

Working group 2: the Potential Role of Peer Reviews to Enhance Disaster Risk Reduction in Europe

Discussion document

The aim of the working document is to provide basis for discussion and explore stakeholders' views on the potential role of "peer review" to enhance disaster risk reduction in Europe.

This document builds on former discussions that took place during the 2009 European HFA Focal Points meetings (Bonn, February 2009 and London, November 2009) as well as on conclusions from the HFA mid-term review.

What could be the added value of peer reviews?

Peer reviews can be a very beneficial tool in helping countries to share experience and best practices in an area of common interest where some countries (peers) examine the performance of another country ('reviewed country'). The effectiveness of that process relies mainly on the equality between the reviewed and the examining countries and the mutual trust and confidence they share in the outcomes from the review process.

The peers can exercise 'soft persuasion' and thus enhance mutual accountability, since the recommendations and the conclusions from the review process do not create binding obligations, but aim to help the reviewed country adopt good practices and identify shortcomings in its disaster risk reduction policies.

Peer reviews can be very effective as an assessment tool and, in particular:

- help the reviewed country improve its policy making on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and risk management by a process of mutual learning and exchange among the participants,
- enhance compliance with the DRR objectives and priorities for actions,
- foster policy dialogue and enhance the capacities of the participating countries in implementation of DRR policy

What could be the objectives and scope of a peer reviews?

The objectives of peer reviews would be to:

- enhance the effective implementation of the HFA;
- increase the consistency between the national DRR policies and practices;
- improve the knowledge base and the comparability between national disaster data;
- stimulate transferability and development of innovative DRR practices;
- encourage awareness raising through involvement of all stakeholders in the review process and wide dissemination of the results;
- enhance regional cooperation between countries exposed to common hazards and risks.

To that end, peer reviews could potentially focus on:

- assessing the progress in the implementation of the HFA through the HFA Report on-line tool;
- analysing ongoing national policy developments within the EU prevention framework, such as the development and implementation of national risk assessments and disaster risk management plans.¹

¹ In December 2010, the Commission in close collaboration with the Member States issued Guidelines on national risk assessments for disaster management and Member States have voluntarily committed to prepare and submit their national risk assessments by the end of 2011. The national risk assessments should inform the decision making process and be followed by national risk management plans. For that purpose, the Commission will issue in 2012 Guidelines on risk management plans and Member States will be invited to develop and implement them by 2014. To ensure common understanding of the guiding principles, objectives, methods and

- reviewing the country's national civil protection legislative and policy framework organisational structure and practices within the disaster management cycle covering prevention, preparedness, response and recovery;

The scope of the review would be defined on a case-by-case basis.²

Peer reviews could also draw from the experience gained in other policy fields such as environment, sustainable development, etc. Potential cooperation could be considered with OECD in the design and implementation of peer review given their extensive peer review experience in various policy areas (ranging from environmental performance, development assistance, regulatory reform, economic surveys etc...).

What could be the set up of a potential peer review programme?

The peer review programme would be based upon a methodology which shall identify the participants and define the principles and criteria for evaluation.

For example, the review panel could consist of 2-4 peers from other national platform/countries to act as reviewers.

The initiative to request a peer review should remain with the country under review which would better ensure its commitment to comply with the recommendations and to make best use of the outcomes from the review.

UNISDR/European Commission could play a coordinating and facilitating role.

The peer review could consist of four main phases:

- **preparatory** – background analysis, provision of information and self-evaluation, including HFA report by the reviewed country
- **consultation** – on-site visits and drafting of the report in consultation with all stakeholders. The reviewed country may be also accorded active role in drawing the conclusions which would contribute to the 'ownership' of the outcomes.
- **assessment** – all countries participating in the programme should have the opportunity to discuss the draft report, make comments and ask questions; The most important outcome from the peer review and the analysis are the conclusions and recommendations on how to address the identified problems, improve DRR policies and enhance the effective implementation of the HFA
- **publication** – the report should be widely disseminated and primarily targeted at decision-makers and the larger audience.

3. Follow-up of the peer review programme

As a follow-up, the reviewed country can report on the specific actions or measures taken in response to the recommendations.

The results of the peer review programme in the form of case-study reports could be distributed and presented at various national and international fora, including the European and Global Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction and could contribute to the preparation of the HFA Europe Progress Report

They shall contribute to the further development of the European DRR knowledge-base and be used at a later stage to analyse trends in national policy developments and transferability of the identified good practices.

processes to be employed in the disaster risk planning, the Commission will prepare also common minimum prevention standards based on good practices in the Member States. See Commission [Staff Working Paper on Risk Assessment and Mapping Guidelines for Disaster Management](#), 17833/10, SEC(2010) 1626.

² For example, an in-depth review of the Italy's civil protection system was done by the OECD. Some countries may opt for a more detailed review of their national system and practices, while others - limit the examination to the assessment of their performance in the overall context of their policy. See *OECD Reviews of Risk Management Policies: Italy 2010: Review of the Italian National Civil Protection System*, 2010.