

REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION STRATEGY

INTRUDUCTION

Republic of Bulgaria often has been affected by natural or man-made disasters, whose social and economic consequences cause significant adverse effect to its development and economic growth, thus disaster risk reduction is essential for the sustainable development of the country. Disaster risk reduction as well as prevention and reduction of the social and economical losses caused by disasters are important premise for sustainable development of our country.

In the forthcoming decades is expected climate change to cause raising of the frequency and scale of disasters. More frequent and stronger storms and floods as well as long-term droughts and devastating forest fires may cause significant adverse impact over the existing possibilities of the society after such dangerous events. For this reason and because of the complexity and the scope of disasters is necessary to consolidate the efforts of all responsible institutions and their active involvement in disaster risk reduction activities, which is expected significantly to reduce the human, social, economic and environmental damages and losses.

During the last years disaster risk reduction turned into a world priority. Evidence are the documents, adopted by the Member States of the European Union as well as UN Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, which calls upon and define each country as a responsible one to establish its own National Platform and Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy.

The Strategy aims to outline a coherent framework for determining strategic priorities for action and disaster risk reduction and to support the implementation of measures for achieving those priorities at national, regional and local level.

It should help for identifying and prioritizing specific areas for cross-border and regional cooperation and also to ensure solving the problems in a coordinated manner with perspective for development of a long-term capacity.

The Strategy encompasses the period from 2014 to 2020.

1. KEY VALUES

The strategy is based on the following key values: positive thinking, perspectivity, awareness, culture, equality, responsibility, cooperation, continuity and political will.

POSITIVE THINKING

Among the Bulgarian society the importance of the prevention, through which disasters may not be only predicted but also managed, is underestimated. The efforts of the responsible institutions are directed mainly to building capabilities to respond to disasters. Within their leadership and expert staff positive thinking related to the possibility for risk management should be formed.

PERSPECTIVITY

The perspective approach overcomes the disadvantages of the planning approach, which relies only on the existing trends and possible forecasts, assuming definite uncertainty and variety of the forecasts during organizing the management. For this reason, the planning of the sustainable development should be performed applying the perspective approach for implementing the disaster risk reduction activities.

AWARENESS

Gathering and dissemination of information on good practices related to the successful development of meaningful policies is in the foundation of disaster risk reduction. The awareness of the responsible institutions ensures the use of the good practices in planning the preventative measures and activities and the awareness of the population facilitates their implementation. The first step to overcome the gaps in the available information on disaster risks is to perform risk assessment. The next step is to examine the good practices which help to reduce disaster risks and to raise the responsible attitude of the leading institution and population to disasters.

CULTURE

Factor for disaster risk reduction is also building a culture of disaster prevention as well as proper behavior of the whole population in case of disasters. Increased culture of society for disaster risks has a positive influence over the processes of decision-making, development of the legislative framework and organization and allocation of resources for disaster risk reduction.

EQUALITY

A very important principle in the field of disaster risk reduction is the equality of the citizens. Disadvantaged citizens and social groups with a lower social status have a limited access to the respective organizational and material resources which is a premise for increased vulnerability of those social groups in case of disasters. For this reason establishment of equal conditions for all social groups in disaster risk areas is needed, including during disaster response and disaster protection.

RESPONSIBILITY

Disaster risk reduction is an expression of moral and social responsibility of all management levels. The responsible leaders should believe and search for fulfillment of the humanitarian cause fighting the disasters. The serious social responsibility, which they wear participating in disaster management process requires strict public determination of the responsibilities and clear personalization of their performance.

COOPERATION

The modern states are not alone against the challenges of the different disasters. Their efforts for disaster risk reduction are supported by the united actions of the countries within United Nations and through a coordinated legal framework. The documents of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, established in 2000 at the UN General Assembly, are leading in disaster risk management.

Many EU documents are in the foundation of improvement and coherence of the actions and results in disaster risk management at international level between the respective competent bodies that contributes to implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and is a part of a package that has external and internal dimension for the Union. The cooperation between the countries strengthens the preparedness and response capacity in case of disasters through balanced approach, leaded by two principles: national responsibility and EU solidarity.

CONTINUITY

With the amendments to the Disaster Protection Act in 2012 a Consultative Council for supporting the Council of Ministers in forming the state policy in the field of disaster protection was established. The Council acts as a National Platform for disaster risk reduction of the Republic of Bulgaria. The Council continues the efforts of the country in this field since 1990 when International Decade for Disaster Risk Reduction has launched.

A National Programme for Disaster Protection 2014-2018 has been developed as a continuation of the National Programme 2009-2013.

Also a National Strategy for management and development of the water sector has been elaborated in regard with the requirements of the Water Act.

Ensuring continuation in the progress of the national policies for disaster risk reduction mitigates disaster consequences and limits their impact over the people, economy and environment.

POLITICAL WILL

Complexity of the social system and management today requires clear political will which to enforce the integrated approach for disaster risk management. Availability of the political will is one of the main premises to involve disaster risk management in the planning of the development of each sector of the social life.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION

2.1 Main natural and man-made hazards

During the last decade Republic of Bulgaria was affected by huge number of disasters with strong intensity. Due to this the territory of Republic of Bulgaria was defined as a high risk one.

Identification of the hazards is a long process oriented not only to the current hazards but also to their progress over time.

Republic of Bulgaria is threatened by the following hazards: seismic hazard, floods hazard, landslides hazard, wildfires hazard and nuclear or radiological accidents hazard, adverse weather conditions hazard such as: drought, strong winds and tornado, heavy snowfall, snow storms, ice and extreme temperatures, hail as well as industrial accidents hazard and accidents during transporting dangerous goods and substances hazard and biological contamination hazard.

2.2 Legal Framework

International document which determine the guidelines for disaster risk reduction is UN Hyogo Framework for Action: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.

2.3 Responsible Authorities

Fire Safety and Civil Protection Directorate-General, Ministry of Interior is the national specialized structure for fire safety, rescue and disaster protection according to the Act on the Ministry of Interior and Disaster Protection Act.

2.3 Existing situation

The lack of strategic framework for disaster risk reduction is one of the main challenges. The actions at the moment don't have strategic direction because their approach is based mainly on development of projects and programmes which often are uncoordinated and unsuitable. The available disaster databases are scattered, limited and can be compared very difficult – different criteria is used like number of victims, value of the damages, number of events that have occurred during certain period of time. The data for physical and economic consequences are in the best case indicative. The activities related to disaster risk reduction and climate change are not integrated well enough as well as National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is in process.

A big challenge is that the society is not informed enough on the principles, purposes and activities for disaster risk reduction as well as on response activities before, during and after disasters. So far the implemented measures in this direction are inconsistent and with a limited scope as the resource provision issue is also underestimated.

The coordination between the responsible institutions is not on the needed level and the frequent change of the legal framework in the sector, the lack of effective coherence, consistency and continuation of the responsible structures have negative impact over disaster risk reduction. This leads to reduction of the administrative capacity at national, regional and local level as well as to loss of expertise and past experience.

3. MAIN STRATEGIC GOAL AND PRIORITIES FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Taking into account the current situation as well as the weaknesses and strengths in the field of disaster risk reduction in the Republic of Bulgaria, the following strategic goal can be formed:

Prevention and/or mitigation of the adverse consequences for the human health, social-economic activity, environment and cultural heritage in Bulgaria caused by natural or man-made disasters.

To achieve the main goal in the current Strategy four priorities for action are defined:

- I. Development of a sustainable national policy and ensuring a stable legal and institutional framework for disaster risk reduction;
- II. Identification, analysis and disaster risk assessment at national, regional and local level. Expanding and maintenance of effective national systems for forecast, monitoring early warning and awareness in case of disasters;
- III. Building a culture of disaster protection at all management levels and among the society using the knowledge, education, scientific researches and innovations;
- IV. Reducing the underlying risk factors and strengthen the preparedness for effective response in case of disasters at all management levels.

Each of those four priorities is described in the Strategy through specific activities for its implementation.

Priority I: Development of a sustainable national policy and ensuring a stable legal and institutional framework for disaster risk reduction

Main activities under priority I are:

1. Development of a sustainable national policy for disaster risk reduction.
2. Improvement of the existing legal framework for disaster risk reduction
3. Development of an institutional capacity to define and implement the DRR actions in all critical sectors.

To gain a long-term resilience of the community in case of disasters detailed review of the current legislation, improvement of the disaster risk reduction mechanisms, adoption of the necessary legislative amendments or adoption of new regulatory framework in the field of planning and actions to mitigate the disaster consequences are needed.

Broaden the Consultative council's activities and turning it into an active national platform for disaster risk reduction shall contribute to strengthening the coordination between different sectors as well as improvement of the dialog at all levels between the respective structures.

Priority II. Identification, analysis and disaster risk assessment at national, regional and local level. Expanding and maintenance of effective national systems for forecast, monitoring early warning and awareness in case of disasters

Main activities under Priority II are:

1. Identification, analysis and risk assessment at national, regional, municipal and site level
2. Planning, building, expanding and maintenance of the systems for monitoring, forecast, early warning and awareness.

The risk assessment shall promote the prevention and preparedness through analysis of the capacity and planning of the capabilities to respond in case of disasters. Description of the risk scenarios and multi-risk scenarios in the risk assessment, development of maps and assessment of the scenarios with the most possible risks, data gathering and data analysis, summarizing and dissemination of statistical information for disasters, adverse consequences and losses are possible through the international, national and local mechanisms.

Disaster risk reduction and promotion of the culture of resilience is performed not only through dissemination of information for the threats but also by the effective use of the systems for monitoring, forecast, early warning and awareness.

Priority III: Building a culture of disaster protection at all management levels and among the society using the knowledge, education, scientific researches and innovations

Main activities under Priority III are:

1. Development and use of scientific researches and innovations.
2. Building a culture of disaster protection through the use of education and training.
3. Raising the awareness and promotion of the participation of the population in disaster risk reduction activities.

Strengthening the Consultative Council's scientific-expert group shall give an opportunity to improve coordination in prioritization of scientific researches as well as to avoid overlapping activities.

The modern methods to raise the public awareness, such as use of internet and social networks as well as creation of an internet platform for dissemination of information on disaster protection should be broadened.

Priority IV: Reducing the underlying risk factors and strengthening the preparedness for effective response in case of disasters at all management levels

Main activities under Priority IV are:

1. Effective management of the natural resources and development of social-economical practices.
2. Planning and execution of measures for critical infrastructure protection.
3. Measures for disaster risks management.
4. Improvement of the preparedness for effective response and recovery in case of disasters
5. Promotion of the international cooperation for disaster risk reduction.

It is necessary to improve the implementation of mechanisms to support the affected by the disasters children, adults, people with disabilities and other socially vulnerable groups as well as to develop insurance mechanisms for sharing the financial risks and for recovery after disasters.

Ensuring high level protection of the critical infrastructures and European critical infrastructures of the Member-States through planning and implementation of measures to reduce vulnerability will lead to decreasing and mitigation of the losses of essential services for the population.

4. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

In order to ensure transparency on the implementation of the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy the preparation of annual monitoring reports based on the self-assessment of all responsible structures has been laid down. The reports will be approved by the Consultative Council. For each priority different indicators for self-assessment are described. The progress reports will be adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria.

5. FINANCING

The financial sources for activities of the Strategy are the state budget and municipal budgets, funds of the European Union and other international organizations.

6. CONCLUSION

The current Strategy identifies strategic goals for disaster risk reduction and priority areas of action to achieve those goals.

The Strategy is an important step towards building comprehensive and coherent framework for disaster prevention which shall contribute to building an integrated approach towards the policy of the Republic of Bulgaria in this field. The implementation of the Strategy shall ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national priority and shall contribute to prevention from disasters and mitigation of their adverse consequences through actions at all management levels and through a good coordination between the responsible institutions. Implementing all actions laid down in the Strategy shall ensure sustainable management for disaster protection.

NOTE:

Along with the Strategy two annexes were also elaborated. The First annex presents the natural and man-made disasters which are typical for the Republic of Bulgaria and the second one is a road map where in a comprehensive way are described key activities along with deadlines and structures responsible for their implementation.