



13 October 2013: International Day for Disaster Reduction

Statement by

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The International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR), launched in 1989, encourages every citizen and government to take part in building more disaster-resilient societies and to promote a global culture of disaster reduction. It is premised on the principle that all groups in the community have the same rights and that their needs are fully respected. In 2013 the IDDR theme "Living with disability and disasters" focusses on the estimated one billion people around the world who live with some form of disability.

The Council of Europe advocates the needs of people with disabilities primarily through its Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 managed by the Council's Social Cohesion and Integration Division, and through the "European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement" (EUR-OPA)* in which guidance on a more operative practice with vulnerable groups — including people with disabilities — is developed.

A report on measures to include people with disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response will be presented during a workshop organised by EUR-OPA on 22 and 23 October 2013 in Paris.¹ The report analyses legislation, policies and practices in Council of Europe member States. Policy makers and representatives of national governments and local authorities, international organisations and associations working for the protection of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction will discuss the document and develop proposals for the implementation of its recommendations.

Representing one-fifth of the world's population, people with disabilities have specific requirements when it comes to evacuation procedures. The International Day for Disaster Reduction is a day to celebrate the ways in which people and communities are reducing their risk to disasters and to raise awareness about the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction. The Council of Europe promotes the perception of persons with disabilities as holding the same rights as all other citizens (as provided for in fundamental texts such as the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter or the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015). Promoting human rights by including people with disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response is part of the Council of Europe's work.

* EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement is a platform for co-operation in the field of major natural and technological disasters between Europe and the South of the Mediterranean. Its field of competence covers the major natural and technological disasters - knowledge, prevention, risk management, post-crisis analysis and rehabilitation. The main objectives of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement are to reinforce and to promote co-operation between member States in a multi-disciplinary context to ensure better prevention, protection against risks and better preparation in the event of major natural or technological disasters.

¹ <http://www.coe.int/t/dq4/majorhazards/>