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## European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)

Conference on  
Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the context of major risks prevention  
and management

organised in cooperation with the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, the  
Intercultural Cities Programme, the support of the INGO Conference of the Council  
of Europe and the Portuguese authorities

14 October 2016

Ismaili Centre  
Lisbon, Portugal

REPORT

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

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## Background and aim of the Conference<sup>1</sup>

Through its EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, the Council of Europe is promoting improvements in emergency planning, disaster response and risk mitigation for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

International population movements pose a challenge to member States in particular in the context of disaster risk management for vulnerable groups. Policies and practices have to be adjusted for the greater mobility of people, and the increasingly complex relationship between risk and mobility. For those currently working in civil protection, this is an unfamiliar issue. Many agencies seem to be responding to situations instead of anticipating them. Civil protection organisations need to take the specific needs of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees into account in their interventions.

Migration is predominantly an urban issue, since towns and cities are the main destination for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. A broad-based, flexible and inclusive approach is taken, looking beyond the current refugee crisis. Civil protection should work with many other support organisations and groups, including the formal and informal organisations of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers themselves. There is an important role for civil society organisations of many kinds to give practical help, show solidarity and cultural exchange.

This conference was organised by the Council of Europe in close cooperation with its North-South Centre, the Intercultural Cities Programme, the support of the INGO Conference and the Portuguese authorities. The participants included policy makers, representatives of local, regional and national governments, agencies, voluntary associations (mainly in civil protection and care and assistance of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers), INGOs, the Intercultural cities network, academics, and other stakeholders working with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and in disaster risk reduction.

A compilation of good practices, guidelines for action and a declaration with recommendations for action across Europe was discussed at the conference: these documents were formally adopted at the 13th Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (Lisbon, 26 October 2016). There were also discussions on how to take forward initiatives in this field in order to improve the quality of services designed to support migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who are confronted with emergencies or disaster risk.

The results of this project will be a contribution to The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.coe.int/en/web/europarisks/20161014\\_conference\\_migrants](http://www.coe.int/en/web/europarisks/20161014_conference_migrants)



## Opening of the Conference

Greeting messages were received from: Mr Panagiotis KOUROUMPLIS, Minister of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction, Greece; and Mr Tomas BOCEK, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, Council of Europe.

Welcome speeches were given by Mr João AFONSO, Deputy Mayor for Social Rights, Lisbon, Portugal; Dr Eladio FERNANDEZ-GALIANO, Head of the Democratic Initiatives Department, Acting Executive Secretary, European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), Council of Europe; Dr Jean-Marie HEYDT, Chair of the Executive Committee of the North-South Centre; and Mr Nazim AHMAD, Ismaili Imamat and Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) representative.

## Session 1. Political commitment

The conference heard six presentations on this topic. Dr Pedro CALADO (High Commissioner for Migration, Government of Portugal) reviewed Portugal's integration policies for migrants and the factors contributing to their success. Ms Paola ALBRITO (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction – UNISDR) discussed the issue of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the context of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Dr Stephen CURZON (DG-ECHO Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, European Commission) outlined the policy instruments and actions of the European Commission for dealing with refugee issues in Europe. Ms Anna RURKA (Chair, INGO Conference, Council of Europe) explained how the quality of interaction between public authorities and civil society organisations, which was respectful of human rights and of the needs of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, was a very strong success factor for migration policy. Dr Nikolaos SITAROPOULOS (Deputy to the Director, Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights) discussed the importance of respect of Council of Europe human rights standards in mitigating migration risks. Mr Duarte MARQUES (PACE) considered parliamentary action to address problems arising from forced migration.

## Session 2. Keynote speech

Mr Vangelis AVGOULAS, Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform, Greece, addressed the conference on the subject of major risks, the refugee/migration crisis and vulnerable social groups, highlighting the need for improved management and social integration. This was followed by a question-and-answer session with participants.

### Session 3. Project outcomes

Dr Mechthilde FUHRER, EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, Council of Europe, Mr Tony VARO, Dr John TWIGG, Prof. Bertrand PAUVERT, Prof. Audrey MOREL SENATORE and Mr Silvio SAGRAMOLA, Members of the Working Group of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) project “Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the context of major risks prevention and management” introduced the project outputs, which comprise:

- A report, ‘Migrants, Refugees, Asylum Seekers: Inclusion in Disaster Preparedness and Response’;
- Guidelines for Assisting Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees during emergencies and disasters;
- Recommendations on the Inclusion of Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees in disaster preparedness and response;
- Compilation of inspiring examples on Major Hazards and Migrants: their Involvement in Disaster Preparedness and Response.

An open floor discussion followed and the conference acknowledged these documents, to be submitted to the EUR-OPA Committee of Permanent Correspondents on 25 October 2016 and adopted at the 13th Ministerial Session of EUR-OPA on 26 October 2016 in Lisbon.

### Session 4. Practical experiences

In this session, participants heard presentations on a variety of organisational and personal experiences relating to the conference topic.

Mr Jérôme HAMILIUS (Director for European Cooperation & Strategy, Council of Europe Development Bank - CEB) described the CEB’s recent activities and experience in the field of migrants and refugees. Ms Lisette ROBLES (Keio University, Japan) drew on experiences in Japan about developing migrant-inclusive disaster risk reduction and recovery processes, identifying the importance of social capital. Dr Khadija QESMOUN (Centre for studies and research in the social sciences, Morocco) discussed regulation, integration and the fight against illegal immigration in Morocco’s immigration policy. Mr Franck IYANGA (ODT, Morocco) shared the experiences of a trade union of migrant workers. Mr Jean-Michel CAUDRON (FIAPA, France, INGO Conference) spoke about the need for response teams to support older people in emergencies internationally, describing the effectiveness of such efforts in response to emergencies in France and Italy. Ms Carmen Diego GONÇALVES (Jesuit Refugee Service, Portugal) described her organisation’s work in the reception of migrants and refugees in Portugal, and associated efforts to increase their resilience. Mr Daniel GUERY (MIAMSI, France, INGO Conference) made a number of observations on what is required to ensure better protection of the rights of migrants and to help them integrate into host societies. Mr Jean-Luc SIMON and Mr Mohammed HANNAN (DPI, France, INGO Conference) drew attention to the experiences and needs of disabled migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

The presentations were followed by a general discussion among the participants.

## Session 5. Co-ordination

Dr Alex ROBINSON spoke on the subject of opportunities for inclusion of migrants and refugees with disabilities under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Dr Robert ROZINSKY (Landesverteidigungsakademie, Austria) discussed multilingualism and intercultural competence as a contribution to the security and integration of adult migrants. Ms Bodil Høyer DAMSGAARD (The International Association of Social Educators, Denmark) gave a presentation on social educators' work with refugees and asylum seekers who are minors, noting the importance of building on young people's strengths and capacities. Prof. William YULE (King's College London, United Kingdom) raised awareness of the needs of displaced and unaccompanied minors.

## Session 6. Strategic planning and enlarging the vision

Ms Chiara BIANCHIZZA (ISIG, Italy) discussed the use of the SeAT social vulnerability self-assessment tool, developed by the ECOSTRESS project funded by DG ECHO. Mr Akiyoshi KIKUCHI (Multicultural Society Coordinator, Sendai, Japan) shared his organisation's experiences of promoting multicultural collaboration for disaster prevention, which has included: providing disaster-related multi-lingual information for foreign residents and travellers, establishing a multi-lingual support centre for disasters, and establishing a volunteer network (mostly migrants). Mr Malte SCHÖNEFELD (University of Greifswald, Germany) described the "Rettung, Hilfe und Kultur" (Rescue, Aid & Culture) initiative to improve the cultural competence of civil protection staff.

## Session 7. Poster presentations and videos

In addition to the conference's formal sessions, poster presentations were given by:

Mr Viktor POYARKOV, European Centre of Technological Safety (TESEC), Ukraine; Dr Diana REINERS and Prof. Dr. Gilles RECKINGER, University of Innsbruck, Austria; Dr Lorenzo GUADAGNO, IOM/MICIC, Switzerland; Dr Alessandro BARELLI, CEMEC, San Marino; Dr Radostina PRIMOVA, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Germany; and Mr Sofoklis PANAGIOTOU, Smile of Child, Greece.

Two videos were specifically produced for that Conference: Their titles: Hakim and Bandiougou. The authors are Bandiougou Traore and Hakim Arezki.

The stories are: Bandiougou comes from Mali. Blind, he chose to join family members in France to study economics, live independently and flourish in society. Hakim, Algerian Kabyle, lost sight in 2001 in a student demonstration. Wounded by a bullet, he wakes up in a hospital in France where he was transported by his family.

## Session 8. Closing the conference

Mr Tony VARO, Chairperson of the EUR-OPA Permanent Correspondents and chair of the conference, brought the event to a close. In his concluding remarks, he observed that migrants, refugees and asylum seekers had the same rights to protection in a disaster as any other citizen. Emergency services had a duty to assist everyone in need without discrimination. Human rights could not be set aside in crisis situations. Ways must be found to integrate the most vulnerable into strategies and plans for risk reduction and emergency response, to make sure that nobody was left behind. As this project and conference had shown, there were many examples of good practice that could be adopted, but there was a need for further collaboration between different organisations and groups, and to involve migrants themselves.

## APPENDIX I: CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS BY DR JOHN TWIGG, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

International migration is growing as the result of globalisation, environmental change, conflict and other factors. In 2010, international migrants totalled 210 million people or 3.1% of the world's population.<sup>2</sup> Such population movements present a present and future challenge to vulnerability reduction. Migration is also predominantly an urban problem, since towns and cities are the main destination for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

For those currently working in civil protection in Europe, this is an unfamiliar problem. There is a limited evidence base (research and practice), both in Europe and globally. Disaster risk management policy and practice will have to adjust to the much greater mobility of people, and the increasingly complex relationship between risk and mobility. This will require more imaginative and flexible approaches.

The results of the two expert questionnaires presented at this meeting show that civil protection organisations do not take the specific needs of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees into account in their interventions. There seems to be little or no institutional contact with these groups. Discussions in the workshop indicate that there is even some uncertainty about how to define or categorise different groups of displaced and migrating people. It is not always clear which institutions are responsible for different types of 'non-citizen' and especially for their different needs.

Civil protection agencies are therefore at the start of a steep 'learning curve'. They are beginning to develop, pilot and introduce new approaches, but so far we have little evidence of 'good practice'. Many agencies seem to be responding to situations instead of anticipating them.

The 'voice' of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees is missing in these discussions. This is a significant gap, with implications for good policy and practice. We know very little about them: their stories, views, needs, priorities, and the challenges they face. Much more research data and understanding are needed. Like everyone else, they have a right to be involved in decisions that affect them, as participants and not merely beneficiaries.

Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have different legal status although they often face similar problems, which they may share with other marginalised, socially excluded and disadvantaged groups. They have varied yet intersecting vulnerabilities, according to differences in gender, age, ethnicity, education, socio-economic class, etc. The challenges they face also vary at different stages in their journeys (displacement/flight – transit – settlement). They have complex identities, which outsiders cannot easily imagine or understand: just as they may be 'outsiders' to supporting agencies, so staff in those agencies are also 'outsiders' to them. They have their own networks and social capital, which are often invisible to formal agencies. They also possess considerable capacities and resourcefulness that enable them to cope with adversity, adapt to difficult situations and recover: it is important to capitalise on these.

Therefore, there can be no single approach or strategy to this issue. A broad-based, flexible and inclusive approach is needed, which looks beyond the current refugee crisis. Improved communication is fundamental and existing approaches must be developed and scaled up. Above all, there should be an integrated approach, going further than conventional inter-service collaboration. Civil protection should work with many other support organisations and groups (e.g. those working on rights and social welfare, cultural and religious organisations), including the formal and informal

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<sup>2</sup> Foresight (2011), *Migration and Global Change: final project report*. London: Government Office for Science

organisations of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers themselves. There is an important role for civil society organisations of many kinds to give practical help, solidarity and cultural exchange.

Trust is a key issue. It is not surprising that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees distrust officials and official organisations. New relationships should be created between these groups. This will be challenging, especially with media stereotyping and political rhetoric creating an atmosphere of hostility.

Although there are difficult challenges, particularly in a very dynamic, rapidly changing context, there are also reasons for optimism. The issue of the vulnerabilities and capacities of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees has emerged in public policy statements and discussions (for instance, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction) and governments and civil protection organisations are seeking ways of addressing the challenge. There are also precedents for managing migrant and refugee problems on this scale in Europe: more than 60 million people were displaced during and after the Second World War, and a great variety of organisations, formal and informal, played a significant role in feeding, sheltering and caring for them.





APPENDIX V- List of Participants – 14 October 2017

Title	Family Name <sup>2</sup>	First Name	Organisation	Country
Mr	AFONSO	João	Câmara Municipal de Lisboa	Portugal
Ms	AITKEN	Eline	Interpreter	
Mr	ALEXANDER	David E.	University College London	United Kingdom
Ms	ALFARO	Christina	Câmara Municipal de Lisboa	Portugal
Mr	AVGOULAS	Vangelis	Law Office	Greece
Mr	BARELLI	Alessandro	ImMigrants Project	San Marino
Ms	BIANCHIZZA	Chiara	Institute of International Sociology	Italy
Mr	CALADO	Pedro	Government of Portugal	Portugal
Mr	CAUDRON	Jean-Michel	FIAPA	France
Mr	DEL BIANCO	Daniele	Institute of International Sociology	Italy
Ms	DIEGO GONÇALVES	Carmen	JRS-Portugal	
Mr	ELBARGHATI	Taha	Centre for the Cooperation in the Mediterranean	spain
Mrs	EMEZIE	Catherine	European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement	France
Mr	FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO	Eladio	European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement	France
Ms	FREITAS	Anna	Civil Protection	Portugal
Ms	FUHRER	Mechthilde	European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement	
Ms	GOUVEIA HOMEM	Catarina	Câmara Municipal de Lisboa / Lisbon City Council	Portugal
Mr	GUADAGNO	Lorenzo	International Organization for Migration	Switzerland
Mr	GUERY	Daniel	MIAMSI	France
Mr	HAMILIUS	Jérôme	Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)	France
Mr	HANNAN	Mohammed	Disabled Persons International - Europe Region	France
Mr	HEYDT	Jean-Marie	Executive Committee, North-South Centre	France
Mr	HØYER DAMSGAARD	Bodil	AIEJI	Denmark
Mr	IYANGA MAKELO	Franck	ORGANISATION DEMOCRATIQUE DES TRAVAILLEURS IMMIGRES AU MAROC(1er et unique syndicat des travailleurs immigrés au Maroc, au Maghreb et en Afrique)	Morocco

Title	Family Name2	First Name	Organisation	Country
Ms	JUDICE	Manuela	Câmara Municipal de Lisboa	Portugal
Mr	KIKUCHI	Akiyoshi	Sendai Tourism, Convention and International association	Japan
Ms	KVAM	Per Arne	Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection (DSB)	Norway
Ms	LEBEL	Sebastien	Protection Civile Française	France
Mr	MARQUES	Duarte	PACE	
Ms	NUNES MEXIA	Maria Assuncao	MIAMSI	Portugal
Ms	OLSVIK	Elise Anonby	Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection	Norway
Ms	OUEDRAOGO	Lea	Interpreter	
Mr	PANAGIOTOU	Sofoklis	The Smile of the Child	Greece
Ms	PAPPA	Lora	METAdrasi	Greece
Mr	PAUVERT	Bertrand	Université de Haute-Alsace	France
Mr	POIARKOV	Viktor	Europea centre of technological safety	Ukraine
Ms	PRIMOVA	Radostina	Heinrich-Böll-Foundation EU office	Belgium
Ms	QESMOUN	Khadija	FIAPA	France
Ms	RECKINGER	Gilles	University of Innsbruck	Luxembourg
Ms	REINERS	Diana	Association Européenne des Enseignants	Luxembourg
Mr	ROBINSON	Alex	Independent consultant	Indonesia
Ms	ROBLES	Lisette	Keio University	Japan
Ms	ROOZE	Magda	European Federation of Psychologists Associations EFPA/Arq Psychotrauma Expert Group	Netherlands
Ms	RUBICONDO-KHOVANOVA	Kseniya	ICC-UA Intercultural Cities Network, Ukraine	Luxembourg
Ms	RURKA	Anna	INGO Conference of the Council of Europe	France
Mr	SAGRAMOLA	Silvio	Info-Handicap	Luxembourg
Ms	SCHIMECK	Christiane	Council of Europe	France
Mr	SCHOENEFELD	Malte	University of Greifswald	Germany

Title	Family Name2	First Name	Organisation	Country
Ms	SENATORE	Audrey	ENSOSP	France
Mr	SIMON	Jean-Luc	Disabled Persons International - Europe Region	France
Mr	SITAROPOULOS	Nikolaos	Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights	France
Ms	SPIROPOULOU	Dafni	Reception and Identification Service, Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction of Greece	Greece
Mr	TWIGG	John	University College London	United Kingdom
Mr	VARO	Tony	Corps des sapeurs-pompiers de Monaco	Monaco
Mr	VOLOT	François Xavier	Protection Civile Française	France