



PrepAGE
Enhancing disaster management preparedness
for the older population in the EU

National Workshop - Report

Facilitator: Bulgarian Red Cross

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1) Introduction

The Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) is working towards increasing the population's preparedness in the event of a disaster situation, and together with the Civil Defense bodies prepares first aid demonstrations and also provides first aid. In order to achieve its goals, the BRC aims to increase the organisation's capacity and improve the organisation's coordination during disasters. The Bulgarian Red Cross is included in the National Disaster Plan and assists the state in protecting and strengthening the population's health in case of natural or technological disasters.

Human Resources

The BRC personnel have an annually updated plan for disaster situations. For rescue activities and population support in case of a disaster the following teams were created:

1. National operational HQ – which includes the National Disaster Response Team and the National Water Life-Saving Team
2. Regional (Local) operational HQ's – (which includes Volunteer Disaster Response Teams)

National Disaster Response Team

The National Disaster Response Team (NDRT) is a volunteer rescue team created to support the BRC during disaster situations. The main goal of the NDRT is to support the national organisation in protecting and strengthening the population's health in case of disasters.

Volunteer Disaster Response Teams

Volunteer Disaster Response Teams (VDRT) are formed to support the organisational structures in the event of an emergency. There are rules and regulations for the voluntary teams in terms of how they provide first aid to victims.

Members of the Regional Disaster Response Team

The Regional Disaster Response Team consists of representatives from different national organisations and it is based in Budapest and subordinate to the Regional European Office of the IFRC/RC (Europe Zone). The aim of the team is to support the National Societies in this region in the assessment of different disaster situations.

Organised and spontaneous volunteers in disaster situations:

Volunteers from other regional BRC organisations (not affected by the disaster)

Mountain Rescue Teams

National and Regional Water Life-Saving Teams. The members of these teams are trained to act in situations involving floods and white water.

Youth Volunteer Disaster Teams

Members of the Refugee and Migrant Service

Psychosocial support teams





Disaster preparedness for people from the third age

A practical guide for trainers, which provided information on how to be well prepared in case of a disaster and what to do during a disaster, was created and distributed to 12 regions in Bulgaria. Training was provided in July 2013 for regional staff members, who are responsible for disaster preparedness in local BRC Branches. During this training, information was provided regarding the specific issues faced by people from the third age. Once trained, these regional staff members led 12 regional training sessions in September 2013. Within these sessions, 300 volunteers from the third age were trained, (25 per region). Following this, trained staff and volunteers went on to share this information with older people in pensioner's clubs and with other regional NGOs (Plovdiv, Yambol, Montana, Shumen, Lovech).

Within the implementation of the PrepAGE project needs, structures and measures will be identified which will improve preparedness for and access to the target group of older people in case of emergencies and disasters. When developing guidelines, the resources and resilience of the older population will be taken into account, and experts from health and social sector will liaise with experts from the Protection and Rescue system.

2) Participants of the National Workshop

- 1) Ministry of Interior
- 2) Ministry of Social Policy and Labour
- 3) Ministry of Health
- 4) National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria
- 5) Union of Pensioners
- 6) National Agency of People with Disabilities
- 7) Sofia Municipality
- 8) Caritas
- 9) Directors, staff and senior volunteers from BRC Local Branches (Yambol and Plovdiv)
- 10) Media
- 11) Bulgarian National 112 System

3. Experience of the various organisations and decision makers in Bulgaria with older population in disaster situations

The workshop was opened by Hristo Grigorov, President of the Bulgarian Red Cross and Associate Professor Krasimir Gigov, Director General of Bulgarian Red Cross. Following this, Yassen Slivenski and Desislava Ilieva presented the participants of the workshop and the aims of the PrepAGE project, as well as the role and the place of the Bulgarian Red Cross in disaster situations. Henrieta Ilieva, National Consultant in PSS outlined the role and the position of the PSS in disaster situations. Desislava Ilieva then introduced the research results which were determined by participants who were split into focus groups to discuss the experiences of the various organisations in Bulgaria with the older population in disaster situations.





The following feedback came from the participants:

- Older people are a vulnerable group during disasters and they require special support;
- There are no registers of older people on a community level;
- The evacuation of older people during disasters is a general problem;
- The focus should be on vulnerable groups, not just on older people;
- Staff from the health and social sector should be trained in disaster preparedness, as should PSS. (The representative from Caritas expressed interest in training their Home Care staff in disaster preparedness and the representative of the Union of Municipalities in Bulgaria was also interested in training staff in disaster preparedness);
- It is important to harness the life experience of older people as they can be volunteers who support vulnerable groups during disaster situations;
- The relationships between all stakeholders have to be stronger for a more satisfactory response to emergency and disaster situations.

Groups of older people that participants considered to be particularly vulnerable:

- Older people with disabilities
- People who are more than 60 years old, chronically ill, and require constant medication
- People with physical and mental health issues
- People with a lower level of education
- People who have no relatives and live alone in small villages

Recommendations

- Development of a database to register vulnerable older people on a regional level;
- Strengthening of the networks between disaster management and care for older people on a local level;
- Capacity building within governmental institutions and NGOs – training the staff and volunteers in disaster response to be better prepared in case of a disaster;
- Better coordination of all stakeholders who are part of the protection and rescue system;
- Education of vulnerable groups through the peer-to-peer method;
- Development of evacuation plans at the local level.

