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EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT (EUR-OPA)

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

Citizen-centred Prevention and Preparedness in the face of natural hazards connected to climate change

Proposed for adoption at the 84th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents
and meeting of the Directors of Specialised Centres (Joint Meeting)

6-7 November 2025, Paris.

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

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The Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA),

- A. Recalls that the Reykjavik Declaration *United around our values* adopted at the Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, held in Reykjavik, Iceland on 16 and 17 May 2023 recognised that Human Rights and the environment are intertwined and that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is critical to the full enjoyment of human rights by present and future generations;
- B. Notes that in the Reykjavik Declaration the Heads of State and Government, recognised "*the urgency of additional efforts to protect the environment, as well as to counter the impact of the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity on human rights, democracy and the rule of law*";
- C. Notes that the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment *United around our Values for People and the Planet*, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 14 May 2025, recognised that the Council of Europe is uniquely placed to support States in their efforts to protect wildlife, ecosystems, habitats and landscapes and called for the action aimed at fostering co-operation and co-ordination to better prevent and respond to major natural and technological hazards, to assess and reduce risks, and to improve preparedness and post-crisis analysis;
- D. Recalls that the Medium Term Plan 2021–2025, adopted at the 14th Ministerial Meeting on 24 November 2020 in Matosinhos, Portugal, the Ministers recognised that adequate involvement of the population as well as by preparedness actions at all levels is one of the key principles that must cover the entire disaster management cycle;
- E. Recognises that the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 calls for policies and practices for disaster risk management at national and local levels to be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics and the environment and to that end that non-sensitive hazard-exposure, vulnerability, risk, disaster and loss-disaggregated information be made freely available and accessible;
- F. Welcomes the principles established by the European Preparedness Union Strategy, adopted on 26 March 2025, namely an all-hazards, whole-of-the-government and whole-of-society approach, with the aim of fostering a culture of preparedness and resilience among citizens;
- G. Considers that the effect of disasters can be reduced if people's capabilities are reinforced by access to the available science-based knowledge of disaster risks in all its dimensions of vulnerability and by their involvement in the decision-making process, in order to be prepared and know how to act individually and collectively in emergency situations;
- H. Recalls that robust scientific evidence on climate risks now exists, enabling states to propose solutions to mitigate their impact on human lives;

1. Recognises that, in addition to punitive and restorative responsibility, under international law, including the newly adopted Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law (to be open for signature on 3 December 2025), States bear a long-accepted obligation of prevention based on due diligence, of which the responsibility to prepare populations is a fundamental component, as risks are inevitable.

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

1. develop, as part of prevention and preparedness planning, national policies, legal framework, plans and programmes to support initial and further training for all; accordingly, education in climate risks should be set up as initial and further training, targeting all children and adults including public policy makers, taking account sensibilities, vulnerabilities and incorporating a cultural dimension;
2. ensure the effective right to prior, detailed, accessible and clear information, as a key component of the capability to protect oneself from the risks to which one is inevitably exposed, and to take part in decision-making; tailor clear and specific information to cultural and linguistic groups, ensure that information provided by State, regional and local authorities is understandable and accessible to the various audiences, notably to vulnerable groups;
3. promote the right to science, which is critical to ensure appropriate governance, and in particular, access to scientific knowledge and its benefits, entailing an obligation to support and disseminate high-quality, independent and public scientific results;
4. set up effective channels of exchange between a plurality of academics, civil society at large and decision-makers and seek to resolve conflicts of interest through dialogue in science-policy interface mechanisms;
5. engage with the public with a view to achieve genuine citizen participation in the preparation, response and recovery stages, at different tiers of decision-making, particularly the local level, taking into account specific circumstances of persons in vulnerable situations, and taking a culturally-sensitive approach;
6. provide, at regular intervals, in principle of 2 years, information to the Committee of Permanent Correspondents on measures taken and problems encountered in implementing this recommendation, with a view to examining its impact at national level, and sharing best practices;
7. promote meetings on the ground between the EUR-OPA Secretariat, experts and relevant partners in the member states involving all the stakeholders including civil society with a view to promoting best practices and addressing particular issues encountered in implementing this recommendation;

Invites the Secretariat to submit the Recommendation 2025-1 to the Committee of Ministers for information and possible distribution to all member States of the Council of Europe.