Official Statement

[European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement](https://www.coe.int/en/web/europarisks)

The vulnerability of individuals, communities and the environment is a major factor that increases exposure to disaster risks, although these risks do not affect everybody in the same way. Underprivileged people and socially disadvantaged groups are the most exposed and suffer most directly from disasters. Yet the most vulnerable people are often not sufficiently considered in prevention strategies or operational manuals.

As part of the Council of Europe, the leading pan-European human rights organisation, the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) has centred its activities on the resilience of vulnerable groups such as migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, people with disabilities and children.

In its [Ethical Principles on Disaster Risk Reduction,](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/majorhazards/ressources/pub/Ethical-Principles-Publication_EN.pdf) EUR-OPA defined in 2011 the Principle of Non-discrimination as “Measures to prevent, reduce and prepare for disasters and to distribute relief and promote recovery are secured and implemented without distinction on any ground such as gender, sexual orientation, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, ethnic group, affiliation to a national minority, socioeconomic circumstances, birth, disability, age or other status”.

These ethical principles serve as a basis to develop both policy recommendations and practical solutions involving prevention, preparedness, reduction of vulnerability, assistance in emergencies and recovery to improve the resilience and readiness of vulnerable groups.

EUR-OPA Agreement encourages and supports projects and activities to prepare recommendations for the reduction of exposure to risks regarding migrants, people with disabilities, children and other vulnerable persons. Guidelines aim to improve co-ordination between civil protection and other agencies supporting vulnerable groups, to exchange good practices for engaging young people in civil society and in all phases of the disaster risk management cycle, as well as actions for engaging with vulnerable groups and using their skills and capacities for disaster risk reduction.

Through its political and scientific networks, EUR-OPA provides its member States with tools to better define their own national strategies on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and to ensure that revamped national strategies will also allow to adequately address trans-boundary risks.

EUR-OPA organises its work around four priorities in line with the Sendai Framework by:

* using scientific and technological knowledge to better assess evolving risks and adapt accordingly the resilience strategies;
* developing cooperation among all decision-makers to better define the appropriate role of authorities in DRR;
* promoting a risk culture among populations (children, adults and groups with special vulnerability);
* fostering populations’ active participation (as individuals and as communities) to DRR.

The Council of Europe, through its EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, is therefore dedicated to transforming the commitment of governments and stakeholders made in Sendai at the Third UN World Conference into local and national action, promoting a participatory and inclusive approach.

Finally, co-operation with other international organisations remains a key element of EUR-OPA’s work to benefit from increased synergies and to avoid duplication of work. Efforts will be made to reinforce the already existing collaboration with other organisations involved in disaster risk reduction, such as the UNISDR Regional Office for Europe and the EU. EUR-OPA is also contributing to the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction, in liaison with its partners.

The Global Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction represents a unique opportunity to exchange good practices, policies and strategies in order to reach the Sendai 2030 priority targets and to build more resilient societies together.