



Bulgarian Chairmanship
Council of Europe
November 2015 – May 2016
Présidence de la Bulgarie
Conseil de l'Europe
Novembre 2015 – Mai 2016

РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ



МИНИСТЕРСТВО
НА ВЪТРЕШНИТЕ РАБОТИ



Strasbourg, 12 November 2015

AP/CAT (2015) 13
Original E

**Ministry of Interior of Bulgaria
European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement**

International Conference

**BUILDING A CULTURE OF PREVENTION
THROUGH DISASTER RISK AWARENESS IMPROVEMENT
AMONG CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**

**09 – 11 December 2015
Sofia, Bulgaria**

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND

Over the last decades the severity of natural disasters has significantly increased, affecting millions of people and their livelihoods. The United Nation's Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction for 2015 indicates that between 1980 and 2012 around 41 million life years were lost in internationally reported disasters each year.ⁱ Despite all efforts to increase awareness about disaster risks and to improve disaster risk management all over the world there is still need to develop more efficient approaches to reduce vulnerability, and in particular of the youngest and often most vulnerable members of society.

Ensuring protection of rights and increasing resilience of children and adolescents during and in the aftermath of disasters requires an international multi-stakeholder approach focused on building a culture of prevention through disaster risk awareness improvement. In 2011 the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) of the Council of Europe adopted Ethical Principles on Disaster Risk Reduction and People's Resilienceⁱⁱ. Providing a good compilation of guiding principles already recognised by the Council of Europe, these Ethical Principles serve as a basis to develop both policy recommendations and practical solutions to improve the resilience and preparedness of vulnerable groups. The most vulnerable groups need special protection of their rights taking into account their specificities in order to help them cope better with disasters.

Member of the Council of Europe since 1992, the Republic of Bulgaria gives paramount importance to the fundamental values of the Organization in the field of human rights, rule of law and democracy. Confirmation of the values and principles of European integration and cooperation will be the main strategic objective of its second Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Moreover the Bulgarian Chairmanship will focus on its priorities, the first of which is Protection of children's rights and widening access to culture for young people.

Protect children and adolescents from disasters

Improving awareness and knowledge of disaster risk among children and adolescents is a key process which allows easy upgrading of knowledge and skills acquired during childhood and adolescence in the field of disaster protection for the formation of a culture of behaviour in the population.

In this regard, the Bulgarian authorities for Fire Safety and Civil Protection work in several directions:

- Joint activities in the formation of state policy to protect children's rights and widening access of young people to culture as well as to reduce risk, together with other responsible institutions – Ministry of Education and Science, State Agency for Child Protection and Ministry of Youth and Sport.
- General information activities for direct contact with target groups - media and web publications, lectures, visits to operational departments and others.

- Joint activities with the Ministry of Education and Science in pre-primary and school education which are stipulated in laws and regulations as follows:
 - Work with children in kindergarten through role-playing games, activities related to art or other educational methods and forms, practical exercises with simulation of an evacuation including the participation of rescue teams;
 - Work with children and adolescents in pre-school and school education system through direct training within 62 hours on specific topics on disaster protection providing general concepts and definitions, characteristics, rules of safe behaviour before, during and after disaster, providing first aid and more;
 - Work with children and adolescents in the school education system by implementation of educational leisure activities and organized extracurricular activities - training, competitions and other initiatives;
 - Focus the implementation of the above activities to institutions that are committed to children with special needs and children without parental care and other minority groups.

Consequently, the work related to disaster risk reduction among children and adolescents shall focus at least on the three following main aspects:

- 1. Raising awareness through schools***
- 2. Raising awareness outside of schools***
- 3. Fostering school safety***

AIM OF THE CONFERENCE

The main aim of the Conference is to bring together European experts and practitioners to take stock of actual progress in improving resilience of children and adolescents to disasters. Based on identified good practices in different countries, the necessary steps to build a strategy to promote a culture of prevention among children and adolescents will be discussed and concrete actions to implement it will be highlighted.

The Conference will thus also serve as a preparatory step of the implementation of the awareness-raising components of the Medium Term Plan 2016-2020 of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) of the Council of Europe.

ORGANISERS AND PARTNERS

The Conference will be organized and hosted by the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior as part of the Calendar of initiatives within the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the Committee of the Ministers of the Council of Europe (from November 2015 to May 2016). It will be organized in cooperation with the Executive Secretariat of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) of the Council of Europe.

PARTICIPANTS

The Bulgarian Ministry of Interior is inviting representatives of the European Commission and of Member States of the EUR-OPA Agreement who are experts in the field of education and disaster risk awareness among children and adolescents to participate in the Conference. In addition, representatives of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science and other national institutions with relevant expertise are invited to attend the Conference.

WORKING LANGUAGE

Working language of the Conference will be English.

ⁱ<http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/2015/en/home/index.html>

ⁱⁱhttps://www.coe.int/t/dg4/majorhazards/ressources/pub/Ethical-Principles-Publication_EN.pdf