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EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT (EUR-OPA)

**THEMATIC PROPOSALS
FOR THE WORK PROGRAMME 2018-2019**

*Document prepared by the Secretariat
of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement*

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INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION

The aim of this paper is to identify thematic priorities for the Work Programme 2018-2019. At the end of November 2016, the Secretariat launched a survey requesting the Permanent Correspondents to indicate their main national concerns for each of the four fields of action adopted in the Medium Term Plan 2016-2020. The thematic proposals and draft Work Programme were discussed at the Bureau meeting (Strasbourg, 16 February 2017) and at the Committee of Permanent Correspondents (Monaco, 14-15 March 2017).

In March, the Secretariat will share the draft Work Programme with partner organisations (UNISDR, UNESCO and the European Commission) to assess possible overlap and/or complementarity with their respective Road Maps and Action Plans. It is essential not to duplicate initiatives that are already being implemented by other organisations in EUR-OPA member States. Following the feedback of partner organisations, if necessary, the Secretariat will revise the draft Work Programme to ensure synergy with partners' ongoing initiatives, which should be adopted at the Committee of Permanent Correspondents in autumn 2017.

The new Work Programme will be the foundation to orient the future work and projects of the 27 Specialised Centres. Therefore, the Executive Secretary will request to the Directors of Specialised Centers to send him by May, their new project proposals in line with the thematic priorities of the 2018-19 Work Programme. These proposals will be presented at the next meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents at the end of the year. Through this process, the Secretariat wants to ensure consistency between national priorities and required scientific and technological knowledge, better dialogue and communication between the Correspondents and the Directors of Specialised Centres, as well as to guarantee efficiency and impact of the future EUR-OPA Work Programme.

In order to take countries' requirements into account and strengthen cooperation with partner organisations, the following main documents should be considered:

EUR-OPA:

- The results of the Secretariat's enquiry addressed to the Permanent Correspondents on 28 November 2016 in order to identify national requests and priorities.
Twelve countries replied out of twenty-five EUR-OPA member States (50% response).
- Resolution (2016) - 1 of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents "Building more disaster resilient societies in Europe and Mediterranean region: Priorities for Action", adopted at the 13th Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), Lisbon, Portugal, 26 October 2016.
- The Medium Term Plan 2016-2020, adopted at the 13th Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), Lisbon, Portugal, 26 October 2016.

Other organisations:

- The Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.
- The European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction: 2015-2020 Roadmap for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework.

- The Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 - A disaster risk-informed approach for all EU policies.
- The Paris agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

THEMATIC PROPOSALS

Further to the Sendai Framework of Action 2015-2030 adopted at the 3rd United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement's Medium Term Plan 2016– 2020, our motto is: *“From words to actions: towards a European and Mediterranean region more resilient to natural and technological risks”*.

The Permanent Correspondents are invited to take note and discuss the thematic proposals hereunder in order to prioritise the main activities for the Work Programme 2018-2019. The proposed actions include disseminating good practices, sharing experiences, fostering governance and cooperation, promoting resilience measures and enhancing scientific and technical work.

1. Using scientific and technological knowledge to better assess evolving risks and adapt accordingly the resilience strategies

*First Priority for Action of the Sendai framework:
“Understanding disaster risk”*

Project 1.1

Social networks serving to inform the population and vulnerable groups in the management of major hazards:

- **Intervention (Alert, information and participation of the population)**

Possible actions:

- Development of early warning systems and monitoring tools with focus on inter-institutional partnership and coordination.
- Development of tailored-made warning communication systems for vulnerable communities.
- Development of a national data base with the record of all damages related with major accidents and catastrophes.
- Implement an Early Warning System for Earthquakes and Tsunamis.
- Modernize the Water Surveillance and Alert System.
- Involvement of the population in disaster alert through social media.
- Promotion of volunteerism among young population for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- Promotion of safety culture among population using new technologies.
- Development of a sense of belonging and involvement of local communities in preventing and mitigating the risk of forest fires.

Project 1.2

Protection of cultural heritage in the context of major hazards (cycle of major hazards management)

Possible actions:

- Development of risk assessment tools for the protection of cultural heritage.
- Training of cultural attachés in civil protection.
- Preparation of a guidelines for the evacuation and safeguarding of cultural property, defining the modalities and responsibilities.
- Creation of infrastructure base and protocols for the protection of cultural heritage in Europe.

2. Developing cooperation among all decision-makers to better define authorities' adequate role in DRR

*Second Priority for Action of the Sendai Framework:
"Strengthening disaster risk governance"*

Project 2.1

Identification of good governance practices in the management of natural catastrophes and cross-border technology:

Two concrete cases:

- **nuclear disasters (Luxembourg-France-Belgium-Germany; Bulgaria-Rumania);**
- **natural hazards (Monaco, France).**

Possible actions:

Inter-ministerial co-ordination

Governance throughout the entire cycle of crisis or disaster management (identification, prevention, preparedness, warning, response and recovery) and the transition from one phase to another is a common problem in disaster management.

What are the best practices in terms of interministerial co-ordination throughout the crisis or disaster management cycle?

Transfer of responsibility – mixed competences

Usually, responsibility for crisis or disaster management is assigned in advance and lies at local, regional or national level. As the crisis develops, however, it can cease to be a purely local matter and become a regional or even national one instead.

What can be done to provide an interface between the different local, regional or national authorities, and a bridge for the transfer of powers and responsibilities? How to ensure good governance in cases of mixed competences?

Involvement of non-government stakeholders

Although managing crises and disasters is the responsibility of the state, it involves not only government agencies but also NGOs and private sector stakeholders. The interface between public authorities and the private sector is in many cases non-existent or relatively unstructured.

The involvement of non-governmental agencies in crisis management could usefully be explored in a best practice study.

Cross-border co-operation – co-ordination between authorities

Cross-border co-operation and co-ordination obviously require communication and information sharing procedures that must be agreed in advance. Lack of procedures is a common obstacle, as each country tends to use its own tools and often there is no common toolkit. Likewise, language can be a major barrier, and information sharing which requires approved translations in the case of a serious, rapidly evolving event is in many cases impossible.

Cross-border co-operation – different state structures

In one country the local authorities may be responsible for responding to a crisis, whereas in the neighbouring country responsibility lies with the national authorities. Communication and co-ordination between authorities which are at different levels of the state can lead to misunderstandings and complications on the political front.

Project 2.2

Monitoring implementation of the recommendations of EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement

Possible actions:

- Set up a small Working Group of 3/4 persons or identify an expert consultant to follow up practices and civil protection exercises with local populations. In particular, evaluate whether the EUR-OPA recommendations to take into account vulnerable groups (migrants, people with disabilities, etc.) are being applied.

3. Promoting risk culture among population (children, adults and groups with special vulnerability)

*Fourth Priority for Action of the Sendai Framework:
"Enhancing disaster preparedness"*

Project 3.1

Social networks serving to inform the population and vulnerable groups in the management of major hazards:

- **Prevention (training in "risk culture")**

Possible actions:

- Promotion of safety culture among population using new technologies.
- Improving risk culture implies two phases that must be mandatory taken into account:
 - Raising awareness of risks related to the specific environment/context and to the specific population sector.
 - Providing simple and easily available instruments able to increase resilience and to minimize impact.

Digital communication can be powerfully used to diffuse both messages above into large amount of population; this is true for more vulnerable people also as, for example, migrants. Smartphones are available among vulnerable people and must be used to deliver messages able to both increase awareness and improve resilience.

- While the fact that the BeSafeNet programme exists at all is to be welcomed, it lacks appeal and is not interactive enough to be of interest to teachers. Why not create synergies with other national sites so as to enhance it, by incorporating links for example? Social media are a communication channel popular even with the very young, so why not use them to disseminate information and publicise the BeSafeNet site? Decide how best to raise awareness among adults, by looking at the initiatives introduced in member states and the results achieved.

Project 3.2

Educational guidelines, awareness raising and public participation

Possible actions:

- Implementing the Risk Education Guidelines at the various levels of school education, namely through specific training actions directed at teachers and the production of a "pedagogical kit" with activities examples.
- Streamlining a national campaign as regards seismic risk preparedness.
- Implementing projects aimed at senior population, in order to raise awareness and provide citizens with knowledge about the risks to which they are subject and inherent self-protection behavior.
- Building a culture of prevention at school level – Environment, Health and safety at work.
- Developing DRR activities such as emergency and evacuation drills at school.
- Extending school safety initiatives and sharing knowledge and experience.

- Adopting and implementing an Awareness Raising Strategy in order to have a multi-sectoral, systematic, organised and all-inclusive (all sectors/stakeholders and all target groups, including vulnerable groups) awareness raising practice.
- Promoting the exchange of experiences.
- Raising awareness of potential threats that our nation is prone to all parts of societies – adults and younger population through interactive media approach and education and training, as well as manuals for behaving in emergencies.
- Developing programs and tools for broader and a more people-centered preventive approach to DRR, to be inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities and their organizations, such as guides for emergency preparedness and response.
- The advocacy of a risk culture within the population, whether vulnerable or not, can only succeed in two specific cases: either the population has known and suffered the direct consequences of a major disaster, or a population is exposed to permanent and repetitive risks, such as earthquakes.
This advocacy should be limited to populations, whether or not vulnerable, living in areas known for specific hazards.
- Suggesting good practices, individual or collective, for dealing with particular threats. Identifying good practices that lead to the development of sustained, appropriate behaviours in dealing with latent risks which have a low probability of occurring, by providing a best practice guide and a survival kit, for example.
- Development the “Proposals for involving the groups of population, being the most vulnerable from disasters, in disaster planning and preparedness as an integral part of disaster preparedness and response”.
- Tailored-made risk awareness for vulnerable groups living in disaster-prone areas.

4. Fostering population’s active participation (as individuals and as community) to DRR

*Third Priority for Action of the Sendai Framework:
“Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience”*

Project 4.1

Social networks serving to inform the population and vulnerable groups in the management of major hazards:

- **Intervention (informing the population and participation of the population)**

Possible actions:

- Involvement of the population in disaster alert through social media.
- New technologies can deliver information in a more or less interactive manner, with users able to both upload and download (e.g. ESMC application).

Project 4.2

Awareness campaigns and public participation

Possible actions:

- Development of the “Methodology and Action Plan to prepare and regularly hold national and municipal “Campaigns” on informing, awareness raising, acquisition and

consolidation of adequate behavior skills and warning for all groups of the population about emergencies”.

- Involvement of local communities in disaster prevention and planning.
- Identify how to reach and motivate population to invest time and resources in DRR. All social groups have to find DRR beneficial in order to participate as individuals and as a community – knowledge and reaching every social group is a key.
- Exchange of good practice in the field of raising awareness of individuals on the need to implement institutional DRR activities on the personal level in order to enhance community safety.
- Raising awareness on the importance of active involvement.
- Develop programs and training that will stress the importance of individual actions in disaster prevention as well as group activities but also community.
- Develop programs involving all actors in DRR, including public-private partnerships with risk-sensitive approach.
- Share knowledge and experience.
- Preparing community-based disaster hazard maps (*it is important to know the environment and the people living in the neighborhoods, in particular the people with special needs such as elderly people, people with disabilities, etc*).
- Extending the training activities at community level (*education is the primary instrument in order to raise awareness in the society*).

INTEGRATING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN OTHER SECTORS

The innovative Sendai Framework has introduced new focus areas such as **ecosystem conservation and restoration, education and cultural heritage**, among others.

The Council Europe has long-standing experience and significant competency in the following matters, for which a transversal and integrated approach with disaster risk management could be strengthened or developed:

1. Marginal and special groups, gender equality and risk management

(people with disabilities, migrants/asylum seekers/refugees, elderly single people, seriously ill, children, women, prisoners, etc).

- Request new project proposals to the Specialised Centres.
Expected outcome: new projects in line with Work Programme priorities.
- Identify possible collaboration with different Council of Europe departments dealing with education, marginal groups, gender equality, in order to raise people's awareness about risk, and promote risk/safety culture in society.
Expected outcome: exchange of good operational practices and development of policy guidelines for decision-makers.

2. Climate change, environment and risk management

- Request new project proposals to the Specialised Centres.
Expected outcome: new projects in line with Work Programme priorities.
- Develop possible cooperation between EUR-OPA and the Council of Europe's "Bern Convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats", in order to identify nature-based solutions and mitigation measures for disaster risk management.
Expected outcome: exchange of good operational practices and development of policy guidelines for decision-makers.

3. Cultural Heritage, community-based approach and risk management

- Request new project proposals to the Specialised Centres.
Expected outcome: new projects in line with Work Programme priorities.
- In collaboration with the Council of Europe's Culture and Cultural Heritage Division, test the implementation of the "Framework Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society", as well as the community and heritage-based approach in some Italian villages hit by the earthquake in 2016.
Expected outcome: exchange of good operational practices and development of policy guidelines for decision-makers.
- Contribute to the European Commission's study to develop good practices on the integration of cultural heritage in the national disaster risk reduction strategies to be developed by EU Member States.
Expected outcome: ensure visibility and reference to the Council of Europe's heritage conventions, heritage strategy and policy recommendations in the EC Study, as well as legislative and technical assistance experiences in the field.

4. Governance and legislation

- Request new project proposals to the Specialised Centres.
Expected outcome: new projects in line with Work Programme priorities.
- Identify existing good operational governance practices and legislation promoting in the all cycle of major hazards management:
 - horizontal inter-ministerial and inter-agency coordination;
 - vertical collaboration between central, regional and local authorities;
 - mixed (central-regional-local) competence governance coordination;
 - cooperation between State authorities and non-governmental organisations and private sectors;
 - trans-boundary and trans-national cooperation.

Expected outcome: exchange of good operational practices to improve cross-sectoral and integrated governance in the all cycle of risk management. Recommendations for innovative legislations and development of policy guidelines for decision-makers.

The new operative direction of the Work Programme 2018-2019 should guide the EUR-OPA member States in identifying the most suitable profile for their Permanent Correspondents and orient the future activities of the Specialised Centres.