, with Mr Michel FEIDER, Vice-Chair, representing the Committee of Permanent Correspondents and the two experts, Prof. David ALEXANDER from the Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction, University College London and Mr Silvio SAGRAMOLA, Director of the Centre National d'Information et de Rencontre du Handicap in Luxembourg.

## **2. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA**

The draft agenda was adopted (cf. Appendix).

## **3. EXCHANGE ON THE REPLIES RECEIVED: QUESTIONNAIRES ON DISABILITY INCLUSIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DIDRR)**

In 2011 the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) adopted *Ethical Principles on Disaster Risk Reduction and People's Resilience*. In 2012 the Committee decided to focus part of its work on guidance for a more operative practice with vulnerable groups and in particular on people with disabilities. A Questionnaire on Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction has been developed and circulated this spring (to the Committee of Permanent Correspondents, the Committee of Experts on the Rights of People with Disabilities and to associations working in the field), in order to collect information from all possible stakeholders on key issues concerning disabled people and risks throughout Europe, as well as examples of good practice and already existing regulations and laws in the field. As the Agreement is a cooperation tool and not a monitoring one, the aim of the questionnaire is not to make an assessment of the actual situation in each member State, but rather to concentrate on reducing the risks within the disaster cycle.

The answers received will be compiled in a Report and Guidelines on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response will be drawn up. A Workshop will present the results and look ahead. People with disabilities will be associated throughout the process.

Ms Fuhrer recalled that the first answers received to the Questionnaires on Disability Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR) were presented at the Meeting of the Bureau of the Committee of the Permanent Correspondents of EUR-OPA in Paris (19 April 2013). Some Centres from EUR-OPA's network, such as ECPFE in Athens and ECRM in Yerevan, have already conducted work on how people with disabilities can face disasters. The Questionnaire and the answers received have also been presented to the Committee of Experts on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CD-RPD), in Strasbourg on 14 June 2013, who welcomed this initiative.

Ms Fuhrer then explained that the work of gathering information is done in close contact with the Social Cohesion and the Integration Division of the Council of Europe, dealing with issues related to people with disabilities. The European Social Charter defines general principles in terms of rights, which are valid for all persons, including people with disabilities.

While analysing the replies received to the Questionnaire, some challenges became evident:

- The policy framework in the different member States is varying: focused rather on response and preparedness or on prevention and mitigation, but rarely considering the disaster cycle as a whole. Where procedures exist, they do not necessarily comprise inclusive action in disaster response.
- Different ministries deal with DRR; they do not necessarily communicate. Therefore coordination is crucial at all levels (national, regional and local).

- The heterogeneous nature of deficiencies and their handicapping consequences have to be taken into account. Each type of requirement needs to be dealt with specifically.
- People with disabilities have to be treated as individuals with different needs, in order to exclude formal discrimination.
- The recovery of people with disabilities and the general emergency planning should be carried out in a holistic approach. It is important to include disabled persons in the emergency management, in the setting up of protective measures. Budgets, DRR education and preparedness activities are also needed.

The experts exchanged on the answers received to the Questionnaire. They are convinced that a broad definition of disability is required. In addition, there is an overlap with other (vulnerable) groups (e.g. elderly people with reduced mobility, minorities of various kinds, children, pregnant women, LGBT). A specific case of nursing should be made (people with disabilities and elderly people) living either in community or at home. Not all persons with disabilities are registered. In fact, there is a huge diversity of settings, frameworks, different legal systems: to be implemented in different contexts. Once there are provisions of legal requirements, an emergency plan has to be set up and become a living document. Here it is important to bring people with disability in, as well as voluntary organisations (e. g. in Germany, THW). Further training of civil protection authorities needs to be promoted, as well as transborder and international cooperation and assistance.

#### **4. DEFINING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

##### **i. Report on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response**

The experts exchanged on the aims and objectives of the report and decided upon its title: *Including people with disabilities in disaster preparedness and response.*

The report shall draw upon the Questionnaire and portray the situation related to people with disabilities in disaster preparedness and response, including examples of good practice. The report will be accompanied by resulting Guidelines on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response.

In fact, very little has been done; countries differ greatly regarding their levels of commitment and who is in charge of the issue. The report should focus on different practices, return of experiences, good practices, mention of legal issues and alert on what could be done in the case of a disaster. Two questions should be answered. At a first stage, how can people with disabilities call for help in all situations and how should people be alerted, informed and evacuated? At a later stage, how can practical problems, shelter and food for a couple of days be dealt with?

The report would identify the respective phases of disaster, come up with indicators of success and efficiency and start off with a working definition (disabilities being very broad). Terminology is an issue. A clear definition is required: what is disability, what is it aimed at (e.g. being elderly is not an element, but being fragile is). It is about accessibility, design, disability. Emergency plans, institutions and organisations in charge are being defined by a respective country, where persons with disabilities may be registered.

Civil protection in civil contingency will be used in the sense of emergency preparedness and response, its wider context being resilience (adapting and resisting, in order to know what to do), mitigation, trying to reduce risk for disabled people. The whole concept of contingency needs to be explored. There are more hazards to deal with and more threats, in terms of vulnerability, disasters, risk, hazards.

A section in the report could also focus on obstacles: what is wrong in order to draft a guideline resulting from it: analyse your weaknesses.

## **ii. European Guidelines on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response**

The guiding principle for drafting the Guidelines should be: what needs to be done and how can the principle formulated be reinforced?

The Guidelines should cover the entire disaster cycle, mitigation, preparedness, response: the pre-disaster phase; the alert; the response; the post disaster phases and recovery.

The Guidelines should be precise, both with a general and a political perspective, thus fitting for varied realities but still attainable. They should be drawn up following the seven Interdependent Success Factors (ISF)<sup>1</sup>, which are:

- 1 Decision-maker commitment
- 2 Coordinating and continuity
- 3 Networking and participation
- 4 Strategic planning
- 5 Knowledge management
- 6 Resources
- 7 Communication and marketing.

In terms of general principles: as far as civil organisations are concerned, disabled disaster risk reduction and disaster resilience should never be left out or ignored, because 1/5 of the population is concerned.

Guidelines should help identify other discussions that need to take place (e.g. in the case of a nuclear catastrophe, if the telecom systems break down, only radio would work): communication, information systems, importance of networking, bringing all stakeholders to identify problems in order to coordinate how to continue to work.

The following items could be included in the Guidelines:

- Governments must ensure that they work on the issue of including people with disabilities in disaster preparedness and response and commit themselves to preparing for emergencies.
- Governments should put into place a coordinating body or a platform with an oversight, ensuring cooperation between ministries and agencies.
- A volunteer response to disabled persons in disaster risk reduction should be developed (e.g. Red Cross).
- Cross ministerial coordination is required.
- Identification of forces which may intervene and awareness related to people with disabilities: training before emergencies in order to be able to respond.
- Evacuation.
- Gender and disasters and the female perspective.
- Disasters tend to amplify discrimination: decision makers decide on making prejudices.

Both the Report and the Guidelines on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response will be circulated to networks operating in the field and participating in the Workshop, before being officially presented at the Workshop.

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<sup>1</sup> cf. [www.eca.lu](http://www.eca.lu): 2008 - ECA for Administrations.

### **iii. Workshop on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response**

The aim of the Workshop "Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response" is to foster on better resilience, adaptation and resistance to disasters for persons with disabilities. The Workshop will be slightly broadening the state of play in EUR-OPA member States countries in order to also present what has not been summarised in the questionnaire. It will last one and a half days.

The experts proposed names of experts and organisations to be invited to the Workshop and prepared a first outline of the event:

#### Workshop on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response

22 October 2013 (14.00 – 18.00)

23 October 2013 (09.00 – 17.30)

Venue: Council of Europe office, Paris, France

Participants expected to participate: policy makers and government representatives, including local governments, agencies, associations, mainly in the field of civil protection and all stakeholders working with people with disabilities and disaster risk reduction.

Background and explanation: In 2011 the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) adopted Ethical Principles on Disaster Risk Reduction and People's Resilience. In 2012 the Committee decided to focus part of its work on guidance for a more operative practice with vulnerable groups and in particular on people with disabilities. A Questionnaire on Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction has been developed and circulated this spring, in order to collect examples of good practice and already existing regulations and laws in the field. The aim is to concentrate on reducing the risks within the disaster cycle. The answers received are currently being compiled in a Report and Guidelines on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response will be drawn up. A Workshop will present the results and look ahead. The aim of the Workshop is to foster on better resilience, adaptation and resistance to disasters for persons with disabilities. People with disabilities will be associated throughout the process.

The first half day of the Workshop (22 October 2013) will set the framework: the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan (2006-2015) will be introduced, as well as other relevant documents dealing with people with disabilities. Case studies will introduce the topic of the Workshop. The aim is to present an overview on the situation of people with disabilities related to disaster risk reduction in the EUR-OPA member States and beyond.

The second day (23 October 2013) will focus on the political dimension of the Workshop. The Council of Europe strives to promote the perception of persons with disabilities as holders of rights in the same way as all other citizens, considering disability to be part of human diversity. Defending values and promoting human rights through Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response is at the heart of the Council of Europe's mission. Prior to the presentation of the Report and Guidelines on Including people with disabilities in disaster preparedness and response, experts will give an overview and explanations on the understanding of "disaster" and "accessibility or Design for All". Round tables and working groups will allow the opportunity for the stakeholders to exchange experiences and come up with Conclusions and an Action Plan. The results of the project will also be presented on a one page poster.

The Workshop will be held in English. An official announcement and invitations will be circulated end of August, together with the Registration Form.

#### **iv. Tasks of the Experts**

The experts will prepare the Report and the Guidelines on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response. Prof. David Alexander will commence the drafting and it will be continued by both consultants. A contract will be set up with both consultants describing their respective tasks.

The consultants will also contribute to the organisation and presentation of the Workshop on "Including people with disabilities in disaster preparedness and response" (Paris, 22 – 23 October 2013). They will also be invited to participate in the dissemination of the results of the work undertaken.

#### **5. DRAFTING CALENDAR**

- Mid July: the Secretariat drafts and sends a mail to the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of EUR-OPA with the following question: Do you have any good practices in disaster and disability to report? Yes (details) / No
- Mid July: the experts start the drafting of the Report and the Guidelines on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response.
- The draft Report and Guidelines will be finalised at the second expert's meeting and circulated to all the partners invited to the Workshop on 15 October 2013. They will be invited to send in comments before the Workshop.

#### **6. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

- The second experts' meeting is planned to take place on 9 October 2013 in Luxembourg.

## **Appendix**

### **Meeting of experts Council of Europe Office, Paris, 8 July 2013**

#### **DRAFT AGENDA**

**1. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA**

*AP/CAT (2013) OJ 2 : Draft Agenda*

**2. EXCHANGE ON THE REPLIES RECEIVED: QUESTIONNAIRES ON DISABILITY INCLUSIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DIDRR)**

**3. DEFINING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**a. Content**

1. Report on Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction
2. European Guidelines on Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction
3. Conference on disability inclusive disaster risk reduction

**b. Tasks of the Experts**

**4. DRAFTING CALENDAR**

**5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**6. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING**