

# Local and regional responses to natural disasters and climate hazards



**From crisis preparedness  
to the resilience of territories**

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## **Territorial solidarity, development of risk cultures and willingness to induce economic, ecological and social transitions**

Most European countries are regularly affected by natural disasters and climate hazards. Local and regional authorities are amongst the first to respond, in particular because they are the closest to the citizens in need of protection and support.

In 2023, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe explored the local and regional conditions of immediate crisis response and for the development of long-term resilience, via three case studies in Belgium, Spain and Türkiye, before formulating recommendations to local, regional and national authorities for effective multilevel responses to crisis situations.

The Congress recommendations are based on the assumption that the short-term provision of emergency and post-crisis responses must go hand in hand with long-term resilience building on territorial solidarity, the development of risk cultures and a willingness to induce economic, ecological, and social transitions.

# Crisis Management in four “Temporal Horizons”

Towards Building  
Resilience and  
Risk Culture



Effective crisis management is a complex matter, as it needs to take place in successive but overlapping “temporal horizons” – before, during, just after and well after a disaster. Short-term and long-term action often needs to be taken in parallel, while ensuring smooth horizontal co-operation within a given territory and vertical co-ordination between different levels of governance.

The long-term resilience of territories becomes a permanent goal because crisis situations are an inherent element of human societies and developments requiring regular adaptations.



**After the crisis  
is before the crisis**



## Before the crisis



### Get prepared, develop an approach, build solidarity

#### Identification of risks and development of risk-preparedness

- ▶ Prevention through modes of land use minimising risks
- ▶ Public awareness-raising
- ▶ Structural responses involving emergency coordination units, monitoring systems, and better interagency collaboration
- ▶ Training for local and regional staff
- ▶ Availability of sufficient funding that can be mobilised swiftly
- ▶ Participatory, community work building on local resources and knowledge

## During the crisis



### Coordinate the flow of operations

#### Immediate emergency assistance

- ▶ Central and decentralised coordination units to be determined and communicated
- ▶ Immediate life-saving assistance ("search & rescue")
- ▶ Regional, national and international resource mobilisation
- ▶ Immediate support measures: shelter, food, health care
- ▶ Psychological support where needed
- ▶ Upholding communication flows between administrative units, their partners and with the population affected



## Just after the crisis



### Provide short- and mid-term reparation and services

#### Multilevel crisis management

- ▶ Search&rescue to be pursued
- ▶ Most urgent reconstruction measures
- ▶ Resource mobilisation for individual and collective help
- ▶ Smooth cooperation between different actors and administrative levels



## Well after the crisis

### Develop a vision for long-term transitions

#### Reconstruction as a laboratory for innovation and change

- ▶ Citizen participation as a key resource
- ▶ Consider the natural characteristics, history and constraints of locations
- ▶ Learn from the crisis and develop better plans for the future

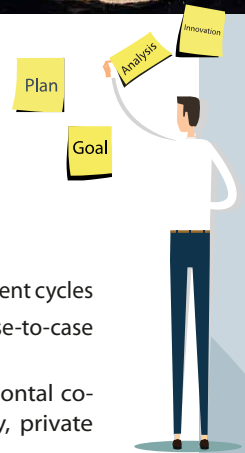
## Long-term resilience



### Construct a local risk culture

#### Making cities and regions more resilient to future crisis situations

- ▶ Identify and adapt to specific local risks
- ▶ Challenge current paradigms, economic models and urban structures
- ▶ Build territorial solidarity within and between territories
- ▶ Counter misinformation and build a positive attitude towards risks



## Key recommendations to local and regional authorities...

- ▶ Follow comprehensive approaches based on full crisis management cycles
- ▶ Foresee a mix of measures to respond to crisis situations on a case-to-case basis and based on the specific risks faced by a territory
- ▶ Set up and regularly review effective mechanisms for horizontal co-operation involving all relevant stakeholders (civil society, private enterprises, citizens)
- ▶ Communicate clearly with local populations about expected or ongoing crisis situations without fuelling fear
- ▶ Improve the crisis preparedness of local and regional services by training professionals and volunteers

## ... and national authorities...

- ▶ Allocate adequate financial resources for an efficient crisis response by local and regional authorities
- ▶ Develop solid vertical coordination mechanisms and communication channels to initiate immediate national support in case of emergencies
- ▶ Co-operate with local and regional authorities and their associations to explore areas for improvement
- ▶ Ensure and harmonise precise, accessible, continuous and interactive data collection
- ▶ Organise national and international exchanges of good practice and support the training of professionals and volunteers

## Long-term action needed: from crisis preparedness to risk cultures and resilience

In upcoming years, Europe will be regularly confronted to natural disasters and climate hazards. Whilst purely natural disasters remain an incalculable risk, all partners in a given country will need to address climate related challenges together, in a concerted effort, all by combining short-term and long-term visions in a comprehensive approach.

Moreover, in a perspective of upholding human rights, democratic governance and the rule of law in times of crisis, the following lines of action are recommended to local, regional and national authorities:

- ▶ Pay attention to public health and psychosocial impacts of crisis situations and their consequences for groups in particularly vulnerable situations
- ▶ Combat the influence by populist movements who may benefit of crisis situations to manipulate public opinions and undermine democratic institutions
- ▶ Make best use of media, including local and social media to maintain reliable communication channels and to counter misinformation and fear
- ▶ Use formal and informal education and training to strengthen the crisis preparedness of citizens of all ages and backgrounds and the representatives of public authorities and agencies
- ▶ Recur to citizen participation, including the participation of young people, throughout the crisis management cycle, to invest into strategies that are owned by those concerned
- ▶ Promote and foster solidarity amongst individuals, communities and territories for more collective resilience against future crisis situations

Further information:

- ▶ Centre of Expertise for multilevel governance at the Congress:  
[ReBuS - Resilience Building Strategies Toolkit](#) (2020)

- ▶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):  
[Building Systemic Climate Resilience in Cities](#) (2023)



French edition: *Réponses locales et régionales aux catastrophes naturelles et aux aléas climatiques – De la préparation aux crises à la résilience des territoires*

This leaflet has been produced by the Secretariat of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, based on the report on “Local and regional responses to natural disasters and climate hazards: from risk preparedness to resilience” and following study visits to Belgium, Spain and Türkiye undertaken in 2023.

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The Congress is a political assembly carrying the voice of local and regional governments in Greater Europe. It is responsible for monitoring standards and providing recommendations concerning local and regional democracy across Europe.

Composed of two Chambers and three thematic Committees, the Congress gathers its members, 612 elected officials representing 130,000 local and regional authorities, in two plenary sessions held in Strasbourg every year.

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