

**Action Oriented Dialogue on  
“Understanding and communicating existing and future  
risks: Ensuring evidence-based communication”  
February 23-24, in Bucharest, Romania**

**Speaking points: Krzysztof Zyman, Executive Secretary  
European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)**

Dear Minister, dear UN SRSG, dear participants,

Thank you for this opportunity to address this meeting organised by the DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR CIVIL PROTECTION, DEPARTMENT FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS, MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS and our partners at the UNDRR. I am honoured to be given the floor at this gathering, and I am equally pleased to see so many partners with whom we cooperate to take part in this important event.

For the sake of brevity, I will go directly to the point of the main theme of this meeting.

Dear Participants,

Focusing on prevention and inclusion, EUR-OPA pays particular attention to the most vulnerable people because disasters affect them more than other groups and create or increase inequalities within our societies. For that reason, EUR-

OPA adopted in 2021 at its Ministerial Meeting, organised in the framework of the EFDRR, two recommendations is on protecting persons with disabilities during pandemics and on inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in pandemics.

Mindful of the particular challenges that the most vulnerable persons within our societies face, the Agreement is working currently on the use of traditional and social media to identify risks, produce guidelines, spread information amongst the population on the best practices to prevent disasters from occurring and the measures to take when the disasters do occur.

Social media platforms have become a feature of everyday lives of millions of people and can play a vital role in saving and safeguarding people's lives and livelihoods. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and other social media sites are useful tools to educate populations on natural and technological disaster preparedness, provide live updates of the impact of disasters people witness as they happen and simply inform about individuals' whereabouts and conditions.

Such uses of social media demonstrate how social media are changing the world for the better. However, with changes come consequences. There are negative impacts of viral social media outreach, that can sometimes harm individuals, and one should be careful about the validity of each claim one sees online. Fake claims online allow malevolent operators to take advantage of naïve social media users and can cause unnecessary panic and fear. They may go as far as to create fundraisers for supposed victims but actually pilfer the funds for their own personal use or fundraise for criminal activity.

This raises the question of the platforms' responsibility and the appropriate use of the social media platforms by authorities and other institutional operators.

The working paper which is currently prepared by the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, shall offer an analysis of the above issues and give specific examples of both the beneficial and malevolent use of social media and of positive examples of engagement of the public, public authorities and other institutional operators. At the next stage the Agreement's members will consider adopting guidelines and **a Recommendation on the use of social media, traditional media, big data and mobile phone networks, to support national measures for successful disaster risk communication.**

The standards elaborated by EUR-OPA are, I am sure we all agree, useful guidance tools at governments' disposal, allowing governments to elaborate more fine-tuned strategies and policies that offer better protection to the most vulnerable persons in our societies. I invite the authorities of all the Agreement's member States, and others, to take them duly into consideration.