

DRAFT CONFERENCE OUTLINE

Conference for Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response

Venue: Palais Egmont, Brussels, Belgium
Dates: 4 December 2014, 9.30 – 18.00 and 5 December 9.30 – 13.00
Expected participants: 100-150 policy makers and government representatives, including local governments, agencies, associations, mainly in the field of civil protection and all stakeholders working with people with disabilities and disaster risk reduction.
Organisers: This Conference is organised by EUR-OPA, in cooperation with the INGO Conference and the Social Cohesion Unit.

The Council of Europe strives to promote the perception of persons with disabilities as holders of rights in the same way as all other citizens, considering disability to be part of human diversity. Defending values and promoting human rights through Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response is at the heart of the Council of Europe's mission.

A Conference (addressed to the 47 member States) on the implementation of the Guidelines for Assisting People with Disabilities during Emergency, Crises and Disasters and the Recommendation on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response, will present the work conducted by EUR-OPA on vulnerable groups and in particular on people with disabilities.

The Ethical Principles on Disaster Risk Reduction and People's Resilience, adopted in 2011, were the basis for the current work programme. A Workshop on "Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response" took place in Paris in October 2013. People with disabilities were associated throughout the process and in particular during the Workshop, voicing their experiences and needs regarding disaster preparedness and response. The Workshop allowed participants to exchange on the Report, Guidelines and Recommendation, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan (2006-2015) and the topic in general: policy makers and government representatives, including local governments, agencies, associations, mainly in the field of civil protection and all stakeholders working with people with disabilities and disaster risk reduction contributed to the debate.

A Working Group (cf appended mandate) was set up to further explore the topic, focusing on different practices, return of experiences, identifying concrete associated actions in the member States, going beyond conceptual approaches and identifying concrete actions to actually improve resilience of people with disabilities. The adopted Guidelines and a Recommendation are to be implemented in order to ensure that the topic is brought to the closer attention of civil protection officials and is encompassed in general by a larger audience. The overall aim is to develop a publication/toolbox for civil protection professionals at local, regional and national level in order to reduce the vulnerability of people with disabilities to natural and technological hazards. The Conference will launch these concrete tools for the use of civil protection professionals. The results of the Conference will be fed into the preparation of the Third World

Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in Sendai City (Japan) in March 2015, where a session on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response is scheduled.

Appendix

MANDATE OF THE WORKING GROUP

Strasbourg, 20 December 2013

Conference on the implementation of the “Guidelines for Assisting People with Disabilities during Emergency, Crises and Disasters” and the Recommendation on “Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response”

(Presentation of the Publication on Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response, as well as of a Toolkit on the same topic for the use of Civil Protection bodies at local, regional and national level).

1. Background and Purpose of the Conference

In 2011 the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) adopted Ethical Principles on Disaster Risk Reduction and People’s Resilience. In 2012 the Committee decided to focus part of its work on guidance for a more operative practice with vulnerable groups and in particular on people with disabilities. A Questionnaire on Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction has been developed and circulated in March 2013 in order to collect examples of good practice and already existing regulations and laws in the field. The Report integrated this information and portrays the situation related to People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response.

On 22-23 October 2013 a Workshop on “Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response” took place in Paris. People with disabilities were associated throughout the process and in particular during the Workshop, voicing their experiences and needs regarding disaster preparedness and response. The Workshop allowed participants to exchange on the Report, Guidelines and Recommendation, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan (2006-2015) and the topic in general: policy makers and government representatives, including local governments, agencies, associations, mainly in the field of civil protection and all stakeholders working with people with disabilities and disaster risk reduction contributed to the debate. The Report, Guidelines and Recommendation were discussed and endorsed by the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) at its meeting on 24 October 2013, before being published.

2. Aim of the Conference

The Council of Europe strives to promote the perception of persons with disabilities as holders of rights in the same way as all other citizens, considering disability to be part of human diversity. Defending values and promoting human rights through Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response is at the heart of the Council of Europe’s mission.

The Workshop on “Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response” was well received by both representatives from the disability and civil protection sectors, particularly as not much work has been carried out to date by civil protection in the field of persons with disabilities and disaster risk reduction.

The Guidelines are now to be translated into concrete Action and the Recommendation needs to be implemented, in order to ensure that the topic is brought to the closer attention of civil protection officials and is encompassed in general by a larger audience. The overall aim is to develop a publication/toolbox for civil protection professionals in order to reduce the vulnerability of people with disabilities to natural and technological hazards.

For that purpose, it is proposed to set up a Working Group. Its aim is to collect good practices, to implement the documents, focusing on different practices, return of experiences, identifying concrete associated actions in the member States and to go beyond conceptual approaches and identify concrete actions to actually improve resilience of people with disabilities.

A Conference (addressed to the 47 member States) on the “Implementation of the Guidelines for Assisting People with Disabilities during Emergency, Crises and Disasters” and the Recommendation on “Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response” will present the work conducted by the Working Group. The Deputy Secretary General should open this Conference where concrete tools for the use of civil protection professionals at local, regional and national level will be presented.

3. Mandate of the Working Group

The main tasks will consist of:

- piloting the process by collecting good practices on “Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response”, e.g. through the EUR-OPA Permanent Correspondents and the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction;
- implementing the findings of the Report and the Guidelines in a Plan of concrete Actions;
- putting forward suggestions for the implementation of the Recommendation;
- setting up accessibility features to be taken into consideration in the development of disaster management plans, both at the level of preparedness before a disaster strikes and during and after a disaster;
- developing a user friendly toolkit for civil protection professionals in order to reduce the risks within the disaster cycle;
- formulating policy recommendations to be forwarded to UNISDR for their inclusion into its future Framework of Action;
- contributing to the preparation of a Conference in 2014.

4. Working Group

It is suggested to invite 10 experts [2 from academia, 2 from civil protection, 2 from INGOs -one of whom will represent disabled people's organisations (DPOs) and the other representing service providers, 2 political decision makers, 2 from international organisations], 1 member of the Committee of experts on the rights of persons with disabilities (CS-RPD) and 2 members from the Council of Europe Secretariat (Social Cohesion and Integration Division and EUR-OPA). If during the course of the work further expertise is needed, specialists on that specific question could be invited to join.

5. Schedule

Working Group meetings:

- 15 January 2014, UNESCO, Paris
- 12 and 13 March 2014, Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction (UCL-IRDR), University College London
- September 2014, Paris (to be confirmed)

Conference: two days at the end of 2014, venue tbc, with the presentation of concrete tools for the use of civil protection professionals.