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EUR-OPA Workshop

Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and
Response

**German approach promoting accessibility of
various environments**

Dr. Regina Ernst & Dr. Dirk Boenke
Rehabilitation International (RI)

Rehabilitation International (RI) is a global network



- RI invented the international symbol of accessibility
- BAR is member of RI and responsible for the German RI National Secretary at the moment
- BAR-focus group
- STUVA is member of the BAR-focus group

Fields of activities and main aims of the BAR-focus group



1. Building and living / housing
2. Public transportation
3. Communication and new technologies
4. The workplace
 - Participation in society
 - Raising awareness
 - Giving recommendations

The ten commandments of freedom from barriers - 1



1. A barrier free environment is the basis for providing easy living conditions for all people.
2. A barrier free environment has to be designed everywhere.
3. Be aware of the importance of a barrier free environment for people with differing needs such as physical, sensory and cognitive impairments.

The ten commandments of freedom from barriers - 2



4. Put a focus on ensuring that everyone can understand everything in routine daily situations.
5. Take five principles into consideration.
6. Always consult people with differing needs.
7. Adopt technical rules and standards, research results and best practice.

The ten commandments of freedom from barriers - 3



8. Make sure that disabled people can live safely and are able to escape unaided in the event of emergencies. Safety is of paramount importance.
9. Be methodical when meeting the demands for accessibility.
10. Remember the demographic changes that are happening. Accessibility is becoming more and more important for society.

Inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response in Germany



- Example I – Bomb-disposal
 - A district with high population density
 - 4.000 people to be evacuated
 - Evacuation takes more than 8h (planned 4h)
 - Reason: 65 physically disabled people had to be carried downstairs (1,6% from all evacuated people)
 - Head of operation: „**An unusual high number of handicapped people**“



Photo: Köhner Stadtanzeiger

[Source: KStA 13.8.2006]

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■ Example II – Flooding

- Dresden 2002, Flooding
 - Police calls for evacuation via loudspeaker announcements
 - People with hearing impairments were not able to receive the message and were left in their flats without electricity
 - 2013: Germany (and parts of Mid- and Eastern Europe), Flooding
- ⇒ **55 rural districts had to be evacuated!**



Source: Deutschland hilft

Inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response in Germany



■ Germany, October 2013

- First Conference about inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response
- **Conclusions:**
- On international level a lot of things going on
- Inclusion has found first access into public awareness in Germany
- Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction is important and urgent
- ⇒ There is still a lot to be done!



Source: Deutschland hilft

Inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response in Germany



- Important key points for an inclusive disaster management
 - Training
(rescue teams & handicapped people)
 - Communication
 - Evacuation, rescue and healthcare

Inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response in Germany



Inclusive training

- Use of easy-to-understand-language for fire protection training
- First-aid training for blind and visually impaired people in co-op from NGOs and self-help organisations
- Not yet common:
Trained people with handicaps working as multipliers



Source: Mission sicheres Zuhause

Inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response in Germany



Inclusive communication

- Pre-information for disaster preparedness: official website of The Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (BBK) largely not yet accessible



Source: Mission sicheres Zuhause

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Inclusive communication

- Beginnings to consider requirements of handicapped people – some examples
 - Emergency fax for people with hearing impairments
 - Information about behaviour in emergency situations in easy-to-use-language
 - Few brochures about how to interact with people with disabilities (target group: rescue teams, police etc.)
 - No guidelines for inter-organisational coop between rescue teams and self-help organisations

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Evacuation, Rescue and health care

■ Rescue Bus

- District of Siegen-Wittgenstein
- Running since June 2013
- normally running as regular urban bus
- equipped with blue light and siren
- equipped with stretchers, possibility to supply lightly injured people
- Capacity: 130 people



Source: www.feuerwehrmagazin.de



Source: www.wir.siegen.de

Inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response in Germany



Evacuation, Rescue and health care

- Yet only two studies in Germany about people with disabilities and emergencies (STUVA)
 - Emergencies in street tunnels (2009)
 - Emergencies in high-rise buildings and public buildings (2011)
- Some ideas transferable to disaster preparedness
- Studies underline the importance of training and organisational measures beneath technical and structural measures (backup)
- STUVA with partners submitted a proposal for a research project dealing with inclusive DPR

Inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response in Germany



Conclusions

- Germany is (yet) a (comparatively) safe country (only few disasters on a regional or national level)
- Demographic change and latest disasters (e. g. floodings) show the urgent need for actions (to consider inclusive DPR)
- Inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response in Germany has found first access to awareness of parties involved
- First steps taken (conferences, further research) to improve the situation

Thank you very much for your attention



Dr. Regina Ernst

Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Rehabilitation e.V. (BAR)

Solmsstraße 18

60486 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Phone: + 49 69 / 60 50 18 -16

Email: regina.ernst@bar-frankfurt.de

Dr. Dirk Boenke

STUVA e.V.

Mathias-Brüggen-Straße 41

50827 Köln, Germany

Phone: +49 221 / 597 95 -19

Email: d.boenke@stuva.de