



Global Risk Forum GRF Davos supports EUR-OPA's initiative on the inclusion of people with disabilities in disaster preparedness and response

Statement by

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Davos, 5 December 2013

On 24 October 2013, the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) adopted a Recommendation on the inclusion of people with disabilities in disaster preparedness and response. This represents a significant step and an important commitment on the part of the Council of Europe and of its EUR-OPA Agreement in their contribution to Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction. The Global Risk Forum GRF Davos welcomes and supports this initiative. The 5th International Disaster and Risk Conference IDRC Davos 2014, to take place on 24 - 28 August 2014 in Davos, Switzerland, is expected to address disability and disaster risk reduction. It will certainly capitalize on the findings of EUR-OPA report "Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response" and the "Guidelines for the Treatment of People with Disabilities During Emergency, Crisis and Disaster Situations" which are linked with it. GRF Davos is ready to associate itself with further initiatives that will be pursued by EUR-OPA in the follow-up to the above-mentioned Recommendation.

Disasters are of increasing concern for mankind, due to their frequency, complexity, scope and disruptive and destructive capacity. Those already vulnerable pay the highest price and inescapably face huge recovery challenges. These populations often encompass people with disabilities, children, elderly, women, gender minorities, refugees, prisoners, homeless people and ethnic minorities. They bear the heaviest burden of disasters' impact. With world's population ageing at a staggering rate, people with access and functional needs are increasing. The reduction of vulnerability of people with disabilities and special needs to hazards is too often an overlooked challenge in disaster risk reduction policy and practice. Furthermore, the participation of people with disabilities and special needs in the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies remains an exception. Disability inclusive disaster resilience therefore requires special frameworks which develop and strengthen capacities that are able to ensure that special measures are in place to improve disaster prevention services and practices, emergency response systems and post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation so as to comply with the need of people with disabilities and those with access and functional needs. The post-2015 strategy and the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR), which will take place in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015, must be considered as opportunities for addressing the disability issue in the context of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. GRF Davos and EUR-OPA will hopefully be partners in the ongoing process leading to the WCDRR and in its follow-up.