

European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction¹ (EFDRR)

Concept Paper

Overview

Overall Objective:

1. The European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction is intended to serve as a forum to stimulate and facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge among participating National HFA Focal Points and Platforms and regional/sub regional partners.
2. To provide advocacy for effective action to reduce disasters, by contributing to the implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters* (HFA), and by promoting and supporting the creation of new National Platforms
3. To create a safer Europe by reducing the impact of natural hazards to reduce vulnerability, and increasing the ability to minimize consequences of disasters
4. The forum facilitates exchanges among European nations on the implementation of the HFA, for expanding the political space devoted to the issue and would provide an opportunity for innovative ideas in the field of DRR.

Why develop a European Forum:

The European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction serves as forum for exchanges at the regional level. The European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction facilitates discussion and advances on disaster risk reduction issues in a coordinated fashion at the regional level.

How the European Forum functions:

The European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction functions through a bottom-up and participatory approach; building on existing institutions and organizations; avoiding the creation of bureaucratic layers and rigid structures; not acting as a political forum and the forum cannot speak on behalf of the member countries; meeting on an annual basis; deciding on the venue and date for the European Forum gatherings after each meeting, and depending on the Chair who will host it.

The European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction nominates a Chair and a Co-Chair each year who will lead the yearly meeting and promote the forum's prioritized topics. UNISDR provides the secretariat support in collaboration with the Council of Europe (CoE) - EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement. Beside the Secretariat, a Steering Committee collaborate with the Chair and Co-Chair in organizing annual meeting and events with the advice, accordingly, of a Friends of the Chair Group. Task force groups addressing identified areas related to disaster risk reduction are stimulated within the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction.

What the European Forum shall address:

- The gap areas identified in the HFA implementation report in Europe;
- Focus areas and activities identified by European NPs and HFA Focal Points;
- Serve as a venue for preparation to the Global Platform.

Who is part of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction

The European Forum includes: HFA Focal Points and representatives of National Platforms¹ in the European region, UNISDR-Europe, regional organizations, in particular representatives from the Council of Europe EUR-OPA, and representatives from the European Commission, Civil Protection - Prevention & Preparedness Unit DG ECHO, and sub-regional organizations/institutions as agreed by the forum.

¹ While in the international context reference will be made to **Regional Platforms**, the specific name attributed is European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Detailed description of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction² and its Functions

Context

The HFA highlights the need to exchange and collaborate on disaster risk reduction issues at the national, regional and international level. The following general points capture the spirit of exchanges applicable to the development of the European Forum:

- "...Promote regional programmes, including programmes for technical cooperation, capacity development, the development of methodologies and standards for hazard and vulnerability monitoring and assessment, the sharing of information and effective mobilization of resources, in view of supporting national and regional efforts to achieve the objectives of this Framework for Action;..."³
- "...Undertake and publish regional and sub-regional baseline assessments of the disaster risk reduction status, according to the needs identified and in line with their mandates;..."⁴
- "...Coordinate and publish periodic reviews on progress in the region and on impediments and support needs and assist countries, as requested, in the preparation of periodic national summaries of their programmes and progress;..."⁵
- "...Establish or strengthen existing specialized regional collaborative centers, as appropriate, to undertake research, training, education and capacity building in the field of disaster risk reduction;..."⁶
- "...Support the development of regional mechanisms and capacities for early warning to disasters, including tsunamis..."⁷
- "...Facilitate the coordination of effective and integrated action within the organizations of the United Nations system and among other relevant international and regional entities, in accordance with their respective mandates, to support the implementation of this Framework for Action. Identify gaps in implementation and facilitate consultative processes to develop guidelines and policy tools for each priority area, with relevant national, regional and international expertise..."⁸

Why develop a European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction

Since the establishment of the UNISDR Regional Office for Europe in 2007, the European NPs and HFA Focal Points have been meeting to share their experiences, good practices and challenges in addressing disaster risk reduction in the context of the HFA implementation. These meetings have been thematically based, and have proven useful, hence the agreement to continue holding them regularly. Informal meetings⁹ have been held between several countries since 2003 with the participation of UNISDR, before the formalization of these

² While in the international context reference will be made to **Regional Platforms**, the specific name attributed is European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction.

³ HFA 2005-2015, Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters", p.15, <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/docs/Hyogo-framework-for-action-english.pdf>

⁴ See footnote 2.

⁵ See footnote 2.

⁶ See footnote 2.

⁷ See footnote 2.

⁸ "HFA 2005-2015, Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters", p.17, <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/docs/Hyogo-framework-for-action-english.pdf>

⁹ In this context of regional exchanges among key players, the European NPs and HFA Focal Points gathered together on several occasions in order to share experiences, good practices and challenges, since 2003 namely: 07-08 December 2006 in Paris, 07 May 2007 in Strasbourg; 25 April 2008 in Paris; 19-20 February 2009 in Bonn.

meetings following the adoption of the HFA for National Platforms or HFA Focal Points. These meetings have been complemented by a number of events: workshops, meetings and high level conferences organized by regional and national partners¹⁰.

Main institutions that are collaborating with UNISDR, NPs and HFA Focal Points

In Europe¹¹ the mandates and engagements of several existing regional and sub-regional organizations and institutions have disaster risk reduction activities at their core. The following summary of sub-regional organizations and institutions is not meant to be exhaustive but includes the main institutions that are collaborating with UNISDR, NPs and HFA Focal Points. Among these institutions, particular reference should be made to Council of Europe EUR-OPA that hosted, supported and facilitated the meetings of NPs and HFA Focal Points.

Council of Europe (CoE) - EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement

The main objective of the agreement is “to reinforce and promote cooperation between member states in a multi-disciplinary context to ensure better prevention, protection and organization of relief in the event of major natural or technological disasters by calling upon present day resources and knowledge to ensure efficient and interdependent management of major disasters.” Following the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action, EUR-OPA has developed a work plan based on the HFA as well as a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNISDR on advancing the disaster risk reduction agenda in the region. In the context of their mandate, work plan and MoU, EUR-OPA has been actively supporting the development of National Platforms in Europe as well as co-organizing, supporting and hosting European National Platforms and HFA Focal Points meetings as well as facilitating the reporting of Europe on the HFA implementation. EUR-OPA has been advancing this agenda alongside the regional countries that are part of the agreement.¹²

European Commission¹³/European Union (EC/EU)

The European Commission has engaged in disaster risk reduction issues since the adoption of the HFA. The EC/EU has launched several relevant programmes (such as the Disaster Risk Reduction programme for South Eastern Europe), organized events and financed research. Further the EC/EU has adopted two Communications on Disaster Prevention Initiative and the Disaster Risk Reduction Initiative¹⁴ and a White Paper on climate change adaptation. In the Commission a number of General Directorates are - particularly involved in these advances within the European context. These are: DG Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) and its Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Unit, DG Research, DG Enlargement and DG Environment. The EC/EU has been closely exchanging and collaborating with UNISDR Europe including through organization of joint workshops, publications and events.

A European Network of National Platforms

This network established in 2007 by the French, German and Swiss National Platforms has been recently joined by national platforms from the Czech Republic and Poland. The network goals include the facilitation and improvement of the exchanges of information among members and support for the integration of disaster risk reduction into all aspects of European society at national, regional and international level. The network aims to

¹⁰ For a full list of events see :

<http://www.unisdr.org/europe/events/index.php?rid=4&timeID=2008&tid=0&oid=0&hid=0&t=1&x=11&y=13>

¹¹ As per UNISDR regional coverage.

¹² Countries that are part of EUR-OPA are: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, Algeria, Lebanon, and Morocco.

¹³ DG ECHO (Civil Protection Prevention and Preparedness Unit), DG Enlargement, DG Research and DG Environment are among the General Directorates that have been actively collaborating with UNISDR Europe and other disaster risk reduction actors.

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/civil/pdfdocs/com_2009_82en.pdf

represent its constituents and civil society vis-à-vis the EU, the Council of Europe (EUR-OPA), the ISDR, and other international bodies addressing disaster risk reduction. It actively contributes to the implementation of HFA, organizes and participates in DRR-related events, and implements among its members' national platforms and partners a European level DRR-related "exchange programme" addressing more than 20 themes.

The Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South-Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE)

This initiative stems from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and has been a primary example of regional ownership. The overarching goal of DPPI SEE¹⁵ is to foster regional cooperation and coordination in disaster preparedness and prevention in South Eastern Europe as well as:

- Strengthening good neighbourly relations through exchange of lessons learnt and good practices in disaster risk management.
- Enhancing cooperation between DPPI partners in view of the EU enlargement and the process of Euro-Atlantic integration for SEE countries.
- Supporting and encouraging countries in the region to develop, adopt and enforce state-of-the-art disaster emergency legislation, environmental regulations and codes designated to prevent and mitigate disasters in line with guidelines and common practices accepted in the international community.
- Assisting and encouraging countries in the region to implement the HFA 2005-2015. DPPI has been closely collaborating with UNISDR Europe in a number of events, training and workshops.

The Central European Forum for Disaster Prevention (CEUDIP)

CEUDIP established following the catastrophic floods in 1997 which devastated large parts of Central Europe. It was created and has a mandate to facilitate the exchange of experience and knowledge and to improve coordination of activities between member platforms, namely those of Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. This includes disaster risk reduction work.

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

The RCC was launched in 2008 as the successor of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and functions as a focal point for cooperation in South Eastern Europe through a regionally owned and led framework that also supports European and Euro-Atlantic integration. It acts as a forum for the continued involvement of the international community engagement in the region. The work of the RCC focuses on five priority areas: Economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice and home affairs, security cooperation and building human capital and parliamentary cooperation. The RCC membership consists of 45 countries, organizations and international institutions. In the context of the South Eastern Europe Disaster Risk Mitigation and Adaptation Programme (WB-UNISDR and partners), RCC has been collaborating with UNISDR Europe on a number of issues including advancing the development of an insurance facility for South Eastern Europe.

Based on the above succinct overview, in the Europe Region there are a number of existing regional and sub-regional organizations that are working and collaborating and/or represented by the HFA Focal Points, National Platforms. All of the mentioned regional and sub-regional players have been collaborating with UNISDR Europe.

With this rich perspective in view, the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction will represent an opportunity for the NPs and HFA Focal Points in Europe and for these existing regional and sub-regional organizations to exchange knowledge and practices on DRR implementation as well as to avoid duplication of efforts but rather to address the actions in a complementary manner. According to their agenda and focus areas, ISDR system partners may be invited to attend meetings of the European Forum.

¹⁵ DPPI SEE covers the following countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Greece and Hungary, although they have not signed the MoU yet, are members of the initiative.

How the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction functions

To create a rational structure for operation, the functions of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction will be based on the following five principles:

- 1. Bottom-up and participatory approach:** This will ensure that National Platforms and HFA Focal Points in Europe will be at the core of the European Forum. Their participation, active exchanges and engagement will shape the agenda and activities of the European Forum.
- 2. Building on existing institutions/organizations:** This will allow for the above mentioned key institutions/organizations to be part of the European Forum. These will be able to contribute to the forum by building on their ongoing meeting opportunities, work plans, activities and working groups.
- 3. Avoiding the creation of bureaucratic layers and rigid structures:** The creation of complex and time consuming bureaucracy will be reduced and the principle will allow maximizing the existing regional organizations forum and gathering.
- 4. Not acting as a political forum and the forum cannot speak on behalf of its member countries:** This principle will allow all countries to express their views and interests through their respective national government. The same principle used to convene NPs and HFA Focal Points meetings shall be applied.
- 5. Meeting on an annual basis:** Continuity will be ensured by having meetings of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction on an annual basis. The venue or date for the European Forum gatherings is decided by the Steering Group.

It is possible, although not necessary, to accompany that meeting with some events (e.g. field trip as a practical presentation of DDR or seminar/discussion on actual themes etc.)

Participants to the meetings will support their own travel expenses while limited funds will be made available by the Council of Europe (EUR-OPA) and UNISDR. Hosting countries shall provide meeting venue and logistic support. No other resources than those already mentioned, will be available.

Meetings of NPs and HFA Focal Points have previously been organized by National Platforms, partly under the auspices and support of the EUR-OPA in collaboration with UNISDR. This common practice and EUR-OPA engagement could be maintained, or other regional organizations could undertake a similar role.

Steering Group

The Steering Group consists of the Chair and Co-Chair, UNISDR (Regional Coordinator) and the Council of Europe's EUR-OPA (Executive Secretary). The Steering Group can invite a representative of the Civil Protection, Prevention and Preparedness Unit (DG ECHO).

The role of the Chair¹⁶ and Co-Chair is an evolving one, with the following primary responsibilities:

- Ensure that the yearly European Forum meeting is organized in coordination with the Steering Group, set the agenda and assist in the preparation and distribution of information packages, identify venue, follow-up after the meeting etc.
- Lead the European Forum in monitoring and advancing the areas of focus identified to develop a system for maintaining liaison and communication with European Forum members in collaboration with UNISDR and Council of Europe-EUR-OPA .
- Put the DRR agenda higher in their national agenda;
- Increase the visibility of the DRR activities within the international settings;
- Stimulate networking and exchanges among partners;
- Work with UNISDR and Council of Europe-EUR-OPA to encourage the participation and membership of those European countries that are currently not engaged
- Does not act as a political function;

¹⁶ The Chair for 2011 is the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Co-Chair is Croatia that will take over the chairmanship in 2012.

- Serve for one calendar year from the 1st of January to the 31st of December¹⁷ Consults with the “Friends of the Chair” regarding the planning of the yearly meeting and other events.

Sub-regional organizations

The role of the sub-regional organizations is to inform the EFDRR about current issues in their geographic area and promote discussion about the relevance for the EFDRR. Progress and good examples from sub-regional organizations can be useful for other countries within the EFDRR. In turn the forum can provide insight on how a similar challenge was addressed by other member countries.

Task Force groups

The possibility of developing task force groups addressing identified areas related to disaster risk reduction will be stimulated within the European Forum. These task force groups will build on the work undertaken by existing working groups/networks developed within regional organizations to ensure the advancement of the topic. UNISDR should maintain a list of the task force groups, their assignments, the name and contact information of the chairperson and the other members of the task force group. Task force groups develop proposals or perform tasks and the results are presented to the forum.

Friends of the Chair

Previous Chairs of the EFDRR and chairs of earlier NPs and HFA Focal Points meetings, together with Council of Europe (EUR-OPA), UNISDR, EC, DPPI form the Friends of the Chair that acts as an advisory group to the Chair and Co-Chair.

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| <h3>What the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction addresses</h3> |
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Based on the objectives of the European Forum outlined above, the outcomes of previous NP and HFA Focal Points meetings¹⁸, and the conclusions of the “Implementing the HFA in Europe”¹⁹ report, the following outcomes and focus areas have been identified:

- Increased awareness on disaster risk reduction as an integral aspect of sustainable development and adaptation to climate change, recognizing that it is “everybody's business”;
- Enhanced commitment of policy and decision-makers to implement the HFA;
- Stimulated engagement of national and regional actors to promote joint activities towards disaster risk reduction;
- Enhanced coordination of relevant national and regional actors in disaster risk reduction;
- Fostered understanding of the HFA reporting mechanisms;
- Identified specific opportunities for cross-fertilization between countries and sub-regions for exchanging knowledge and information, as well as inter-government and inter-sector cooperation.

Focus areas and activities identified for the period 2011 and forward are the following:

- Adaptation to climate change and extreme weather events;
- Information sharing and exchange;
- Local level / community level approach (Making Cities Resilient, protection of critical infrastructures such as hospitals and schools etc.);
- Harmonize risk mapping and assessments including data collection;
- Cost-benefit analysis case studies.

¹⁷ Sweden as the EFDRR's first chair served from the forum's establishment in November 2009 to October 2010 when the former Republic of Macedonia took over but in the future the chair will serve one calendar year from the 1st of January to the 31st of December.

¹⁸ Meetings held since 2003 including in particular the Bonn meeting in 2004.

¹⁹ <http://www.unisdr.org/europe/publications/v.php?id=9452>

The focus areas will be evolving based on achievements obtained and/or on new focus areas emerging within the European Forum.

Together with highlighted outcomes and focus areas, the European Forum will serve as venue for:

- Facilitating the identification of common needs and action programmes;
- Information sharing, exchange of knowledge and ideas and facilitation of cooperation;
- Stimulating exchanges among HFA focal points and NPs and facilitating joint activities and twinning among European NPs and with other regions;
- Learning from past experiences and sharing of good practice;
- Providing practical suggestions for regional and sub-regional initiatives in support of national and community efforts to reduce disaster risk;
- Benchmarking where countries can seek guidance from others who have already achieved desired results;
- Fostering the use of innovative technologies in DRR within member countries;
- Reviewing the development of regional reports on HFA implementation and advocating national reporting on HFA through the UNISDR monitoring tool;
- Promoting the development of key events that can promote disaster risk reduction;
- Serving as venue for preparation for Global Platform sessions.

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| Role of Council of Europe-EUR-OPA (or anchoring regional organization) |
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Within this forum, the role of Council of Europe-EUR-OPA may include:

- Supporting the organization of European Forum meetings and promoting the participation of countries that have not been previously active;
- Hosting when necessary European Forum meetings²⁰, based on funds availability and requests sponsoring participants' attendance;
- Supporting the development of regional reports on the HFA implementation;
- Sharing information and updates with EUR-OPA permanent correspondent and Council of Europe on European Forum meetings and advances.

The above mentioned functions will be complementary to the EUR-OPA mandate and with the MoU developed with UNISDR²¹.

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| Role of UNISDR Regional Office for Europe |
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Within this forum, the UNISDR Regional Office for Europe will:

- call upon relevant International and European Organizations to collaborate with the European Forum based on its identified focus areas;
- collaborate with the Council of Europe EUR-OPA, the anchoring regional organizations and the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction current Chair and Co-Chair on the development of the meeting agendas, objectives, distribution information, documents, other activities, and follow-up etc;
- advocate and provide visibility to European Forum issues at the global level.

²⁰When necessary depending on hosting country availability.

²¹Document available upon request UNISDR/Council of Europe-EUR-OPA.

All the above mentioned functions will be complementary to the below UNISDR Europe Regional office functions and core services:

- Promote coherent action in disaster risk reduction at national and regional levels between all actors engaged, including through the support of regional strategies, partnerships and networks and promoting linkages with climate change policies;
- Monitor, report and guide the Hyogo Framework for Action implementation at the national and regional levels;
- Provide technical assistance and promote a consensus on establishing standards for disaster risk reduction, and the exchange of information and lessons learned in line with UNISDR goals and priorities.
- Advocacy, information services and tools for national and sub-national actors to mainstream of disaster risk reduction in national development plans;
- Technical support and tools for the monitoring of progress on disaster risk reduction implementation in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action;
- Technical and operational support to the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction;
- Develop guidance and good practices based on lessons learnt and develop and maintain expert networks and contacts.