

# TOWARDS MORE DISASTER RESILIENT SOCIETIES

## The EUR-OPA contribution



The EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement has long contributed to and continues to support the global efforts on Disaster Risk Reduction, in particular the four priority areas of the Post-2015 Framework to be adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (14-18 March 2015, Sendai, Japan).



## BETTER RISK ASSESSMENT

**W**ith a view to preventing existing risks and coping with emerging threats, risks first need to be identified and their sources understood. The Agreement has therefore focused on identifying and mapping hazards by giving priority to relevant studies and joint action at international level.

### RISK IDENTIFICATION

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The Centre on Geodynamical Hazards of High Dams (Tbilisi, Georgia) and the Centre for Seismic and Geomorphological Hazards (Strasbourg, France) have been conducting innovative research in the field of geo-morphological and geo-hydrological hazards, leading to the development and dissemination of methodologies and techniques in the monitoring of trigger factors and their integration into associated susceptibility maps.

### EMERGING RISKS

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Climate change has already transformed risk patterns by modifying the frequency of extreme events, but in certain regions, such as the Arctic, it also influences the level of vulnerability itself. The Centre of New Technologies for the Management of Natural and Technological Major Hazards (Moscow, Russian Federation) has developed a survey on potential new threats associated with recent changes in the Arctic region and has identified new requirements to adequately handle the subsequent opportunities and challenges.

## BETTER RISK GOVERNANCE

The EUR-OPA Agreement has taken a particular interest in analysing the legislation on risk prevention and management. Even though the situation differs from one country to another, authorities often seek to draw on other countries' experience to formulate their own legislation. Limiting the scope to the practices of immediate neighbours is too restrictive. Indeed, a more global approach is necessary in order to identify a wide range of good practices.

### INTER-MINISTERIAL MANAGEMENT

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The lack of co-ordination appears to be a major problem in national civil protection legislation, according to a review undertaken by the Higher Institute of Emergency Planning (Brussels, Belgium). These findings led to subsequent work on the actual role of interministerial action in several countries with different management models. Regular co-ordination between various risk-management governmental entities – through integrated multidisciplinary action which respects individual responsibilities – enables more consistent and effective decision taking at national level and the formulation of better practices further down the line.

### LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

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National authorities must be encouraged to reconsider their decision-making approach in order to facilitate implementation by regional and local authorities. Taking into account the findings of a study on “subnational action”, it appears that effective networking at all levels of authority is essential to successful risk management.



## BETTER RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS

The vulnerability of individuals, communities and the environment is a major factor in determining susceptibility to disaster risks and levels of resilience. Yet these risks do not affect everybody in the same way. Poor people and socially disadvantaged groups are the most exposed and suffer most directly from disasters. In 2011, the EUR-OPA Agreement adopted the “Ethical principles on disaster risk reduction and people’s resilience”, aimed at improving preparedness and dealing with ethical problems related to the victims of disasters.

### PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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Laying a solid foundation, the Agreement’s work focused on people with disabilities, which resulted in the publication “Major hazards and people with disabilities. Their involvement in disaster preparedness and response”, including guidelines for assistance and a recommendation for the inclusion of people with disabilities in preparedness and response. Currently, the Agreement is preparing a “Toolkit for civil protection professionals” to provide practical guidance for the improvement of services, plans and assistance for people with disabilities in the light of risks, crises, emergencies and disasters.

### ECOSYSTEM-BASED RESILIENCE

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As an active member of the Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR), the Agreement promotes ecosystem management as the key strategy to reduce disaster risk, increase local resilience and adapt to climate change. To support these principles, the Agreement has published “Ecosystem approach to disaster risk reduction”.

## BETTER PREPAREDNESS FOR DISASTERS

The growing frequency and complexity of emergencies show the need to strengthen response capabilities. Civil protection, law-enforcement bodies and other concerned stakeholders should be ready to respond at all times, and co-ordination between all relevant partners is key to effectively managing crises. Yet, efficient preparation cannot be limited to improved public services: people’s awareness of and preparedness for risks are crucial to ensuring adequate responses.

### FOREST FIRES

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The EUR-OPA Global Fire Monitoring Centre (Freiburg, Germany) assesses potential wildfire risks to natural and cultural heritage sites. In co-operation with other European countries, the centre has developed guidelines for the defence of rural populations against wildfires. The Agreement has also supported its efforts to promote transnational fire management co-operation in Europe and beyond.

### INFORMATION FOR THE POPULATION

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To improve the population’s preparedness for disasters, the European Centre for Disaster Medicine (San Marino) has coordinated the publication of a multilingual guide “Know how to deal with emergencies”, which provides useful information on how to deal with emergencies (from earthquakes to chemical accidents), in order to mitigate the impact of natural and technological disasters on human life.

” Disaster risk reduction has reached maturity in Sendai. Now that the scientific, technical, financial and governance tools are available, states are duty bound to protect their citizens from disasters.

**Eladio Fernandez-Galiano**

Executive Secretary, EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement



# Resolution 2014-1

## on the support to the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

Paris, France, 28 November 2014

### Resolution 2014-1

— The Committee of Permanent Correspondents,

- A. Noting the increase, both in extent and frequency, of natural and technological disasters occurring in Europe and the Mediterranean region over recent years;
- B. Expressing their concern for the increase in the negative effects (economic, social and environmental) on communities affected by these disasters;
- C. Noting that many of these disasters are linked to extreme weather conditions, (such as floods, coastal hazards and forest fires, threats which are all likely to increase with climate change);
- D. Valuing the successful co-operation and synergy between the Council of Europe (European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement, EUR-OPA) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN-ISDR);
- E. Noting the success of the European Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction grouping European National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction and Hyogo Framework of Action Focal Points and its close co-operation with the EUR-OPA Agreement;
- F. Warmly thanking the UN-ISDR Secretariat for the excellent preparatory work for the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the involvement of the EUR-OPA Agreement in it;
- G. Confirming that the main messages of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-15 are still pertinent and further work remains to be done to fully achieve its goals;
- H. Taking note with interest of the draft Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction submitted by the co-chairs of the Preparatory Committee;
- I. Highlighting the importance of the Post-2015 Framework to complement and strengthen previous work associated to the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-15;

— Resolves to:

1. confirm the Council of Europe's commitment, through its Major Hazards Agreement, to participate in the implementation of the Post-2015 Framework in its regional area and within its specific mandate;
2. adopt the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction priority areas as additional guidance for its disaster risk reduction activities – including prevention, preparedness and efficient response to emergencies – over the coming years;
3. emphasize in its future work the importance of the human dimension of disaster risk reduction recognised in the Post-2015 Framework, in particular the involvement and care of most vulnerable groups;
4. take account in future activities of the need expressed in the Post-2015 Framework to further prepare societies for the challenges of increased risks from climate change and to new threats on sustainable development;
5. reiterate in its future action the crucial role of scientific knowledge and expertise on risks to better assess them and propose innovative solutions to tackle them, as highlighted in the Post-2015 Framework;
6. reinforce the future involvement of the Agreement in the specific role of international organisations in the Post-2015 Framework implementation, both at national and international levels;
7. instruct the Executive Secretariat of the Agreement to follow the implementation of activities related to the Post-2015 Framework, adapting them as required to new circumstances and making proposals and recommendations to improve their effectiveness;
8. instruct the network of specialised centres of the Agreement to support, in their respective spheres of competence, the implementation of sound, co-ordinated programmes in line with the Post-2015 Framework priorities;
9. increase collaboration with the United Nations, the European Commission and other appropriate organisations and fora concerned with disaster reduction and relief in Europe and the Mediterranean region in deploying the international aspects of the Post-2015 Framework;
10. invite European and Mediterranean states which are not party to the Partial Agreement to also contribute to this common effort by creating a coherent European and Mediterranean approach to disaster risk reduction, in particular by participating in the Agreement's co-operation structure.

## Who are we?

Set up by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1987, the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Partial Agreement has 26 member states to date:

Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Spain, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, and three Mediterranean countries which are not member states of the Council of Europe: Algeria, Lebanon and Morocco.

Our main objective is to reinforce and promote co-operation between member states in a multi-disciplinary context to ensure better prevention and protection against risks and better preparation in the event of major natural or technological disasters.

The decision-taking bodies are the Ministerial Session, which defines medium-term priority fields of action, assisted by the Committee of Permanent Correspondents in their annual implementation.

The 26 specialised centres' specific role is to develop projects, both at national and international levels, which aim to improve the awareness of and resilience to major risks within the population.

Our main partners:

UNISDR | UNESCO | European Commission | Global Risk Forum (GRF Davos) | Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR) | European Forum for Local and Regional Disaster Management

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation.

It includes 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union.

All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.