

TOWARDS MORE DISASTER RESILIENT SOCIETIES

The EUR-OPA contribution





” Disaster risk reduction has reached maturity in Sendai. Now that the scientific, technical, financial and governance tools are available, states are duty bound to protect their citizens from disasters.

Eladio Fernandez-Galiano

Executive Secretary, EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement

The EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement has long contributed to and continues to support the global efforts on Disaster Risk Reduction, in particular the four priority areas of the Post-2015 Framework to be adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (14-18 March 2015, Sendai, Japan).

BETTER RISK ASSESSMENT

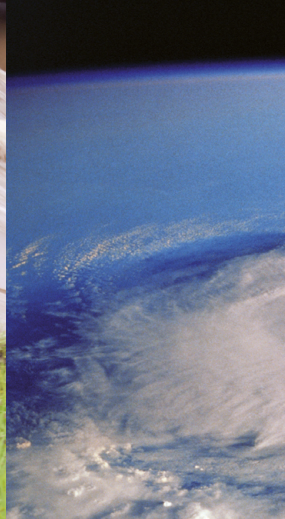
With a view to preventing existing risks and coping with emerging threats, risks first need to be identified and their sources understood. The Agreement has therefore focused on identifying and mapping hazards by giving priority to relevant studies and joint action at international level.

RISK IDENTIFICATION

The Centre on Geodynamical Hazards of High Dams (Tbilisi, Georgia) and the Centre for Seismic and Geomorphological Hazards (Strasbourg, France) have been conducting innovative research in the field of geo-morphological and geo-hydrological hazards, leading to the development and dissemination of methodologies and techniques in the monitoring of trigger factors and their integration into associated susceptibility maps.

EMERGING RISKS

Climate change has already transformed risk patterns by modifying the frequency of extreme events, but in certain regions, such as the Arctic, it also influences the level of vulnerability itself. The Centre of New Technologies for the Management of Natural and Technological Major Hazards (Moscow, Russian Federation) has developed a survey on potential new threats associated with recent changes in the Arctic region and has identified new requirements to adequately handle the subsequent opportunities and challenges.



BETTER RISK GOVERNANCE

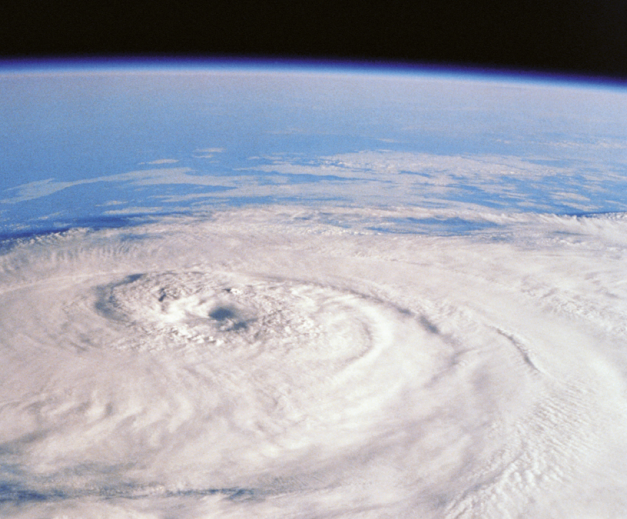
The EUR-OPA Agreement has taken a particular interest in analysing the legislation on risk prevention and management. Even though the situation differs from one country to another, authorities often seek to draw on other countries' experience to formulate their own legislation. Limiting the scope to the practices of immediate neighbours is too restrictive. Indeed, a more global approach is necessary in order to identify a wide range of good practices.

INTER-MINISTERIAL MANAGEMENT

The lack of co-ordination appears to be a major problem in national civil protection legislation, according to a review undertaken by the Higher Institute of Emergency Planning (Brussels, Belgium). These findings led to subsequent work on the actual role of interministerial action in several countries with different management models. Regular co-ordination between various risk-management governmental entities – through integrated multidisciplinary action which respects individual responsibilities – enables more consistent and effective decision taking at national level and the formulation of better practices further down the line.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

National authorities must be encouraged to reconsider their decision-making approach in order to facilitate implementation by regional and local authorities. Taking into account the findings of a study on "subnational action", it appears that effective networking at all levels of authority is essential to successful risk management.



BETTER RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS

The vulnerability of individuals, communities and the environment is a major factor in determining susceptibility to disaster risks and levels of resilience. Yet these risks do not affect everybody in the same way. Poor people and socially disadvantaged groups are the most exposed and suffer most directly from disasters. In 2011, the EUR-OPA Agreement adopted the “Ethical principles on disaster risk reduction and people’s resilience”, aimed at improving preparedness and dealing with ethical problems related to the victims of disasters.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

EUR-OPA’s Agreement published guidelines and recommendations to improve the assistance and the inclusion of people with disabilities in preparedness and response to Major Hazards. A “Toolkit” for civil protection professionals has also been developed to provide practical guidance in this area. The Agreement also prepared guidelines and recommendations as well as a manual of good practices to accompany States in developing policies to improve the resilience of Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees to natural and technological hazards.

ECOSYSTEM-BASED RESILIENCE

As an active member of the Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR), the Agreement promotes ecosystem management as the key strategy to reduce disaster risk, increase local resilience and adapt to climate change. To support these principles, the Agreement has published “Ecosystem approach to disaster risk reduction”.



BETTER PREPAREDNESS FOR DISASTERS

The growing frequency and complexity of emergencies show the need to strengthen response capabilities. Civil protection, law-enforcement bodies and other concerned stakeholders should be ready to respond at all times, and co-ordination between all relevant partners is key to effectively managing crises. Yet, efficient preparation cannot be limited to improved public services: people's awareness of and preparedness for risks are crucial to ensuring adequate responses.

FOREST FIRES

The EUR-OPA Global Fire Monitoring Centre (Freiburg, Germany) assesses potential wildfire risks to natural and cultural heritage sites. In co-operation with other European countries, the centre has developed guidelines for the defence of rural populations against wildfires. The Agreement has also supported its efforts to promote transnational fire management co-operation in Europe and beyond.

INFORMATION FOR THE POPULATION

To improve the population's preparedness for disasters, the European Centre for Disaster Medicine (San Marino) has coordinated the publication of a multilingual guide "Know how to deal with emergencies", which provides useful information on how to deal with emergencies (from earthquakes to chemical accidents), in order to mitigate the impact of natural and technological disasters on human life.

The main objective of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Partial Agreement is to reinforce and promote co-operation between member states in a multi-disciplinary context to ensure better prevention and protection against risks and better preparation in the event of major natural or technological disasters.

■ Set up by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1987, the has 25 member states to date: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Turkey, Ukraine, and three Mediterranean countries which are not member states of the Council of Europe: Algeria, Lebanon and Morocco.

■ On the scientific and technical level, the Agreement’s 26 specialised centres develop projects, both at national and international levels, which aim to improve the awareness of and resilience to major risks within the population.

■ The main partners of the EUR-OPA Agreement are: UNISDR, UNESCO, European Commission, Global Risk Forum (GRF Davos), Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction.

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 26 member states.



Contact us:
EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
Tel: +33 388 41 3027 / +33 388 41 2937
Fax: +33 388 41 2728
Email: europa.risk@coe.int
Web: www.coe.int/europarisks

www.coe.int

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.


EUR-OPA MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT
ACCORD EUR-OPA RISQUES MAJEURS

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE