

# MAJOR HAZARDS, MIGRANTS, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

## Their inclusion in Disaster Preparedness and Management



# **MAJOR HAZARDS, MIGRANTS, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES**

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Preparedness and Management**

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French edition:

*Risques majeurs, migrants, demandeurs  
d'asile et réfugiés: leur inclusion dans la  
préparation et la gestion des catastrophes*

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# Introduction

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**M**igrants, asylum seekers and refugees constitute a significant and growing proportion of the general population of countries in Europe. When major incidents and disasters occur, they face the same hardship as other affected people, but they can suffer additionally from isolation, neglect or discrimination.

■ There is an indisputable moral and ethical case for an inclusive approach that guarantees migrants, asylum seekers and refugees equal rights with the rest of the population with regard to care and support in crises and throughout the disaster cycle. This may require some reorientation of the way that civil protection services are planned and delivered.

■ In emergency preparedness and contingency planning, the locations, needs and vulnerabilities of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees should be given consideration. Adequate organisation, resources and manpower to assist them should be put in place, at all levels from national to local. Civil protection actors should receive training in intercultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. Linguistically and culturally appropriate communication and education programmes about risks, emergency procedures and services should be implemented.

■ Civil protection planning and emergency assistance should be co-ordinated and integrated with other specialist services that provide welfare and support to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, such as healthcare institutions, social services and civil society. For better communication, mutual understanding and building trust, it is essential to involve migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and the organisations that represent them, in counter-disaster programming. Migrants' skills and coping capacities should also be recognised and utilised.

■ Countries in Europe and the Mediterranean area are working hard to improve their disaster preparedness and emergency management. However, little has been done to include migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and their organisations in relevant frameworks and practical programmes of action, and their views are rarely heard. Nevertheless, as this document shows, there are models and examples of good practice from Europe and around the world that could inspire improved practice and outcomes.

■ In conclusion, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and the organisations that serve and represent them, need to be drawn into the civil protection and emergency management process. Preparing for disasters with them, and on their behalf, requires political commitment, national, regional and local co-ordination, strategic planning, networking, knowledge management, optimisation of resources and the development of good communication strategies. With this in view the Council of Europe, through the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement and its member States, has developed these guidelines and recommendations.

# Key requirements

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*for the attention of European policy makers*

1. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are entitled to the same support as the the general population, on the principle of equal rights for all, and consistent with international human rights law.
2. There should be national policies, legal frameworks, plans and programmes to assist and protect migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in emergencies, with assigned responsibilities for implementation at national, regional and local levels, and co-ordination with other support agencies.
3. Planning for protection and assistance of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in emergencies should involve political authorities, public administrators, civil protection authorities, the private sector, civil society organisations and representative migrant groups and organisations.
4. Planning should take into account migrant populations' locations, living conditions, vulnerabilities and needs, together with the obstacles they may face in accessing assistance, for example because of language barriers, or lack of financial resources, information and documentation, or fear of arrest or discrimination.
5. Emergency plans should recognise the heterogeneity of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees as individuals with specific needs, rather than as groups or categories.
6. Particular attention should be given to situations in urban areas, where the majority of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees reside, and to invisible and highly mobile populations.
7. Civil protection staff and volunteers should be trained in cultural diversity, intercultural communication and awareness, and should seek to establish relationships of trust with migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.
8. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees should be recruited and trained as staff, volunteers and advisors, including making full use of the linguistic and technological skills of young people.

9. Migrants' skills and capacities should be recognised and utilised, including their social networks and experiences in dealing with crises and overcoming hardship.
10. Communication and public education programmes about risks, emergency procedures and services should be designed specifically for non-native speakers, through community outreach, written and oral translation, graphics and other innovative communication tools.
11. Negative stereotypes about migrants, asylum seekers and refugees should be challenged through advocacy, and positive communication should be encouraged to promote improved inter-community relationships that will be valuable in crisis planning and response.
12. Procedures should be put in place to ensure that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are protected from exploitation, discrimination, abuse and violence throughout the disaster cycle (prevention, preparedness, response and recovery).

# The inclusion of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in disaster preparedness and response

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**T**he globalisation and internationalisation of our societies, combined with the rapid growth in communication technologies, are revealing a gradual change in attitudes with regard to how foreigners are seen. The recent international success of many European athletes with migrant backgrounds (for example, the Rio Olympics)<sup>1</sup> and the success of some actors tie in with this change, and prejudices are tending to decline. Foreigners, whether migrants, asylum seekers or refugees, are beginning to be better accepted and integrated in European societies. While such recognition is valuable for presenting a different image of foreigners, everyone nevertheless realises that these individual successes are in no way representative of the situation of a large proportion of the migrants, asylum seekers and refugees living in our societies. In particular, the mass influx of refugees and migrants which Europe has been experiencing for several years is now a major challenge for all Council of Europe member states. While all states have taken action to provide support and assistance for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, concentrating them in certain places can produce a situation that could threaten both their well-being and their rights under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The political importance of this issue to the Council of Europe led the organisation to appoint a Special Representative on Migration and Refugees at the beginning of 2016.<sup>2</sup>

■ Nevertheless, international instruments on individual rights usually apply without reference to the nationality of the rights holders.<sup>3</sup> The process of European construction is also based on the principle of freedom of movement and the elimination of any discrimination on the grounds of nationality. Equality tends, therefore, to be achieved in economic and social terms, owing to the substantial lobbying work done by organisations operating in the social field throughout the world. Regardless of their various statuses, people of foreign origin are no longer “invisible citizens” and are demanding their right to be present in all areas of life in society.

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1. Pautot, M., 2014, 2016; Simon, G, ed., 2014.

2. Ambassador Tomáš Božek was appointed Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees. He is responsible for gathering information on the basic rights of migrants and refugees in Europe, including through fact-finding visits, and making proposals for action. He took up his duties on 1 February 2016.

3. See, in particular, Article 1 and 14 of the ECHR; the same applies to the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

■ In spite of this favourable trend, however, discrimination still exists and there has been an increase in hate speech and hostile conduct towards migrants for some years now. This is reflected in an upsurge in attacks on reception centres and other accommodation facilities. As stated by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, “the overall situation highlights the need to combat racist violence and hate speech and implement effective integration strategies.”<sup>4</sup> Because they are facing a difficult economic situation, many countries are implementing austerity measures and budget cuts. This reduction in financial resources has affected the institutions seeking to prevent and combat racism and intolerance while the relevant tasks and problems have continued to grow. In some countries, there have also been reductions in social benefits. Against this difficult background, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are in competition with other groups of potentially disadvantaged individuals who are also looking for jobs or attempting to remain in work (workers on insecure contracts, older workers, people from disadvantaged social backgrounds and the long-term unemployed).

■ Although it is not possible to give an exact figure, there are sufficiently large numbers of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in European societies for them to form significant minorities in some cases. They account for approximately 15% of the population in most European countries.<sup>5</sup> This figure is also up substantially on 2012,<sup>6</sup> given the recent mass influx of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. From a legal point of view, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees as groups all belong to the single category of “foreigners”; nevertheless, this term is not entirely relevant here because cross-border workers, immigrants and lawful residents, and even citizens of foreign origin could be added. The number of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees may therefore vary substantially depending on the definition and calculation methods employed; it is becoming very difficult to assess the real figures, especially since some migrants’ position is unlawful under the legislation on residence and they therefore cannot be counted.<sup>7</sup> It may therefore be said that in some countries in Europe almost one person in five could fall into the category of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. As pointed out by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), “The term ‘migration’ is used here to cover the broad spectrum of different reasons that led people to leave their country of origin. While many migrants received refugee status in the recipient countries, others had their asylum claims rejected or, in some cases, did not submit an application for asylum in the first place.”<sup>8</sup> In addition, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees may also be economically disadvantaged in relation to other members of society through the difficulties they face in finding suitable employment, always assuming they are entitled to work. Moreover, dealing with the demands of daily life may be more complex than for nationals and lawful residents, if only for linguistic or cultural reasons.

■ With regard to civil protection and crises, progress is particularly slow as regards the inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and major crisis

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4. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2015, p. 10.

5. Eurostat, *Migration and migrant population statistics*, May 2016.

6. Eurostat, *Asylum statistics*, April 2016.

7. Eurostat, *Statistics on enforcement of immigration legislation*, October 2015.

8. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, *ibid.*, p. 7.

preparedness and management. Crises or disasters in particular and emergency or exceptional situations in general often have the effect of turning ordinary life upside down and may foster an upsurge in prejudice or discrimination. However, if the emergency services and the public authorities so desire, it is possible to make organisational arrangements for taking better account of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and major crisis preparedness, planning and management.

■ This publication seeks to give an overview of the current situation in terms of the inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in major disaster preparedness and management, given that their situation as a particularly vulnerable group exposes them to an additional risk of harm in the event of disasters. In particular, the aim is to see whether the emergency and rescue services take proper account of these groups so as to foster their resilience.

■ The publication therefore begins by defining migrants, asylum seekers and refugees as a group so as to clarify the ethical issues concerning the right of these individuals to enjoy an acceptable level of protection when disasters or major crises occur. This is followed by consideration of the institutional framework put in place by states to ensure equal protection for migrants. We see that there is a lack of any specific consideration by states of the circumstances of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management, on the part both of the emergency services and of the authorities. Given this situation, it is necessary to improve the theoretical and practical training for emergency and rescue service personnel, the key aspect being proper planning that takes account of the existence and circumstances of migrants. Lastly, account must be taken of the various examples of good practices which must be continually adapted in line with new circumstances and environments. The publication shows that there is much scope for improving emergency preparedness for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and the arguments for doing so are indisputable.

## **Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees – definitions, facts and figures**

■ The 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees provides that a refugee is any person who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”<sup>9</sup> In the case of migrants, there is no standard legal definition at international level, but “migrants” are generally described as people who leave or flee their home countries and go somewhere else – usually abroad – to seek better or safer surroundings. Migration may be voluntary or forced.<sup>10</sup> The Council of Europe has also pointed out that “migrants” is a “wide-ranging term that covers most people who move to a foreign country for a variety of reasons and for a certain length of time (...). Different from “immigrant”, which means someone who

9. Article 1 of the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, signed in Geneva on 28 July 1951.

10. International Federation of the Red Cross; <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/migration/>. See also “Accueil et hébergement des personnes migrantes”, Croix-Rouge française, [www.croix-rouge.fr/Nos-actions/Action-sociale/Personnes-migrantes/Accueil-et-hebergement-des-personnes-migrantes](http://www.croix-rouge.fr/Nos-actions/Action-sociale/Personnes-migrantes/Accueil-et-hebergement-des-personnes-migrantes).

takes up permanent residence in a country other than his or her original homeland.”<sup>11</sup> Lastly, asylum seekers are persons who have entered a country and sought recognition as refugees. While all of the above are foreigners under the legislation on nationality, their circumstances are very different in terms of their legal protection. Regardless of their circumstances, however, they must all be treated with respect and dignity, while their human rights must be safeguarded. The category of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees therefore covers a whole range of different situations and it would probably be more relevant and effective here to develop a holistic approach that better targets the persons concerned: “It seems more appropriate to determine target groups according to certain features such as their country of origin, the languages they speak, the religion they practice, where they live and work, etc. Proceeding in this way makes it possible to include people who do not fit into traditional migration management categories such as undocumented migrants, transfrontier workers, foreign tourists or nationals with a migration background.”<sup>12</sup>

■ Although the particular vulnerability which some migrants, asylum seekers and refugees may suffer in the event of disasters or major crises cannot be compared with that resulting from a disability (reduced mobility, total or partial blindness, deafness or hearing impairment) or old age, it is real all the same. The vulnerability of these groups stems firstly from their situation as displaced persons. Living in a country which is not their own and which they do not know well, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are not aware of the hazards they are exposed to there and this lack of knowledge makes them particularly vulnerable in the event of disasters. They therefore run a significant risk of not reacting appropriately in such events. Moreover, the vulnerability of these groups also depends on how they see their future in the countries hosting them: while all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees may be victims of disasters or major crises, the attention they pay to prevention messages and measures will vary greatly depending on whether they believe they are only passing through the country where they are living or whether they want to rebuild their lives on a lasting basis there. For all of them, their lack of command of the local language exposes them more particularly to harm in the event of disasters (ignorance of, or inability to understand, safety instructions or instructions on how to act in emergencies). Those whose position is unlawful in terms of the requirements for entry into or residence in the country concerned may react negatively to the arrival of the emergency services, whose uniforms they might take to be police uniforms. All these factors and the wide range of human circumstances must be taken into consideration by the authorities and emergency service professionals in the strategies, approaches and solutions to be developed in all areas of emergency management and hazard prevention.

■ All vulnerable groups (people with disabilities, pregnant women, children, some elderly people, the sick, the wounded, prisoners and ethnic or religious minorities,

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11. “The protection of migrants and asylum seekers: states’ main legal obligations under the Council of Europe conventions”, letter from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to heads of government of Council of Europe member states, 8 September 2015.

12. European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), APCAT (2014)08. <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016800c445a>.

etc.)<sup>13</sup> share one common feature: they are more exposed to situations involving lack of proper care, hostility, violence or discrimination than the rest of the population. Moreover, everyone recognises that human rights cannot be set aside on the pretext of the need for urgent action or of the disorder resulting from a major crisis or a disaster, given how they must apply at all times, in all places and in all circumstances.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, human rights come under particular threat in the event of disasters because of the disorder and panic,<sup>15</sup> and those of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are particularly at risk, especially since there may be shortages of goods and resources, exacerbating the tensions between individuals and groups.

■ Hazard reduction and the effectiveness of emergency assistance depend to a large extent on proper planning of the response, which in turn is based on the existence of different emergency response plans and on implementation scenarios. These plans may be defined as all the measures or procedures to be implemented to allow the effective distribution of emergency assistance to population groups in response to sudden, unusual and large-scale incidents which could endanger their lives and property.<sup>16</sup> If hazards are to be reduced, they must be identified, as must zones of vulnerability, so that monitoring and warning systems can be implemented and information and education measures can also be adopted so as to prepare responses which limit the harm to individuals and property when the relevant incidents occur. The authorities and emergency services must take proper account of the specific circumstances of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in order to establish beforehand on a preventive basis an operational structure for dealing with the characteristics of crisis situations which is suited to all the situations identified.

## Ethical aspects

■ The occurrence of a disaster or a major crisis often triggers a complex situation where it is not unusual for human rights to be neglected or even flouted. However, “human rights cannot be ignored under the deceptive pretext of exceptional circumstances”<sup>17</sup> and it is important to underline that there is a general ethical principle in the overriding need to respect these rights, as disasters do not sweep away fundamental human rights.

■ Like other people, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are entitled to respect for their rights, regardless of whether they are refugees or whether they have been displaced by environmental phenomena, migrants have recognised rights at international level.<sup>18</sup> Yet their status as foreigners places them in an ambiguous position from the outset. As foreigners, the law sees them as nationals of another country (involving restrictions on the exercise of certain individual freedoms); as human beings, they must enjoy the fundamental freedoms of every individual. Nowadays,

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13. Prieur, M., 2012.

14. Park K.G., 2013.

15. Prieur, M., 2010.

16. Noto, R., 1996.

17. European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), 2012, p. 6, [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/majorhazards/ressources/pub/Ethical-Principles-Publication\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/majorhazards/ressources/pub/Ethical-Principles-Publication_en.pdf).

18. Cournil, C., and Mayer, B. 2014.

the ethical influence of natural law has put an end to legal distinctions involving nationality: human beings are covered by a natural law that is clearly universal; the dialectic generated by the various declarations of rights is based on the principle of equality between individuals and rules out any discrimination between them. In spite of this principle, however, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees frequently come up against various measures involving exclusion or xenophobia, both legal and actual; their human rights are often forgotten.

■ When a disaster or major incident occurs, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are entitled to the same level of protection as the other members of society and events of this kind must not serve as pretexts for suspending their fundamental rights. Moreover, this does not happen when it comes to the provision of emergency relief, as it is clear that the emergency services help all victims without paying the slightest attention to their status as “migrants”, “asylum seekers” or “refugees”: they provide relief and care without any special consideration or discrimination. Nevertheless, this egalitarian and abstract approach may lead to neglect of certain specific circumstances of these groups when they are faced with disaster situations (in particular, in terms of language proficiency and understanding of safety instructions, location of housing, etc.); this has the effect of overexposing migrants, asylum seekers and refugees to the risk of additional harm during disasters and major crises. Yet there is no justification for relaxing either ethical or moral standards, or human rights, during a major incident or disaster. At a time when there are increasingly large numbers of groups of foreign origin in our societies, it is important for the authorities and the emergency services to take account of any specific factors concerning them so that they enjoy equal access to emergency care and assistance in the event of disasters and major crises. Recognition of this imperative during crisis planning is bound to ensure that the most effective assistance possible is provided when such events occur.

### **Implementation shortfall**

■ However, failure to include migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in any way in major crisis and disaster planning and management seems to be a constant, on the part both of emergency and rescue services and of states, and also extends to the failure to properly appreciate any specific needs (linguistic or cultural) they may have. The reason given most frequently by states and emergency services for this situation lies in the principle of the “equal treatment of all individuals in emergencies”. Those receiving assistance are regarded abstractly as victims to be supported without there being any need to take account of their legal or social status as migrants, asylum seekers or refugees. Emergency and rescue services carry out their work with total impartiality towards all individuals, whatever their background or religion. It would not appear to be an exaggeration to say that, in the final analysis, for states and specifically from the angle of major crisis preparedness and management, asylum seekers and refugees do not exist, that is, they are not regarded as a specific identified group. This partly explains why the issue of prevention measures aimed at specific population groups has mostly been brushed aside by fire-fighters and emergency service professionals. It is necessary, above all, to reiterate why migrants, asylum seekers and refugees form a particularly vulnerable group when disasters strike.

■ The particular vulnerability of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the event of disasters and major crises is undeniable. They form a group who are vulnerable for both practical reasons (low income, poor-quality housing which may be less resilient to disasters, etc.) and cultural reasons (lack of knowledge of the local language, making it difficult to ensure effective relief distribution and to reach out to this section of the population and provide it with information about prevention measures or what to do in the event of a disaster); reluctance to trust the authorities, a related tendency to withdraw into their community (cultural differences related to gender and/or family relations, religious beliefs, etc.). By way of example, it became public knowledge in October 2015 that the area in which several thousand migrants were living in Calais in northern France lies within a technological hazards prevention plan zone.<sup>19</sup> If a chemical incident had occurred on the site of the industrial plant concerned, would the migrants living nearby really have received the same protection as other population groups? There are legitimate grounds for believing they would not. Yet there are practically no studies dealing specifically with the situation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the event of disasters; there is also a lack of systematic data concerning these individuals in connection with their protection against disasters and, likewise, hazard planning and post-incident evaluation do not (or only very rarely) include people of foreign origin. The implementation shortfall therefore primarily stems from a lack of data and analyses; in other words, from the inability to gain a precise understanding of the specific issues which arise in terms of addressing the position of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management.

■ If involving migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster planning and management is hard to achieve, this is mainly on account of the wide range of circumstances of the relevant groups. Some of the individuals concerned wish to integrate on a lasting basis in the countries where they are living (this is particularly true of migrants, but also of many asylum seekers); others are only passing through the country concerned and want to move on to countries other than the one where they are living at present; still others want to return to their countries of origin when the circumstances that led to their leaving no longer exist and they are able to do so (this applies in particular and in principle to refugees). These different motivations make it difficult to adopt a uniform approach to all the civil protection issues relating to the groups concerned. While all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees may be victims of disasters or major crises, their interest in prevention of major crises will vary greatly depending on whether they believe they are only passing through the country where they are living or whether they want to rebuild their lives on a lasting basis there. This also raises the issue of subjective or objective awareness of the hazards to which these groups might be exposed.

■ Nevertheless, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted in 2015 urges states to adopt a broader and more people-centred preventive approach; in particular, it stresses that disaster risk reduction practices need to be inclusive and accessible in order to be efficient and effective. Governments are called on to engage

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19. *Le Monde*, 19 October 2015, [www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2015/10/19/la-jungle-de-calais-est-majoritairement-situee-en-zone-seveso\\_4792559\\_3224.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2015/10/19/la-jungle-de-calais-est-majoritairement-situee-en-zone-seveso_4792559_3224.html).

with the relevant stakeholders to include migrants in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards.<sup>20</sup> The document also states that in order to improve the governance of disaster risks, it is important to work and co-ordinate with migrants in disaster risk management at local level.<sup>21</sup> In view of the great diversity of political systems, cultural differences and people's living standards, internal organisation methods of states and their emergency services and also individual countries' specific geographical and climatic characteristics and the range of risks to which they may be exposed, it is, however, extremely difficult to draw up common criteria. Therefore, it is above all necessary to recognise the challenges and the need to develop specific measures for involving migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management. A key to effective action here lies in gathering reliable data about the groups concerned, an area where there are great shortcomings at present.

■ While many countries have population registers and are therefore aware of the migrants, asylum seekers and refugees living on their territory (although this is not the case in all of them), this system of population registration is not entirely satisfactory regarding migrants. In particular, it only applies to those groups whose position is lawful under the legislation on residence in the country concerned. By definition, the registers do not take account of migrants for whom that is not the case. Yet if all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are to be involved in hazard prevention measures, it is vital to know who and how many people will require assistance, where they are located and what risks they are exposed to – especially as regards the most vulnerable groups. This essential basic information will underpin any viable programme of assistance. Moreover, if they are to be effective, the registers must be available to the emergency and rescue services and the local authorities and must be kept updated. Such registers could be particularly relevant firstly in the event of disasters but also, and above all, when emergency planning is being conducted and the distribution of relief planned, as they provide an almost comprehensive inventory of the special needs and location of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who may be in need of assistance when disaster strikes.

■ In addition, the principle of the “equal treatment of all individuals in emergencies”, under which those receiving assistance are regarded abstractly and merely as victims to be supported, is inadequate in that it does not take account of all the relevant aspects concerning the distribution of relief. It could be supplemented with a method incorporating Design for All,<sup>22</sup> a more comprehensive approach which seeks to offer everyone the same opportunities for integrating into modern life and taking advantage of its services. This involves designing and planning infrastructure, services and authorities and even public policies in such a way that the entire population benefits from them without any distinction based on status or condition.

■ In spite of the progress observed in recent years,<sup>23</sup> at present at international level there are still “no treaties or political documents on the subject of human rights

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20. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, point 7.

21. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, point 27(h).

22. See Aragall, F., Neumann, P., and Sagramola, S., 2013.

23. Report of the International Law Commission, 2013.

during disasters,"<sup>24</sup> which led the Council of Europe to take up the matter and draw up Ethical Principles on Disaster Risk Reduction and People's Resilience in 2012. These make it clear that "states have a duty to protect persons on their territory, guaranteeing that, even if a disaster occurs, human rights are fully applied for not only their nationals, but also for foreigners on their territory."<sup>25</sup> Several points are characteristic of states' failure to properly implement these principles.

■ Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are not taken into account as a specifically vulnerable group. The fact that emergency services provide assistance without any special consideration or discrimination given the principle of the equal treatment of victims means that no emphasis at all is placed on the specific characteristics of groups of foreigners who may need assistance. To ensure still more effective relief distribution, consideration should be given to this dimension. Official guidelines should urge those providing emergency assistance, in particular at local level, to take account of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the organisation of relief distribution.

■ There is a lack of institutional, organised contacts with representatives of migrants, refugees or asylum seekers. They are rarely regarded or perceived as forming "groups" or "communities", but rather as individuals within such groups. While this individual approach clearly ties in with the desire to place emphasis on the personal dimension of what the migrants want, it also has the negative effect of neglecting the collective dimension of migration and accordingly cutting the authorities off from a collective approach to the persons concerned.

■ These groups are not taken properly into account in prevention and crisis planning. From the angle of operational emergency management proper, almost all states have tools which give foreign population groups proper access to emergency services (multilingual call centres, access to translation/interpretation services at short notice). Nevertheless, and beyond the mere issue of alerting the emergency services, only very few states have prevention measures specifically designed for foreigners (and the measures essentially consist of guides available in several languages, usually only for tourists).

■ There is a lack of information and advice on the management of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees when disasters or major crises occur. Similarly, European countries have not reported the holding of any relevant training for their emergency services in recent years. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are not specifically taken into account when planning measures are drawn up. The problems here are compounded still further by the decentralisation of emergency relief work and the stakeholders' lack of knowledge of one another.

■ There is a lack of awareness of the presence of staff members with migrant backgrounds in the emergency services. Similarly, the emergency services do not have recognised contacts within these groups and do not seek to involve the groups in their disaster prevention planning either. Issues relating to knowledge of migrants,

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24. Prieur, M., 2010, *ibid.*

25. European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), *Ethical Principles on Disaster Risk Reduction and People's Resilience*, 2012, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

asylum seekers and refugees are usually left to civil society (non-governmental organisations (NGOs)) or welfare services which back up emergency services.

■ Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are also at risk of suffering discrimination after a disaster or major crisis, during the period of “recovery” or return to normality. Yet “during the period of a return to the conditions of a normal life, [states and local and regional authorities] continue to guarantee infrastructures and essential services, the enjoyment of and respect for human rights.”<sup>26</sup> Even if living conditions have become difficult because of the limited resources available, hardship or deterioration in the environment, it is important that those involved at this stage ensure respect for the rights of groups of foreign origin, especially since they may be still more seriously disoriented than ordinary residents by the effects of the disaster. Lastly, it should be remembered that migrants can also contribute to the resilience of communities and societies because, as noted in the Sendai Framework, “their knowledge, skills and capacities can be useful in the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction.”<sup>27</sup>

## Institutional framework

■ In order to ensure fairness and equal treatment for all, governments must have policies that:

- ▶ guarantee and safeguard everyone’s fundamental rights, and hence too the rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees;
- ▶ promote better integration of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the host society;
- ▶ seek to prevent discrimination against migrants, asylum seekers and refugees;
- ▶ create legal and administrative mechanisms for achieving these objectives;
- ▶ determine precisely which authorities and organisations are responsible for implementing and executing these mechanisms;
- ▶ encourage impartial scrutiny and regular monitoring with respect to the ethics and effectiveness of these mechanisms, and the extent to which they have been implemented.

■ The particular needs of, and challenges involved in including, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management call for more than mere pledges within the framework of broader policies designed to secure the rights of disadvantaged groups. On the contrary, they must be taken up at every level of the agencies responsible for these matters.

■ The deficiencies and weaknesses listed in the previous section may be due firstly to the way in which the emergency services operate. Traditionally, these services were locally based and linked to given areas, with personnel from those areas. The emergency services, therefore, have not always been sufficiently careful

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26. European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), *Ethical Principles on Disaster Risk Reduction and People’s Resilience*, 2012, op. cit., p. 33.

27. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, point 36 (a-vi).

to take account of new situations, in particular situations such as the one covered by the study. It could be said that, in a way, from the point of view of the emergency services, “foreigners”, “migrants”, “asylum seekers” and “refugees” do not exist; they are regarded solely as potential victims without any consideration whatsoever for their nationality or legal status. Such an abstract approach, however, can lead to failure to recognise certain factors specific to those groups and, as a correlation, to their being overexposed to the risk of harm when disasters or major crises occur. Certainly, in practical terms, fire-fighters are often singularly adept at adapting to individual situations, which helps to explain why there are few written provisions or instructions concerning specific population groups, thus allowing a degree of flexibility in decisions about how to respond. Some thought should nevertheless be given to the particular challenges involved in operations of this kind before disasters or major crises arise. Lastly, the lack of contact between those involved in caring for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees (social services, health services) and those responsible for emergency planning and management (interior ministry and local authorities), not forgetting the role of associations (NGOs) and volunteers, explains the difficulty of liaising between these different stakeholders.

■ Answering the needs of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees during disasters requires a concerted effort by all those involved in providing emergency assistance. This means, first and foremost, the state, from upper- to lower-level central government authorities, but also local government and all those who provide emergency assistance and relief (fire-fighters, medical services) as well as civil society (mainly voluntary organisations and groups and the public at large). Institutionally, there need to be strong links in several directions, as follows:

- ▶ between the national, intermediate and local tiers of government;
- ▶ between health care, social services and other ministries, such as those that deal with emergency response (usually the ministry of the interior or the armed forces);
- ▶ between the forms of public administration listed above and voluntary associations (NGOs);
- ▶ between civil protection services and associations that care or advocate for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

■ Integrating migrants, asylum seekers and refugees into disaster and major crisis preparedness and management presupposes, firstly, an awareness of the importance of not leaving these groups out of the risk management process. While there is undoubtedly a need for the government to take the lead nationally, the measures should then be rolled out locally, and co-ordinated and managed by the body representing central government in co-operation with the agencies in charge of emergency planning. This body must see to it that the recommendations are followed through at the level closest to the populations concerned and have the full backing of local authorities. Care will also need to be taken to encourage information sharing and discussion based around the feedback received at national and international level.

■ One very important aspect of these institutional arrangements is teamwork and networking between all the stakeholders. The emergency services (in particular

fire-fighters) and civil protection associations must be encouraged to work with groups representing migrants, asylum seekers and refugees (see diagram). This is one way of connecting two sets of institutions which do not always operate together, as they have different competences and agendas. Synergies also need to be developed between central government and decentralised services, as well as civil society organisations, as the latter are often a vital link in the chain when it comes to performing tasks that are either outside the remit of the state or have been ceded to the voluntary sector, usually through lack of public resources.

### Working together to include migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in relief and assistance plans



■ In addition to fostering bilateral relationships between, for example, a civil protection agency and a voluntary organisation that helps migrants, there are other key players that need to be drawn into the process of preparing to assist migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the event of a disaster. These include advocates for these groups and associations specialising in helping the underprivileged, which assist the managers in charge of personal assistance services. All have a role to play and must be mindful of the need to involve migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management.

■ The relationships described in this section should be implemented at the emergency planning stage, which is described in the next section of this report.

### Planning

■ Whenever an emergency situation (major incident, disaster, contingency, crisis – however one chooses to refer to it) occurs, the authorities activate the arrangements, which will have been properly planned in advance. Such emergency planning is aimed either at ensuring or maintaining public order and protecting facilities and activities which are of vital national interest, or at preventing risks, organising relief and bringing about a gradual return to normality. There are three distinct elements here: plans, procedures and improvisation. Procedures or protocols are a form of guidance for conducting particular activities. In civil protection, planning includes

putting in place provisional instruments to enable the state to respond effectively in a crisis, through well-organised relief and sensible use of equipment and materials at every level, from central government to local authorities. These plans are drawn up as part of a concerted, multidisciplinary approach to the process of emergency response and in order to be effective, they must be regularly updated and circulated to the people and agencies who will be using them. Even if the measures are envisaged in an overarching fashion, at a higher level, the “bedrock” level of emergency planning is at local level. This is because the local level, as the one closest to people’s needs, is always the theatre of operations when an emergency situation arises. The next level, namely the area level, then becomes the one at which resources are coordinated and prioritised. The essence of emergency planning is to make all the necessary arrangements in terms of identifying and preparing personnel, supplies, vehicles, communications, fuel, equipment, etc., so that urgent needs can be met as effectively as possible.

■ Planning is carried out with respect to three key stages in the development of a crisis. First there are the prevention measures designed to avert the crisis and second, the rescue operations themselves. Third, planners have to think about the aftermath, and the need to come to the aid of the affected populations and facilitate a gradual return to normality, in terms of both people and activities. Even the best-laid plans can go awry, however, if one disaster or major crisis triggers another “non-standard” crisis, that is, one which exceeds the limits of what could reasonably be envisaged and prepared for.<sup>28</sup> Some flexibility in the use of planning measures is always essential therefore, in order to be able to cope with the unexpected. From the time a crisis occurs until the time it is over, the emergency services may find themselves forced to improvise in order to deal with unforeseen situations. Any such improvisation needs to be kept to a minimum, though, as it generally translates into inefficiency and a waste of energy and can lead to unnecessary destruction of property or even loss of life. A key element in planning is the introduction of *ex ante* risk prevention measures. Training and awareness-raising exercises and activities aimed directly at migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and those who work with them are another important part of the prevention effort.

■ In terms of the technical and operational conditions, there is not much difference between emergency response operations to help migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and those intended for the rest of the population. The main technical differences between the two are firstly the language barrier between the emergency services and migrants and, secondly, the suspicion with which migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are liable to react to the arrival of men and women in uniforms, if they mistake them for police or immigration officers.

■ A key factor in successful emergency response is sound operational planning. It is most unlikely, for example, that if the emergency plans for the general population are inadequate or non-existent, there will be any specific provision for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. On the other hand, well-thought-out emergency plans that take due account of the specific needs of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, in particular from a linguistic point of view, will work for other groups of foreigners as

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28. See Marie-Caroline Moulin, 2014.

well, for example, tourists, and will facilitate the relief effort. The arrangements put in place for the general population are a prerequisite for those aimed at migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, therefore. The former, however, should not be allowed to subsume the latter; rather, it is a question of adapting them so as to take account of certain specific needs.

■ The first stage of any emergency planning process is to collect data on hazards and vulnerability. The main difficulty is then to form an accurate picture of the migrant, asylum seeker and refugee communities because even if population registers exist, many of the individuals concerned may not be listed in them, especially if they are present in the country illegally.<sup>29</sup> Because the official data are by no means always adequate and reliable, it is important that the agencies in charge of emergency planning be able, as far as possible, to gather appropriate information concerning migrants, asylum seekers and refugees present in the area (whereabouts, age, national languages or dialects used, probable requirements in an emergency, etc.). At the same time, an assessment needs to be made of the nature of the hazards that threaten these communities and the probable local impacts of an extreme event. Obviously it will be impossible to obtain exact figures or full details, but the fact of being able to draw on information that is as accurate as possible will make it easier for the emergency services to respond should it become necessary to do so.

■ The next stage in emergency planning is to design measures to safeguard the population based on the hazards to which they are exposed and an inventory of private and public resources which are already available or could be requisitioned in an emergency (personnel, vehicles, equipment, supplies, communications, buildings and food). Where hazard impacts can be forecast with enough time to react, plans should make provision for warning and evacuating migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, with careful consideration being given to all aspects of this process and the issue of comprehension (use of pictograms, instructions in a language that people can understand). Where shelter is designated in advance, care should be taken to ensure that it is accessible to people who do not understand the language or have no perception of the danger to which they are exposed (as in the case of chemical hazards, for example). Broadly speaking, the preparations made as part of the planning process should reflect the commitment to pursuing a policy of including, rather than excluding, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in emergency arrangements.

## Training and exercises

■ All emergency response personnel need to be sensitised to the challenges involved in including migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management. Such awareness raising is particularly important at three key stages, namely when training those providing emergency assistance (fire-fighters, medical services and civil protection associations), when planning what action to take in a crisis and, lastly, during simulation exercises. First and foremost, it is a good idea to provide all those involved with a general training course that explains

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<sup>29</sup> This is particularly common in the case of foreigners whose applications for asylum have been rejected.

what it means to include migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management. This could include comprehensive training in diversity. A number of points will need to be addressed, including for example:

- ▶ the structural presence of migrant populations in modern societies and the various possible causes of migration;
- ▶ the moral and ethical case for inclusiveness;
- ▶ legal and jurisdictional responsibilities of care;
- ▶ planning of measures to help migrants, asylum seekers and refugees;
- ▶ scenarios for action when incidents occur or disaster strikes;
- ▶ practical matters connected with first response to an incident or disaster.

■ The first point to consider concerns the provision of separate training for rescue workers from the emergency services, the relevant branches of public administration and voluntary organisations, regarding the inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management. As far as possible, these courses should teach a combination of general theory and case studies that reflect local circumstances. Notable examples of issues to be addressed include how to build relations with groups of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, how to become familiar with these groups and their composition (origin, languages spoken and cultural practices), how to identify “resource persons” within the groups, how to ensure that warnings are issued to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in such a way as to be comprehensible (messages and instructions in their own languages and the use of pictograms) and how to ensure that any evacuations are carried out, as far as possible, in a way that respects their dignity and culture. Where feasible (and this may well prove very difficult in practice), individuals from the populations concerned should be encouraged to get involved as instructors. If that can be accomplished, it will undoubtedly make for a better understanding of the challenges involved among the course participants and most importantly, after the course has ended, among the migrants, asylum seekers and refugees themselves.

■ It is primarily on the planning front that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees need to be included in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management. Until now, fostering an inclusive approach towards migrants has not been part of the culture in the emergency services. Operating on the principle that relief should not discriminate or differentiate as all users are equal, the emergency services and the authorities in charge of civil protection have yet to really factor the challenges associated with the presence of large numbers of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees into their planning documents and measures. Some thought needs to be given to this, therefore, so that key considerations such as language barriers, lack of hazard awareness on the part of the groups concerned, or lack of knowledge about how to react and what to do in a disaster are built into the relief plans. Another point to consider here, and in the planning process, is the possibility of negative reactions from some members of these groups at the sight of uniformed men and women who could be mistaken for law enforcement officers. Such factors, which can potentially delay the emergency response or even aggravate the situation, piling one crisis on top of another, must be planned for in advance if the rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees to protection during disasters are to be respected in practice.

■ Simulation exercises are a natural extension of both planning and training. They can be carried out at different levels and in different forms. They can be discussions featuring role play (table-top exercise) or crisis management exercises (with an operational command post or command centre), or large-scale simulations carried out in the field, involving large numbers of players. Simulating emergency and disaster conditions is one of the ways in which preparedness to meet civil contingencies can be improved. If they are to be successful, simulations must be backed by adequate planning, both of the simulation exercise itself and of the emergency responses required. In many countries, such exercises are mandatory in institutions and provide an opportunity to “road-test” the effectiveness of practical co-operation with local emergency services. The advantages of simulation exercises in the field are as follows:

- ▶ they help sensitise not only those directly involved but the population at large to the need to prepare for disasters;
- ▶ they help familiarise participants with the role they will be expected to perform in a crisis and with the protocols and procedures to be followed in a major emergency;
- ▶ they help the different services, organisations and managers to work together under unfamiliar circumstances and under pressure;
- ▶ they may reveal deficiencies in terms of organisation or preparation for a real emergency;
- ▶ they can provide an opportunity to introduce the question of how to care for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees during emergencies (people needing to be evacuated who do not understand the language or instructions, who run away when the emergency services arrive or react in a violent or hostile manner).

■ There are also drawbacks to simulation exercises, however:

- ▶ they can be expensive and often require considerable organisation if they are to take place in conditions that mimic reality as closely as possible; the entire process generally takes six to 12 months of preparation, meetings and planning;
- ▶ simulations are usually artificial situations and tend to lack the urgency, spontaneity and realism of genuine emergencies;
- ▶ on the other hand, if a simulation is realistic (meaning the participants receive no advance notice), it risks disrupting normal life and can present safety risks;
- ▶ for the same reasons, it is seldom possible to test all the emergency arrangements. Usually, only some of them can be tested in a simulation, with the result that the exercise lacks credibility. Likewise, it is difficult to include unknown factors of the kind that invariably arise in real-life emergencies;
- ▶ there is a widespread tendency not to repeat exercises, or not to do so on a regular basis (the same is generally true when it comes to updating emergency plans); hence, the experience acquired may gradually be lost afterwards.

■ Simulation exercises are nevertheless a vital means of testing the responsiveness of the various components of the emergency response system, highlighting areas that need improvement (shortcomings and gaps in co-ordination, inadequate procedures, etc.) and raising awareness of issues. They can be an opportunity to

rally migrant support groups around the goal of providing protection for these populations in an emergency, to train the emergency services in how to deal with migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the arrangements for rescuing, accommodating and assisting them when disaster strikes. Like the crises themselves, these exercises should provide feedback that will help to improve the way operations are conducted in future.

## Examples of good practice

■ A firm believer in non-discrimination, the Council of Europe promotes protection for the rights of migrants, refugees and displaced people. In 2010, for example, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted Recommendation 1917 (2010) “Migrants and refugees: a continuing challenge for the Council of Europe”, in which it calls on the Council of Europe to devise hard and soft law instruments and practical activities pertaining to migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons. There is a risk, furthermore, that the large movements of refugees and migrants which Europe is seeing today could lead to a disavowal of the rights which they enjoy under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. This is a major political issue in the view of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, prompting him to appoint, as from February 2016, a Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, Ambassador Tomáš Boček, to gather information on how the fundamental rights of migrants and refugees are protected on the ground in Europe.

■ Similarly, the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) has chosen to focus some of its work on guidance designed to improve operational practices with regard to vulnerable groups (people with disabilities, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, children, etc.). The concept paper (2014-2016) “Vulnerable Groups: migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and disaster preparedness and response” accordingly seeks to “identify how civil protection bodies take into account the specificity of such groups while conceiving and implementing protection and evacuation schemes; and how these populations can be encouraged to take an active part in this work and contribute to the development of even more effective schemes, adapted to their specific needs.”<sup>30</sup> The project also aims to ensure that professionals have tools they can draw on to help them safeguard the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in disasters. While the emergency aid available for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees is relatively satisfactory and has led to fairly effective mechanisms for co-operation being set up between states within the European Union,<sup>31</sup> what is required now is a wider vision of how these migrants, asylum seekers and refugees can be included in major crisis preparedness and management.

■ In 2014 the Council of Europe began an initiative which involved sending a questionnaire on disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees to the 25 member countries of the European and

30. Council of Europe, European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), APCAT (2015)10.

31. Within the European Union, there is a humanitarian aid and civil protection department (ECHO), while the EU civil protection mechanism has been working since 2001 to foster co-operation between member States in the field of civil protection; [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en).

Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) and other members of the Council of Europe.<sup>32</sup> Fourteen responses were received. While, on the face of it, this figure may seem too low to be meaningful, a few conclusions can nevertheless be drawn from the replies received and indeed, from the lack of replies, which is sometimes no less significant. Overall, the replies provide a meaningful snapshot of the level of preparedness in European and Mediterranean countries.

■ The replies, which are remarkably candid, reflect the novel nature of, and the need for, the debate on including migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management. Despite the fact that the partner states in the agreement have excellent emergency services and are forever working to improve their emergency preparedness, the share of existing provision that specifically includes migrants is very small, or non-existent, in all countries. Very few measures have been adopted and where efforts at inclusion have been made, they are often extremely ad hoc in nature.

■ Overall, two major points can be noted. Firstly, there is a tendency to subsume measures for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees into the broader provision for dealing with emergencies. Secondly, states are apt to favour emergency measures in the abstract over matters specifically relating to the inclusion of migrants, taking the view that these last are primarily the responsibility of NGOs or the social welfare agencies which provide back up for the emergency services. However, the large number of players liable to be involved in such matters (emergency services, medical services, social services, the voluntary sector, and central and local government agencies) does not make either communication or co-operation any easier.

■ There are, nevertheless, some examples of good practice that may serve as a beacon for other countries to emulate and adapt to their own circumstances and needs.

■ Firstly, it is worth stressing the importance of having a good understanding of migrant, asylum seeker and refugee populations, because to a large extent, such knowledge will determine how effectively they are included in major crisis preparedness. A number of good practices, at local or international level, are worth noting. In Barcelona, for example, a local initiative involving interactive digital mapping has helped to improve awareness and knowledge of cultural diversity. Thanks to this system of mapping various pieces of intelligence about immigration and cultural practices, the information can be re-used to introduce the cultural dimension into disaster management planning. On a global level, the population tracking tools and the Displacement Tracking Matrix used by the International Migration Organisation (IMO) could inspire states to tackle the need to map migrant populations.<sup>33</sup>

■ A number of countries have multilingual guides (one example being Greece, where the most important documents about hazards can be downloaded from the Greek civil protection website in English, Spanish, French and Arabic)<sup>34</sup>. While most other countries are less advanced, several are clearly keen to provide information for foreign communities living within their borders. Examples include Luxembourg, Malta

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32. European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), APCAT (2015)08.

33. <http://www.globaldtm.info/global/>.

34. <http://civilprotection.gr/el>.

and Croatia (in the case of forest fires), while Albania is currently preparing material of this kind. Such prevention measures are usually confined, however, to producing printed matter in one or more other languages. At local level, similar arrangements have been put in place by local authorities, usually in partnership with the tourist board (the Generalitat de Catalunya, for instance, has printed matter available in French, English and Spanish). In France, the emergency response plans (risk analysis and coverage plans), which are updated every three to five years, are concerned with the capacity of the emergency services to respond; some of these plans now include under the heading “risks to the community” large influxes of refugees or shipwreck victims, together with scaling scenarios. Nearly all states have call centres or operations centres with translation platforms or translators who can be drafted in at short notice, and in temporary shelters for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees it is not uncommon to find signposts and notices translated into various languages or featuring pictograms, making it easier for people to find their way around. Leaflets are another very handy and effective way of providing information and emergency telephone numbers. The ImMigRaT project (immediate tools and resources for migrants) run by the European Centre for Disaster Medicine (CEMEC) in San Marino is developing basic means of communication for providing information to migrants, in particular about how to access health services. The emphasis is on visual tools as a way of communicating easy-to-understand information about health issues, access to care, communication, hygiene and housing, as well as about food-related risks and legal issues.<sup>35</sup> Valuable lessons and inspiration can also be drawn from some recent initiatives aimed at providing multilingual advice to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees entering and travelling across Europe. For example, the websites created by the Red Cross and the International Rescue Committee provide accessible advice on emergencies and contacts in the humanitarian assistance agencies, along with practical information about medical services.<sup>36</sup> In Fuenlabrada, in Spain, a diversity management team set up by the local police has developed a network of contacts within the migrant community who can be contacted very quickly if needed.<sup>37</sup> The Council of Europe’s Intercultural Cities programme contributes to disaster risk reduction by promoting intercultural interaction as a way of building confidence and relations within cities. The inclusion of refugees in this process, as recommended by the Intercultural Cities programme, is predicated on the notion of “diversity advantage”, meaning that everyone has something to offer the society in which they have chosen to live. The Intercultural Cities programme proposes innovative policy practices, guidelines and tools for supporting cities in devising ways of ensuring a sustainable, inclusive approach to inflows of refugees.<sup>38</sup>

■ Other examples of existing good practice involving other vulnerable groups could easily be adapted to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Several countries have introduced systems whereby text messages are sent to hearing-impaired people notifying them of emergencies; a similar mechanism could be introduced without too much difficulty in all countries, as could multilingual emergency telephone helplines.

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35. <http://www.cemec-sanmarino.eu/>.

36. <http://preparezvous.eu/front/index.php>; <http://refugeeinfo.eu>.

37. Freeman O., 2014

38. Idem.

In Lisbon, co-ordinated action has been taken by the city authorities and NGOs to support and integrate immigrants via a “one-stop-shop” and a network of 148 local support, reception and care centres. Other measures include municipal support for several dozen multicultural associations involving a wide range of organisations working with migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.<sup>39</sup>

■ Training schemes have also been implemented. In France, for example, the *Ecole nationale supérieure des officiers de sapeurs-pompiers* (ENSOSP) decided to expand the training for officers in the fire and emergency services to include raising awareness about including migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in thinking about disaster and major crisis preparedness and management. New “operational response planning” modules place particular emphasis on continuous strategic monitoring of emerging risks and recent developments, such as those which affect populations fleeing their countries. One advantage of such an approach is that it brings together the various actors who can respond in a crisis and affords each of them an opportunity to improve their major hazard planning and prevention. It is interesting to note that local crisis planning documents, which are periodically revised, are starting to look at how the specific needs of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees can be addressed. At the same time, the initiative launched under the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement has provided a useful insight into the challenges involved in improving the inclusion of migrants in major hazard prevention.

■ Outside Europe, other initiatives have emerged which are of relevance to the themes covered by the EUR-OPA Agreement. At global level, in 2016, the Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative (MCIC) launched a set of guidelines to protect migrants in countries experiencing conflict or natural disaster, following an inclusive, state-led consultation process. The guidelines contain ten fundamental principles, fifteen targeted guidelines and a selection of examples which illustrate practical ways of improving the protection of migrants at the crisis preparedness, emergency response and post-crisis recovery phases. The guidelines apply to states, private sector actors, international organisations and civil society and are available in all the official UN languages, including French and Spanish.<sup>40</sup> In addition to the MCIC guidelines, there is an online depository containing details of hundreds of existing practices, plus additional resources to help states and other stakeholders exchange knowledge and expertise.<sup>41</sup> In Japan in particular, measures aimed specifically at foreigners have been developed. One such example is the Disaster Multilingual Support Centre in the city of Sendai. This government-funded centre, set up by the Sendai International Relations Association, promotes exchanges and intercultural relations within the local population. It brings together associations and volunteers, runs language courses and provides support for children from immigrant backgrounds and advice for foreigners living in Sendai. It also provides non-Japanese residents with relevant information in foreign languages in case a disaster occurs.<sup>42</sup> A multilingual disaster

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39. European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement, (EUR-OPA), APCAT (2016)01.

40. MCIC, 2016.

41. The online repository is available at the following address: <http://micicinitiative.iom.int/repository-practices>. The EUR-OPA agreement is a partner in this initiative. [www.coe.int/fr/web/europarisks](http://www.coe.int/fr/web/europarisks); <https://www.facebook.com/europarisk/>

42. Sendai Disaster Multilingual Support Center; [www.int.sentia-sendai.jp/saigai/](http://www.int.sentia-sendai.jp/saigai/).

information system has been developed to overcome the language barrier in such circumstances.<sup>43</sup> As a result, it was much easier to reach out to migrants living in Sendai when the city suffered an earthquake in 2011.

■ The UN General Assembly has decided to designate the second Wednesday in October as “International Disaster Reduction Day”. Every year, the event is dedicated to a particular theme.<sup>44</sup> In 2016, the theme is “Live to tell” and in 2013, it was “Living with disability and disasters”. The aim of this global initiative, sponsored by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), is to promote resilience. The UNISDR supports the idea that no one should be excluded from solutions to the problem of disasters; to this end, the issue of including migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management could be given greater media coverage, to ensure it receives the publicity it deserves.

■ A EUR-OPA meeting likewise highlighted expert opinions on this matter and identified migrants, asylum seekers and refugees as particularly vulnerable in disaster situations.<sup>45</sup> A number of specific points have already been made and are worth emphasising:

- ▶ use of pictograms that identify the hazards and take account of migrants’ cultural perceptions;
- ▶ use of multilingual warning systems;
- ▶ identification of resource persons within migrant, asylum seeker and refugee communities;
- ▶ inclusion of the issue of how to cater for migrants in emergency preparedness and simulation exercises.

■ It would be helpful, furthermore, if this debate were also to pave the way for a degree of standardisation in prevention and warning measures at international level (pictograms, warning signals). In the meantime, agencies should be encouraged to work together in this area. For example, a tool similar to the open source online platform (and Facebook page) created by the group “Future Architecture” could be developed. This platform, entitled “Architecture for Refugees”<sup>46</sup> collects and shares questions, problems, ideas and solutions dealing with the architectural aspects of the current refugee crisis at European and global level. Replicating such a tool in disaster preparedness and management would help to enhance the collaborative work between activists, refugees, emergency workers and politicians.

■ One final point to note concerns the armed forces, who are frequently drafted in by the authorities if the disaster exceeds a certain magnitude. Military units specialising in civil protection (as in France and Spain) and ordinary armed forces may be mobilised as required. While the specialised units are highly trained and have a proven record of operational effectiveness, including when it comes to dealing with cultural diversity in the course of their work, the same cannot be said for the rest of the armed forces. Where these last are liable to be called upon to assist in dealing

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43. Miyao M, et al., 2007.

44. [www.un.org/fr/events/disasterreductionday/pastobs.shtml](http://www.un.org/fr/events/disasterreductionday/pastobs.shtml).

45. European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), APCAT (2012)16.

46. [www.futurearchitectureplatform.org/projects/32a151aa-d1bc-4418-98ed-75018e3e06bb/](http://www.futurearchitectureplatform.org/projects/32a151aa-d1bc-4418-98ed-75018e3e06bb/)

with major crises, it would be helpful if some cross-cultural awareness raising could be included in their training.

## Conclusions

How a society treats its weakest and most vulnerable members says much about its morality. The point that this publication seeks to make is that although migrants, asylum seekers and refugees form part of a larger population of disadvantaged groups and individuals, they are nevertheless remarkably heterogeneous, whether in terms of their legal status or their willingness, or unwillingness, to integrate into the host country in the long term. These groups, however, are more vulnerable than others to the effects of disaster, firstly because of their limited access to information about hazards (very often, they do not speak the language of the country they live in and/or are unaware of risks with which local people are familiar, etc.), and secondly because of the poor conditions in which they often live (e.g. in camps or substandard accommodation, in remote or dangerous places, etc.)

In addition, including migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in major crisis preparedness and management can in some cases significantly improve effectiveness in the emergency services. Migrants also possess skills of which the civil protection agencies have little or no appreciation. Having people in these communities who can act as intermediaries will make it easier for the emergency services to respond in the event of a disaster. Also, thanks to their personal histories, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are often well equipped to deal with emergency situations. Hardship has taught them resilience and made them adept at overcoming adversity. Frequently, too, they have strong internal mutual support networks, which can be invaluable in a disaster. Diversity in those circumstances becomes an asset, rather than a hurdle.

If migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are to receive the level of protection to which they are entitled as human beings, therefore, the question of how to include them in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management needs to be addressed by public authorities and the emergency services. It is particularly important that any planning measures and simulations incorporate the issue of the potential victims' cultural differences, and how to respect these differences when responding to emergencies (where appropriate).

Lastly, involving representatives of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the conversation about how to include them in disaster and major crisis preparedness and management is a key factor in the success of these schemes. Addressing the issue of security for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees is a matter of fundamental rights and, at the same time, a question of optimum efficiency and effectiveness in the emergency services. Planning, training and the provision of information are activities that are essential in order to ensure that those rights are guaranteed. So are the processes of sharing information, learning from good practice and standardising approaches between European countries. Migrants now make up a significant minority in European societies and must be afforded protection, in line with human rights obligations and basic ethical imperatives. Provided they are willing to do so, states can take action and work together to this end.

# Guidelines for assisting migrants, asylum seekers and refugees during emergencies and disasters

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## Preamble

In today's globalised world, there is a growing presence of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in all regions. Europe is home to a sizeable proportion, with migrants, asylum seekers and refugees deepening the demographic, cultural and socio-economic diversity of communities in countless, predominantly urban, centres of the continent. With the number of international migrants growing in the world at a rate faster than the world's population in 2015, and global forced displacement figures reaching a record high, these trends are unlikely to abate.

Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees can be particularly vulnerable to disasters. Language barriers, immigration status, isolation, limited social networks, restrictions on mobility, distrust of authorities, lost identity and travel documents and abuse, exploitation and xenophobia are among the conditions of vulnerability that reduce their resilience and dictate needs. Yet, as acknowledged in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, migrants contribute to the resilience of communities and societies and have knowledge, skills and capacities that can contribute to the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction.

In this context, disaster risk reduction policy and practice must anticipate and accommodate the greater mobility of people, the ways in which mobility affects demographic, cultural and socio-economic diversity of communities, and the vulnerability, needs and capacities of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Policies and practices will also need to recognise that as human beings, all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have human rights. Standards in UN treaties, the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter apply to all non-citizens. The human rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees need to be respected, protected and fulfilled in accordance with international and regional law, even in the context of disasters. To ensure that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees receive adequate care is also a matter of equity, fairness and justice, as well as an important affirmation of the values of civility.

Leaders and decision makers in public administration, businesses and civil society who have responsibility for services that affect migrants, asylum seekers and refugees should understand that these people may be more at risk than the general public. They may be more vulnerable to hazards, the consequences of disasters, and unfair treatment during or after the event.

■ In preparing for, reacting to and recovering from disasters every effort should be made to ensure that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are not discriminated against. The aim should be to ensure that the treatment and services they receive are as effective a form of support as that given to citizens. Similarly, every effort should be made to ensure that the skills and capacities of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are leveraged to improve preparedness, response and recovery action.

■ Including and engaging migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster and emergency management efforts requires looking in depth at their individual and collective conditions, needs and capacities. This is likely to be a resource-intensive process. It also requires cross-cultural competence and pre-existing relationships of trust with migrant, asylum seeker and refugee groups and communities. Therefore, the planning, design and implementation of disaster risk reduction and the provision of care and services should necessarily involve a wide variety of actors—from national and local authorities to civil society and volunteer groups that work with, or comprise, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

■ Assisting migrants, asylum seekers and refugees during disasters requires planning. Foresight and inclusive and concerted action are necessary before disasters strike, so that programmes and procedures are in place when the situation becomes critical. Improvisation is the enemy of good procedure and should be reduced to a minimum by undertaking consultations and planning processes that designate resources for use when they are needed.

■ This set of guidelines is intended to ensure that national governments and their counterparts at regional and local level, civil society organisations and relevant offices in both the public and private sector obtain a clear idea of how to proceed within the provision of disaster risk reduction for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. It begins with a set of working definitions and then considers the requirements of good preparedness during all phases of crisis management: mitigation and planning, alert, emergency action, and recovery. The integration and involvement of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees needs to be considered with respect to all of these phases.

## **Successful implementation**

■ Disasters and their impacts can vary considerably from one place to another around the world and emergency response systems are strongly influenced by their political and cultural backgrounds.

■ Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees risk being exposed to different scenarios. During their migration and at their final destination they are confronted with unknown political and socio-cultural situations. The very first obstacle to be faced may be the language.

■ It is therefore important to adopt a conceptual approach to disaster risk management that is easily understandable and transferable, a strategy that is based on the “Design for All” concept.

■ Such a strategy could be based on a set of common factors.<sup>47</sup>

1. **Political commitment.** Governments must commit themselves to developing disaster risk management strategies based on human diversity as part of their overall political agendas. As part of the more general endeavour to ensure the safety of increasingly diverse populations, they must consistently pay attention to a large variety of peoples' ways of living and potential needs.
2. **Co-ordination and continuity.** In order to guarantee the effective development, application and monitoring of emergency systems, one particular body of governmental administration must be responsible for co-ordination and the continuity of initiatives. In close co-operation with all relevant stakeholders, it will be the task of the co-ordinating body to make sure that all relevant information is collected and centralised.
3. **Networking.** At least one network should exist that allows stakeholders to meet and exchange information about the challenges to be met if risks are to be identified and solutions are to be found. As migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are not a homogeneous group, these networks should always be open to new members and should take full account of evolutionary changes in technology, habits and expectations.
4. **Strategic planning.** A master plan should be set up and constantly updated. The organisation of training activities and the evaluation of emergency exercises should be part of a constant process of adaptation of the master plan.
5. **Knowledge management.** A coherent programme of knowledge management should be used to ensure the transfer of acquired know-how to those who can benefit from it. This knowledge would facilitate the organisation of training activities and allow emergency schemes constantly to be improved. Specific added value will be provided by the involvement of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and their organisations.
6. **Identification and optimisation of resources.** The evaluation of a master plan and constant updating of its capacities, and the general level of knowledge, should allow stakeholders to estimate needs regarding financial, organisational and human resources.
7. **Communication.** In order to ensure that everyone is kept informed about the state of preparedness, a good communication policy is needed. Energetic dissemination of information will ensure that more and more relevant stakeholders are contacted and involved in the preparedness process.

## Phases of transition

■ Obviously the level of implementation for emergency strategies is very different at international level. In order to identify the level of preparedness, different phases can be identified, namely: awareness, inception, development and consolidation. These phases are summarised in the following table.

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47. EuCAN, 2008, p.18.

	<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Inception</b>	<b>Development</b>	<b>Consolidation</b>
<b>Political commitment</b>	Motivating the government to become active	Deciding to start the process of implementation	Creating an official mandate and attributing tasks	Including the measure systematically in budget provisions
<b>Co-ordination</b>	Deciding who should take responsibility for the task	Nominations and job description	Organising actions and reporting	Establishing the co-ordinating body in official structures
<b>Networking</b>	Identifying potential partners	Inviting internal and external partners and defining roles, structures and working methods	Establishing working methods	Maintaining the structure and acquiring expertise
<b>Strategic planning</b>	Looking for possible models	Defining goals, aims and actions	Developing a master plan with agreed and fixed strategies, actions, time scale and resources	Organising an on-going assessment of quality and success levels
<b>Knowledge management</b>	Rising levels of interest and appearance of questions	Situation analysis (legal framework, documentation, etc.) Identifying needs for education or external expertise	Setting up a common knowledge base (for education, training, information, conferences, etc.)	Managing newly acquired knowledge on an on-going basis
<b>Resources</b>	Looking for existing resources (voluntary roles)	Clarifying the allocation of resources	Allocating resources according to a master plan and opportunities	Assigning stable resources
<b>Communication</b>	Interest appears (through key experiences, press releases, etc)	Communicating and announcing intentions Seeking external exchange and communication	Communication and feedback of steps achieved	Ongoing monitoring of quality and success (customer relationship management)

## Creating action plans

Once political commitment has been secured, co-ordination arrangements have been agreed and are operational, and collaborative networks have been established, an action plan can be defined. This comprises four phases: prevention (long-term planning and disaster risk reduction), preparedness (shorter-term emergency planning and early warning), response (emergency management and humanitarian assistance), and recovery (rehabilitation, returning to normality and reducing future risks).

### Prevention

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Before disasters strike, national policies, legal frameworks, plans and programmes should be developed to ensure adequate assistance and protection for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in emergencies. Responsibilities for implementing these policies and plans should be assigned to official agencies at national and local levels.

Co-ordination mechanisms should be established between civil protection organisations, agencies providing other forms of support to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees (e.g. health, housing, welfare, education) and other organisations representing them or working on their behalf. Collaboration agreements between states may also be needed in the case of cross-border emergencies or migrants, asylum seekers and refugees crossing national borders.

Plans and programmes should take the situation and needs of migrant, asylum seeker and refugee populations into account and the potential problems they may face in accessing assistance (for instance due to legal status, social isolation or language barriers). Civil protection staff, at all levels, and volunteers should receive training in cultural diversity, intercultural communication and awareness. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees should be recruited and trained as civil protection staff, volunteers and advisors.

The principle of equal rights for all in disasters should be firmly established, ensuring that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have the same fundamental rights to protection and assistance as the rest of the population.

### Preparedness

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The needs and vulnerabilities of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees should be considered as an integral part of emergency preparedness and contingency planning at international, national, regional and local levels, and should be taken into account in the design and operation of early warning systems.

It is essential to involve migrant, asylum seeker and refugee associations and groups in disaster preparedness planning.

Good counter-disaster planning requires accurate and up-to-date information on people's location, needs and vulnerabilities. Planning should take into account the fact that it is difficult to collect and maintain data on highly mobile migrant, asylum seeker and refugee populations that include people whose past experiences may

make them suspicious or fearful of official agencies. The differences in vulnerabilities and capacities between various migrant, asylum seeker and refugee groups as well as within groups (e.g. vulnerability arising from gender relations) should be taken into account.

■ Communication and public education programmes about risks, emergency procedures and services should be implemented for non-native speakers. This requires the use of multiple languages and media, as well as cultural sensitivity. Involvement of community representatives is essential in developing and delivering such programmes because it facilitates communication, understanding and trust-building. Agencies should keep updated lists of migrant, asylum seeker and refugee organisations, community leaders and ethnic media that can disseminate information very quickly in a crisis.

## **Response and recovery**

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■ Emergency and humanitarian agencies should follow the basic principle of providing assistance to everyone according to their needs, recognising that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees may be at particular risk of exploitation, abuse and violence during a crisis.

■ Assistance should be culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive. Evacuation shelters and rest centres should be planned and organised with regard to cultural diversity and sensitivities (e.g. issues such as dietary restrictions and women's privacy) and special needs.

■ Civil protection organisations should have pre-existing procedures to ensure no one is left behind. Extra efforts may be needed to locate migrant, asylum seeker and refugee populations in need of assistance and protection, especially those that are invisible to the authorities or highly mobile.

■ Agencies should be aware that some migrants, asylum seekers and refugees may be unwilling to leave a potentially dangerous situation, for fear of losing their jobs and assets, or arrest and deportation, or being barred from returning after the emergency.

■ Emergency assistance should be integrated with other specialist services that provide welfare and support to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees to integrate into host societies, in order to help them to recover from the disaster and restore their living conditions and livelihoods. Psychosocial support may be particularly needed by those migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who are already suffering from trauma as a result of previous experiences.

■ Post-disaster recovery may be a slow process, lasting for years and involving long periods of living with temporary arrangements. Care should be taken to ensure that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are not further discriminated against in access to post-disaster employment opportunities and welfare support or assignment of permanent housing.

# Recommendation 2016- 1 of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents on the inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster preparedness and response

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*adopted at the 13th Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), Lisbon, Portugal, 26 October 2016*

The Ministers,

- A. recognising that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have a fundamental right to a degree of protection against disasters that is equal to that enjoyed by the rest of the population;
- B. mindful that, in EUR-OPA member States, awareness, planning, services, training and emergency assistance to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees would benefit from significant improvement;
- C. desirous to promote a more integrated, efficient and effective approach to protecting migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Europe from the risks and impacts of disasters;
- D. taking note with satisfaction of the report on “The inclusion of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in disaster preparedness and response” and of the “Guidelines for assisting migrants, asylum seekers and refugees during Emergencies and Disasters”, as well as other relevant frameworks and guidelines,

Recommend that member States of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA):

1. integrate specialised measures on migrants, asylum seekers and refugees into national disaster risk reduction policies, planning processes, training curricula and emergency management, favouring, investment in long-term strategies that would reduce the vulnerability and exposure to disaster of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees;
2. design and promote national programmes and standards for the rescue, protection and care of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees when and where they are at risk of disaster;
3. design, promote and co-ordinate measures at all levels, through authorities and emergency management services, making use of civil society;
4. involve civil society and other non-state actors, including the private sector, that provide care, services and representation to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees;
5. ensure that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are included in the entire disaster risk reduction process, taking their views into account and using their skills and capacities;
6. ensure that education and training on the protection and assistance of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are in the mainstream curricula for disaster risk reduction;
7. support the efforts of the agreement to promote inclusive disaster risk reduction for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in its member States through the promotion of adequate policies, the sharing of expertise, the organisation of training programmes and the promotion of promising practices,

Invite the member States of the Council of Europe which are not parties to the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), to examine the above recommendations and to use them as a source of inspiration for their policy and practice.

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# Glossary

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In both academic and professional publications on emergencies, crises and disasters there is a wide variety of definitions of key terms, some of which are conflicting. However, definitions are necessary as a means of establishing the nature of the phenomena and processes that are under consideration. Putting aside differences of opinion on meanings, this section provides some simple working definitions of terms. When documents of international interest are being translated into national languages, there is always a risk of misunderstanding, and it is therefore important to make sure that translations do not distort the message to be transmitted.

**Asylum seeker:** Someone who has made a claim that he or she is a refugee and is waiting for that claim to be accepted or rejected. The term contains no presumption either way; it simply describes the fact that someone has lodged a claim. Some asylum seekers will be judged to be refugees and others not.

**Crisis** (in the present context): A major incident that interrupts normal activities for a significant number of people and causes, or threatens to cause, harm to themselves or their property.

**Disaster:** A major destructive event that involves a large number of people and causes widespread damage and probably significant physical injury, possibly with a number, more or less large, of fatalities. Attempts to quantify the threshold at which an incident becomes a disaster have not generally been successful, but disasters have a profound effect on society and communities and tend to be larger, or more serious, than incidents.

**Disaster risk reduction:** The process of preparing for, reducing the risk of and planning to face disaster when it happens.

**Hazard:** A condition that threatens the safety and well-being of people. In origin it may be natural (e.g. earthquakes, floods), technological (e.g. transportation crashes, toxic releases), social (e.g. crowd crushes, demonstrations) or intentional (e.g. terrorism, politically-inspired violence).

**Migrant:** A wide-ranging term that covers most people who move to a foreign country for a variety of reasons and for a certain length of time. Different from “immigrant”, which means someone who takes up permanent residence in a country other than his or her original homeland.

**Risk** (in the present context): The product of hazard and vulnerability leading to a probability of harm, expressed as physical or psychological injury, damage, destruction or interruption of productive and essential activities.

**Vulnerability** (in the present context): A person’s susceptibility to harm as a result of external adverse events such as natural disasters, public emergencies, technological incidents or political violence.

**Refugee:** A refugee is someone who fled his or her home and country owing to “a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country;” according to the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention. Many refugees are in exile to escape the effects of natural or human-made disasters.

**Resilience:** For individuals, groups of people and society as a whole, the state (and process) of being robust in the face of disaster risks. This means being able to reduce the impact of disaster, manage its effects with efficiency and recover rapidly from it, hopefully to a state of greater resistance than existed before (the “bounce forward” strategy).

**Civil protection** (sometimes known as “civil defence” or “civil security”): The provision of services to the general population that enable them to face the risk of, survive and reduce the damaging effects of disasters and crises.

In the past years, many countries faced an unprecedented large-scale arrival of migrants. This publication seeks to give an overview of the current situation in terms of the inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in major disaster preparedness and management, given that their situation as a particularly vulnerable group exposes them to an additional risk of harm in the event of disasters. In particular, the aim is to see whether the emergency and rescue services take proper account of these groups so as to foster their resilience. It presents recommendations and guidelines in order to accompany member states in developing policies to improve the resilience of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees to natural and technological hazards.

Created in 1987, the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) is a platform for co-operation between European and Southern Mediterranean countries in the field of major natural and technological disasters. Its field of action covers the knowledge of hazards, risk prevention, risk management, post-crisis analysis and rehabilitation. It has up to date 25 member states.



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

