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**EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT  
(EUR-OPA)**

**International Conference**

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

**9 – 11 December 2015**

**Sofia, Bulgaria**

**REPORT AND CONCLUSIONS**

[www.coe.int/euoparisks](http://www.coe.int/euoparisks)

**Mr Nikolov (Director of the General Fire Safety and Civil Protection Directorate)** welcomed the participants (see appendix 2) and wished them every success in their work. Reiterating his country's commitment to risk awareness education, he said that the aim of Bulgarian policy was to better prepare children to deal with such risks and that new curricula on this topic were currently being developed by the Ministry of Education.

## OPENING SPEECHES

**Mr Tsipov (Deputy Minister of Interior)** said that his presence was a clear sign of the importance attached by the Bulgarian government to risk awareness among children and young people, it being the duty of all governments to protect lives. The key to resilience was better preparedness, so developing a culture of prevention among young people was essential.

**Ms Spasova (Director of the Human Rights Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)** noted that this conference was one of its first events to take place during the Bulgarian Chairmanship, which had begun on 20 November. The main theme of the Bulgarian Chairmanship, in fact, was protecting fundamental rights in Europe and the opening of the conference coincided with Human Rights Day.

Among the various areas covered, the Bulgarian Chairmanship would focus in particular on three main objectives:

1. Protect children rights
2. Protect the media from external influence
3. Protect vulnerable groups through more inclusive societies

She pointed out that to invest in children was to invest in our future, and expressed support for the new Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021). She concluded by saying that she believed the conference was a good opportunity to identify both policy proposals and practical solutions related to child risk awareness.

**Mr Pla (Deputy Executive Secretary of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement)** thanked the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe for its help in bringing together a wide range of experts from 13 countries. He agreed that natural and technological disasters posed a particular threat to children, one that was often overlooked as its consequences (thankfully) seldom materialised.

He commended Bulgaria for its commitment to raising risk awareness among children and adolescents, a commitment that had been shared by the EUR-OPA Agreement since its inception in 1987. When considering how to protect more vulnerable population groups against risks, and in particular children, who had specific physical and psychological needs, a special approach was required in order to help them cope better with disasters.

A diverse range of experiences would contribute to our common thinking on how to improve children's disaster preparedness and a significant amount of time would be devoted to identifying promising ways to build such a culture of prevention through practical proposals. Only if there was sufficient co-operation between the different actors (pupils, teachers, principals, Civil Protection, parents, etc.), together with clearly defined objectives, could the safety of our societies in general and of children in particular be improved.

## PRESENTATIONS

Full versions of the presentations are available on the dedicated [webpage](#).

### Presentations session 1: Raising awareness through schools

**Georgi PETROV (Critical Infrastructure and Prevention Directorate, Fire Safety and Civil Protection Directorate General, Ministry of Interior, Bulgaria)** gave a presentation on preventive activities developed by the Bulgarian authorities for children and young people. Disaster protection role play and games had already been introduced in kindergartens and education on disaster protection was provided during class.

Twice a year, each school had special lessons on fire safety and disaster protection and real-time evacuation drills were organised. Awareness-raising outside school was provided through training courses and competitions, in particular:

- the youth fire brigades movement (involving youngsters aged from 12 to 16 years)
- an international children's drawing competition "I saw the disaster with my own eyes"
- a national student competition "Protection from disasters, fires and emergencies"
- fire safety week events

In addition, a safe school environment was promoted through the legal framework and associated activities.

In his presentation, **Christos ANTONIADES (Ministry of Education, Cyprus)** spoke about co-operation between the Civil Protection authorities and the Ministry of Education in Cyprus, in particular on earthquake safety in schools. Injuries and damage could be reduced or avoided entirely if appropriate preparedness measures were taken:

- Earthquake research for schools;
- Advance preparation and commitment of staff;
- Knowing what to do before and after an earthquake and practising it.

Earthquake drills were the most important type of preparedness and cost nothing to implement. Acting out what they had been taught would help pupils to remember what to do at the critical time. Regular visits to schools were essential in order to:

- inspect emergency supplies, fire extinguishers etc.;
- provide training in safety and first aid;
- assist in introducing/updating evacuation procedures/plans (with specific guidance for students with disabilities or special needs).

**Biljana CULAFIC (Principal of the elementary school "Vlado Milic", Podgorica, Montenegro)** stressed the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction courses for teachers. She outlined the three international courses run in Croatia under the auspices of the DPPI-SEE for teachers (mainly geography teachers) and principals in the region to inform them about risks (definitions, organisations, etc.) and build on that knowledge in order to develop practical tools for school activities related to DRR.

She also provided information about the measures taken in Montenegro by:

- the Directorate of Emergency Management, which had given presentations and run summer schools on disasters, drawn up evacuation plans, organised drills and published a manual;
- the Ministry of Education, which had introduced six DRR-related topics (emergency situations, geological hazards, hydro-meteorological hazards, fires, protection and rescue system, disaster prevention and preparedness) into several school subjects (geography, technical education, biology, etc.) at various levels.

**Tommaso PIACENTINI (Department of Engineering and Geology, University "G. D'Annunzio" of Chieti Pescara, Italy)** described the DRR work done by university lecturers in Italian schools according to:

- age: from primary school to secondary school (but also for school teachers);
- topics: geological and hydro-meteorological hazard and risks;
- type of activity: lessons, field trips, web games, awards, etc.;
- people involved: from small projects involving a single class to large projects involving several schools.

At primary level, activities included lessons and seminars, museum visits and field laboratories and easy-to-understand books for children and schools while at secondary level, other initiatives were organised such as the opportunity to become a "Geologist for a day" (coastal erosion, landslides, floods) or the Technical Scientific Observatory (lessons, labs, field trips). For both primary and secondary schools, UNIJUNIOR (a regional "university" for 8- to 14-year-olds) was attended by up a thousand pupils a year and training was also provided for school teachers through lessons, seminars, field trips and books.

Geology lessons could provide opportunities for civic education and for building a culture of disaster prevention because they encouraged children to look inside the earth. The work done by university lecturers in schools and the education of young people could serve as an international "bridge", helping to spread information about hazards and risks to families and the public at large: raising prevention awareness from a young age was crucial for Europe's future sustainability.

## **Presentations session 2: Raising awareness outside of schools**

**Milena IVANOVA (Expert in First Aid and Health Education, Bulgarian Red Cross/Bulgarian Red Cross Youth)** spoke about the training in first aid and disaster risk awareness and preparedness developed by the Bulgarian Red Cross. One of BRCY's main priority areas was providing first aid training for children. School First Aid Teams (266 teams of children aged between 12 and 14) had proved crucial. The regional and national competitions were a key motivator for future involvement in the Youth Emergency Teams.

The Youth Emergency Teams operated within the BRC, and were also part of the country's wider institutional disaster preparedness framework. There were 20 teams (consisting of between 5 and 20 well-trained volunteers, aged 18 or over) dotted around the country and the focus was on three areas:

- pre-disaster: disaster preparedness activities via lectures, demonstrations and simulations in schools and other institutions, and dissemination of information among the general public;
- during disaster: involvement in relief and shelter efforts, helping to collect data about the affected population and to assess their needs, rendering first aid and psychosocial support, if needed;
- post-disaster: supporting the community in the process of recovery.

Even if not directly involved in rescue operations during disasters, the Youth Emergency Teams supported the activities of professionals and rescue teams in the so-called "green zone" of the disaster, i.e. beyond its periphery, and in 2014 played a huge role in providing humanitarian assistance to flood victims.

**Marinos PAPADOPOULOS (Cyprus Civil Defence, Cyprus)** emphasised the importance of Internet resources for informing people about hazards, one example being the BeSafeNet initiative. The aim of this website was to provide teachers with an educational tool, focusing on risk prevention, preparedness, immediate response and rehabilitation. Its goals were to promote a culture of safety, replacing fear with a culture of preparedness, through an interactive multilingual tool enhanced by contributions from users.

The hazards were divided into three groups (natural, technological and specific) and the structure was the same for all three, with 12 predefined questions and associated answers at different levels. The information was currently available in 5 languages: English, French, Russian, Italian and Greek. The website could be promoted in schools in the countries concerned and users could contribute to it by suggesting additional material or exercises.

**Salina KABULOVA (Head of Department of International relations, the Russian Union of Rescuers, Russian Federation)** talked about DRR child-centred initiatives in the Russian Federation developed by the Russian Union of Rescuers. The organisation's youth wing, "School of Safety", involved over 5.5 million children in 25,000 national and international activities a year, and included specialist areas such as fire fighting, water rescue, etc.

"School of safety" was a practical component of the basic health and safety course taught in Russian schools and was divided into 3 steps (7-10 years; 11-14 years; 15-18 years). An international camp held in Russia from 31 July to 10 August 2015 and offering basic training in urban search and rescue brought together 15 teams from 10 countries to share experience, learn about lifesaving technologies and find out what it was like to work in a multinational rescue team.

The cadet corps (the youth Wing of RUOR) had 53 regional branches in Russia and over 12,000 volunteers. Young rescuers underwent constant training and were capable of responding in a professional manner to all kinds of emergencies, rescuing and protecting people and property and informing and guiding DRR measures and policies. With the capability to innovate and also to educate their families and the wider community about how to reduce the risk of disasters, they were credible stakeholders in disaster risk management at local and national level, including risk assessments, disaster risk management planning, monitoring and evaluation.

**Kolio KOLEV (Director of the European Centre for Risk Prevention, Sofia, Bulgaria)** reported on the potential of the booklet "Basic Knowledge of Nuclear Hazards" to raise awareness among children and young people, especially in areas close to nuclear plants. Based on the lessons learned from the Chernobyl and Fukushima accidents, the booklet sought to highlight the real dangers associated with radiological incidents and to educate readers about what to do in the event of such an incident.

Drawing on the expertise of various countries, the booklet had been distributed to a number of national authorities in an effort to promote its use in areas near nuclear plants. The material could also serve as a basis for alerting children and young people to this particular hazard without causing undue fear, by providing basic advice on the appropriate action to take.

### **Presentations session 3: Fostering school safety**

**Yelena BADALYAN (European Interregional Scientific and Educational Centre on Major Risk Management, Yerevan, Armenia)** looked at safety in schools and the best way to reach children through safety tests in schools and specific training for children. During school hours, those working inside the school (teachers, the school administration) would be the ones called upon first to respond to any emergency that might occur. Parents needed to know that the teachers, administration and their children had received proper training and were capable of responding appropriately to different types of emergencies.

Special tests were suggested as one possible way to ensure disaster preparedness in schools and other educational institutions and awareness raising, enabling school staff, teachers, pupils and their parents to respond appropriately to any emergency that might arise in the local area. These tests could pave the way for recommendations on reducing the vulnerability of schools, improving the capacity of the school staff and administration to take appropriate action in an emergency and reviewing and updating disaster preparedness plans, as well as on how to teach parents to recognise hazards and take preventive measures to reduce the risks for their children.

**Garry de la POMMERAI (Honorary Chair of the Global Task Force on Building Codes, UNESCO, United Kingdom)** gave a presentation on GADRRRES, a United Nations initiative to create Global Strategies for Safe Learning Facilities under the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools (WISS).

WISS was a country-led initiative to support and motivate safe schools implementation globally according to four key pillars of comprehensive school safety. A collective and co-ordinated approach to school safety was supported by Global Alliance partners through a technical support package. Its objectives were to motivate political commitment around school safety, to support governments in making school safety a priority as part of national strategies for disaster risk reduction or education plans, to provide technical assistance and particular expertise as required by governments, around the core pillars of safe school, to promote governments' good practices, expertise and achievements in safe school implementation for possible replication in other countries and regions.

The Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector and the Comprehensive School Safety Framework defined a "Safe School" as combining ALL of the following three components:

- Safe learning facilities (disaster-resilient infrastructure: risk and vulnerability assessment)
- School disaster management (preparedness measures, stockpiling, simulations, drills, evacuations, etc.)

- Disaster risk reduction and resilience education (integration of disaster risk reduction into school curriculum)

The expected outcomes were as follows:

- At least 10 governments engage as "Safe School Leaders".
- At least 100,000 schools are preliminary assessed through crowd-sourcing initiatives.
- Growing social demand for safe school implementation, in particular from children themselves and communities.
- A digital platform is developed as a collaborative Safe Schools web-based monitoring platform to collect data and track progress on school safety implementation globally.
- School safety is recognised as a priority in the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction and in Regional Platforms' political declarations.
- Regional partners support the development of tools and standards for school safety and support a co-ordinated delivery of the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools on the ground.

## GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### Discussion group 1: Raising awareness through schools

When it came to in-school activities, the approaches adopted seemed to be quite similar across the various countries. The inclusion of DRR in school curricula was important if learning of this kind was to become mandatory but:

- it was difficult to impose DRR education due to the lack of available time;
- often the education provided was too limited to be of any value;
- there was a lack of practical tools for implementing it.

The best alternative appeared to be to motivate teachers, as a way of reaching more students. School principals also had an important role to play in supporting teachers' initiatives and overcoming any resistance that there might be. Other countries' experience could be helpful in introducing awareness raising, as it provided schools with concrete examples to draw on.

The awareness raising needed to be introduced through a variety of schools subjects and over the years in order to increase its overall impact:

- DRR-sensitive subjects must be promoted to make it a truly transversal topic at school.
- A comprehensive teaching strategy through the ages needed to be introduced in order to develop a genuine culture of safety.

With the younger age groups, it was best to focus on teaching children what to do in the event of a disaster. In pre-school facilities, simple tools such as games, demonstrations, etc. could be used. Hazard description and information about risk reduction measures should be introduced later on as these were more complex topics.

The main goal was to develop the children's ability to understand and deal with risks, not to create fear. Focusing mainly on local risks made it easier to engage pupils and these lessons could later be extended to include other risks liable to arise when travelling to other regions and/or countries.

Teachers must be supported in this process through:

- greater visibility for DRR (media) to make it more socially relevant
- training on the topic in order to develop competences
  - include DRR in initial teacher training (essential for sustainability)
  - use professional training (mandatory) to introduce the topic
- the use of age-appropriate material
  - go beyond general guidelines
  - concentrate on tools rather than on recommendations
  - make greater use of new technologies
- a willingness to actively involve pupils in the strategy
  - treat prevention as a way to make DRR an everyday matter (cf. climate change adaptation and environment)
  - encourage teachers to guide pupils' online searches, to help them find the right sites
  - promote competitions that encourage co-operation

Parents needed to be better informed as they were a major source of support for such initiatives.

### **Discussion group 2: Raising awareness outside of schools**

The previous presentations had already illustrated some interesting, ground-breaking activities outside school:

1. Organising summer camps for children on safety, DRR, first aid, etc.
2. Promoting international/national/regional summer schools
3. Scout competitions, contests

A whole range of organisations could be used to promote such initiatives: international and national NGOs, governmental organisations, local authorities, schools themselves and even the private sector.

Another point worth emphasising was the attractiveness of Internet-based tools for young people. Alongside traditional websites (like Prevention Web or BeSafeNet) as major sources of information, social media were perceived as being less institutional while the fun aspect of e-games could help pupils assimilate basic information.

The adoption of new tools of this type called for a fresh approach when preparing the associated material. Pictures, short films, presentations, live-practice, animations, cartoons, outdoor games and competitions were far more effective tools than plain text.

While the Internet was a key instrument for reaching children, there was concern about the dangers of relying solely on virtual tools. Human support in using these tools was crucial as the Internet was not immune to inaccurate information and/or misinterpretation. It was important therefore that the e-learning tools be developed by professionals.

It should further be noted that in less developed countries, children did not have extensive access to the Internet and other (more traditional) ways to reach them should be explored: human support was even more important in such cases.

Parental involvement in raising risk awareness would appear to be another avenue worth pursuing but parents also needed to be trained before they in turn could train their children.

International organisations could play a major role in such activities as international camps, including interaction between experts and trainers. Knowledge exchange, information sharing, seminars and the production of new materials were other areas where they could make a significant contribution.

It was important that these new materials be interesting, user-friendly and tailored to the age group concerned. Training based on any such new materials should also be organised on a regular basis in order to get their message across.

### **Discussion group 3: School safety**

There was a need to identify innovative activities and various stakeholders should be involved in this process: United Nations, international and national NGOs, national school initiatives, teachers, children, parents, school governors, etc.

Risk assessment for educational facilities was crucial but it was more manageable in smaller countries than in large countries with schools located in remote areas. Simple tests should be introduced to quickly evaluate all potential risks. That implied a bottom-up approach, with a “red flag” function for teachers, maintenance staff, pupils and parents.

Building usage thus needed to be a factor in risk assessment, particularly where there had been significant changes in relation to the original intended use. The surrounding environment risks to schools should also be considered carefully as these could potentially affect escape routes, assembly points, emergency access (including fireworks, tyre storage, etc.).

The school administration had a crucial role to play where safety issues were concerned. It co-ordinated DRR activities/drills/etc. and must ensure capacity training for its teams as well as liaising with the competent authorities. Disaster management plans should be part of contingency planning and must contribute to risk reduction.

A specific contact person was certainly needed to deal with all these topics but he/she could only act as a co-ordinator, delegating duties to the most appropriate members of the disaster management team as a whole. Drills were an important tool but they were based on actual perception of the number and types of risks. To be fully effective, they must be adapted to the different kinds of events.

Once again, international organisations could play a specific role here by providing tools, expertise and wide-ranging experience. They could also help by injecting funds and support crowd sourcing in order to implement the necessary safety measures.

## **GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the conclusions of the three groups, as presented by a representative of each group, a more general debate got under way about the kind of action that ought to be promoted in the future.

### **On school education**

To really have an impact, it was important to train trainers who could then spread the message to a wider audience. Within the school community, teachers and principals could be a driving force in such training, with the health and safety of schools as a central theme.

Such training would be all the more effective if it were underpinned or accompanied by a legal framework in the form of national rules and regulations. To implement training properly, education ministries also needed tools in order to monitor DRR teaching.

As European legislation on health and safety was already in place, the simplest option was to link risk awareness to this existing legal framework. Worker protection could serve as a way to introduce DRR in schools as every principal had a statutory duty to protect his or her staff (and other persons who used the school premises).

Parents could be an important catalyst but judging from the Cypriot experience, the best way to involve parents was not by distributing leaflets and holding meetings. A better option was to invite them to specific activities (such as evacuation exercises, field trips, etc.) and liaise with parent associations in order to engage them in the long term.

Another potentially useful approach was to involve individuals who had already participated in awareness activities. It was also crucial to invite the media and politicians to any planned activities in order to increase the visibility of prevention-related issues.

It was important to make use of international institutions to organise exchanges and create clusters of schools, thus helping to combat isolation and increase effectiveness, while drawing on existing support mechanisms. Organising competitions appeared to be another highly effective means of sensitising children and young people to risks.

Another way in which DRR topics could be introduced into curricula was by incorporating them in the climate change awareness already being promoted in schools. Indeed, to be fully effective, and even though the connection might seem rather tenuous, DRR topics needed to be woven into various school subjects (history, physics, etc.) so that children could see the bigger picture.

### **On out-of-school education**

It was pointed out that it was important to build on existing “informal education” initiatives in the various structures/countries in order to promote successful risk awareness activities.

In particular, it was noted that school holidays were long and parents often worked during that period: part of that free time was spent by children in out-of-school structures, thus providing an opportunity for DRR-related activities. Longer initiatives (lasting several days or a week) could also be considered during summer holidays with, for example, summer schools or camps on DRR-related topics. Field trips to hazardous zones were another good way to illustrate not only the causes of hazards but also their potential consequences.

The material used in extracurricular teaching of this kind needed to be even more appealing: as well as being age-specific, it had to be user-friendly and easy to understand, with the emphasis on pictures and animations (cartoons and short films), games (outdoor and electronic), etc. as more attractive ways to convey the awareness message.

Grandparents could also be a useful source of information about past disasters and were able to teach children in ways that were quite different from those employed by professional teachers. Grandparents were effectively a database of experience and examples of the practical application of knowledge. In many cases, the process of learning was more important than the content itself.

### **On school safety**

Risk assessment in schools needed to be carried out systematically and regularly. While generally undertaken by professionals, such assessments would benefit greatly from a bottom-up approach to identifying emerging risks. Parents, many of whom would themselves have used the school facilities in the past, also had a part to play in day-to-day risk evaluation.

How buildings were used was clearly a crucial factor when developing school safety measures and consideration also needed to be given to the school's surroundings. Since the school administration had to deal with the overall safety aspect, it was essential that a team be set up to prepare for and respond to potential disasters.

The need for more tailor-made activities was also highlighted. Evacuation drills must be adapted to each specific risk and small-scale but frequent events must also be considered. Although less common than in developing countries, remote schools and their specific needs also had to be considered in Europe.

### **General conclusions**

In order to summarise the various contributions and the wide-ranging discussions, the organisers presented the participants with a set of conclusions for approval (see Appendix 3).

On behalf of the Bulgarian authorities, Antoaneta Boycheva thanked all the speakers for their interesting presentations and the fruitful discussions that these had generated among the participants. She also wished to reiterate the Bulgarian authorities' commitment to developing awareness among children and looked forward to further developments in line with the conference's findings.

The Executive Secretariat of the Agreement, on behalf of all the participants, also wished to thank the Bulgarian authorities for their hospitality and confirmed its intention to use the conference findings to further its long-term work on child and youth awareness. It was important, in this context, to be better informed about what member states were doing so as to build on existing good practice and try to fill any remaining gaps.



## APPENDIX 1: AGENDA

### **WEDNESDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2015**

09:00 – 18:00 Arrival of participants

19:30 – 22:30 **Welcome dinner**

### **THURSDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2015**

09:00 – 9:30 Registration

09:30 – 10:00 Opening addresses:

- Mr Krasimir TSIPOV, Deputy Minister of Interior, Bulgaria
- Mr Nikolay NIKOLOV, Director of the General Fire Safety and Civil Protection Directorate, Ministry of Interior, Bulgaria
- Ms Maria SPASOVA, Director of Human Rights Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bulgaria
- Mr Francesc PLA, Deputy Executive Secretary of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, Council of Europe

10:00 – 10:30 **Coffee break and group photo**

10:30 – 11:30 **Presentations session 1: Raising awareness through schools**

- ❖ Georgi PETROV, Critical Infrastructure and Prevention Directorate, Fire Safety and Civil Protection Directorate General, Ministry of Interior, Bulgaria  
*Preventive Activities With Children And Young People*
- ❖ Christos ANTONIADES, Ministry of Education, Cyprus  
*Co-operation between the Civil Protection authority and the Ministry of Education in Cyprus*
- ❖ Biljana CULAFIC, Principal of the elementary school "Vlado Milic", Podgorica, Montenegro  
*Disaster Risk Reduction for Teachers Course*
- ❖ Tommaso PIACENTINI, Department of Engineering and Geology, University "G. D'Annunzio" of Chieti Pescara, Italy  
*University lecturers' work in schools: case studies in Italy*

11:30 – 12:30 **Presentations session 2: Raising awareness outside of schools**

- ❖ Milena IVANOVA, Expert First Aid and Health Education, Bulgarian Red Cross/Bulgarian Red Cross Youth  
*Training and involving children and young people in first aid and disaster risk awareness and preparedness activities*
- ❖ Marinos PAPADOPOULOS, Cyprus Civil Defence, Cyprus  
*Internet resources on hazards: the BeSafeNet initiative*
- ❖ Zalina KABULOVA, Head of Department of International Relations, The Russian Union of Rescuers, Russian Federation  
*"School of Safety" – building a culture of safety and resilience, based on the DRR child-centred initiatives of the Russian Union of Rescuers*  
*Pan-Russian youth movement "School of Safety", Russian Union of Rescuers*
- ❖ Kolio KOLEV, Director of the European Centre for Risk Prevention (ECRP), Sofia, Bulgaria  
*Basic Knowledge on Nuclear Hazards: lessons learned from Chernobyl and Fukushima*

12:30 – 14:00 **Lunch**

14:00 – 15:00 **Presentations Session 3: Fostering school safety**

- ❖ Yelena BADALYAN, European Interregional Scientific and Educational Centre on Major Risk Management (ECRM), Yerevan, Armenia  
*Safety in schools: finding the right way to reach children*
- ❖ Garry de la POMMERAI, Honorary Chair of the Global Task Force on Building Codes, UNESCO, United Kingdom  
*GADRRRES: Creating Global Strategies for Safe Learning Facilities*

15:00 – 15:30 **Coffee break**

15:30 – 17:00 Three discussion groups on the session topics

17:30 – 19:30 Tour of Sofia city centre

20:00 – 22:00 **Official dinner**

## **FRIDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2015**

09:30 – 10:30 Discussion group findings

10:30 – 11:30 General discussion on the conclusions of the Conference

11:30 – 12:00 Close of the Conference

12:00 – 13:00 **Lunch**

13:00 Departure

## **Appendix 2: List of participants**

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### **Appendix 3: Conclusions**



#### ***International Conference on***

#### ***Building a culture of prevention through disaster risk awareness improvement among children and adolescents***

**9 – 11 December 2015**

***Sofia, Bulgaria***

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

The International Conference on building a culture of prevention through disaster risk awareness improvement among children and adolescents was held at the Vitosha Park Hotel conference centre in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 10 and 11 December 2015.

The conference was organised and hosted by the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, in particular DG Fire Safety and Civil Protection, together with the Secretariat of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, as part of a series of initiatives during the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The aim of the conference, namely to bring together experts and practitioners to take stock of progress and good practices and to continue expanding facilities for building a culture of prevention with a view to improving the resilience of children and adolescents to disasters, was achieved. The conference also marked the start of the Medium Term Plan 2016-2020 of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement EUR-OPA.

Representatives of member states of the EUR-OPA Agreement and experts from the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science and other national institutions with relevant expertise in the field of education and disaster risk awareness among children and adolescents participated in the event.

Based on the various presentations and subsequent discussions, the participants concluded that there was a need to:



- Promote the inclusion of DRR training in future school curricula in order to foster overall risk awareness among future generations

*Bulgaria's long experience of implementing specific DRR curricula at all school levels showed that such an approach was feasible and effective, even at national level.*

- Encourage initiatives by principals and teachers to develop specific DRR education measures in schools, in particular through relevant teacher training and extracurricular activities

*The Croatian-led initiatives within DPPI-SEE aimed at directly involving principals and teachers in the region in DRR training would seem to be a good way to promote such initiatives.*

- Support the efforts of everyone involved (at local, national and international level) in specific actions of this kind by providing them with appropriate tools to facilitate implementation

*The work done by university lecturers in primary and secondary schools in Italy was felt to be a good example of how to improve pupils' knowledge of hazards.*

- Facilitate the launch of ground-breaking initiatives outside school such as school-holiday activities devoted to DRR, first aid and safety

*The Russian experience in developing summer camps (both national and international) would seem to be a successful example of out-of-school schemes to increase youth awareness.*

- Capitalise on the opportunities afforded by new technologies and support mechanisms which were more attractive to children and adolescents

*The use in the BeSafeNet initiative of the Internet as a way to disseminate basic knowledge about hazards demonstrated the potential of these new tools for teachers and for self-training.*

- Involve parents and grandparents in all DRR activities, so as to benefit from their knowledge and experience

*The Armenian effort to involve parents in school safety evaluation tests showed the value of co-operation between parents and school administrations in this area.*

- Encourage schools to appoint a focal point to co-ordinate and delegate the development of a comprehensive DRR strategy.

*The Cypriot experience of involving selected teachers and/or administrative officers in each school would seem to be a good way to encourage DRR implementation.*

- Take particular care to consider indirect effects on school safety, such as changes to building use and/or environmental risks, in contingency planning and when updating risk assessments.

*The UK's decision to avoid siting colliery spoil tips near schools after the 1966 Aberfan disaster highlighted the importance of considering the surrounding area as well.*

- Encourage collaborative use of existing resources through greater interaction between schools in addressing all DRR-related issues

*The development of the UNISDR-led "Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools" was seen as a great opportunity for networking within interested schools all over Europe.*

- Develop practical initiatives within the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement 2016-17 work plan to promote the above proposals.

*The collection of actual experiences within member states would help to identify significant gaps and enable appropriate tools to be developed to bridge them.*

The participants also wished to thank the Bulgarian authorities for the expert manner in which they had organised the conference and for their hospitality.