



SEE ME

SAFE AND EQUAL IN EMERGENCIES

RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR LOCAL /REGIONAL
AUTHORITIES



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SEE ME RECOMMENDATIONS



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Safe and Equal in emergencies – Recommendations for local/regional authorities are views of SEE ME project team, European Commission is not responsible for any information inside of therein.



1. INTRODUCTION

Project SEE ME (Safe and Equal in EMERgencies) is aiming to contribute to the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities in emergencies.

Persons with disabilities (PWD) face considerable barriers in different areas of their social life, despite the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, and the 2021-2030 European Disability Strategy followed by the national strategies and plans. This particularly refers to inadequate access to and the provision of protection and rescue during emergencies, resulting from the lack of common standards in protection and rescue of persons with disabilities. Although PwDs are recognized as a particularly vulnerable group, their right to equal rights and opportunities in emergencies is often neglected in local emergency response plans and civil protection procedures. Persons with disabilities are excluded from decision-making in the emergency planning and management system.

One of the aims of this project is to improve the safety and equality of the persons with disabilities in emergencies through implementation the application of the recommendations in local emergency response plans.

The training of officials of local and regional (regional) self-government units in the Republic of Croatia who work on planning tasks in the field of civil protection was carried out as part of the project. Five workshops were held in Zagreb, Varaždin, Osijek, Rijeka and Split. This recommendations are based on the experiences that were gathered through the presentations and the discussion that developed afterwards. They can help in the creation of civil protection action plans.



2. LEGISLATION

The Civil Protection System Law of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette no. 82/15, 118/18, 31/20, 20/21 and 114/22) in Articles 16 -19 prescribes the obligations of local and regional self-government units in the area of the civil protection system, and thus also the obligation to adopt a civil protection action plan for their area of operation.

These obligations are further elaborated in the Regulation on holders, content and procedures for creating planning documents in civil protection and the way of informing the public about the procedure for their adoption (Official Gazette no. 66/21), Article 25.:

1. The Action plans of territorial (regional) civil protection self-government bodies must contain elaboration of methods for fulfilling needs of groups or categories of persons with disabilities, while the Civil protection action plans of local self-government bodies must include specific needs of each person with disabilities.
2. In particular, it is necessary to develop an alerting method in such a way as to include the individual requirements of persons with disabilities as much as possible. It is also necessary to develop capacities for accommodation of persons with disabilities, in a way that appropriate supplementary methods of alerting persons with disabilities are established which are different from the standard ones, with an emphasis on adjustment of the information transmission appropriate to the disability categories of persons with disabilities.
3. Procedures in the Local self-governments Civil protection action plans must be developed in such a way as to avoid discrimination of persons with disabilities in all civil protection system action phases. All cases of discrimination should be resolved quickly and fairly by competent authorities.
4. Temporary accommodation for persons with disabilities after a major accident and disaster must be accessible and designed in such a way to meet their basic needs, until the moment when the conditions for their return to the places from which they were evacuated, are fulfilled. Before the onset of a major accident and disaster, it is necessary to determine the most suitable places and structures for organization of care to ensure the urgent needs of persons with disabilities are met.
5. It is necessary to incorporate in civil protection action plans specific tasks/procedures for operational forces of the civil protection system for the implementation of measures and activities for rescue of persons with disabilities in major accidents and disasters. Local government representative bodies must decide and appoint legal entities of interest to the civil protection system, determine the bearers of the duties and the procedures of the public services involvement covering their regular activities, as well as citizens' associations and other dedicated capacities, which all should create operational civil protection plans for their implementation.



6. Evacuation, emergency transport, temporary accommodation and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities in a major accidents, should be executed using all capacities that should be adjusted to the specific needs of persons with disabilities. In the civil protection action plans all the tasks of the operational forces of the civil protection system must be determined, material needs must be identified as well as sources from which they will be provided.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING CIVIL PROTECTION ACTION PLANS ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL

The Association of Persons with Disabilities of the Republic of Croatia conducted research on the existed civil protection action plans (the ones they found published on the web) in relation to the persons with disabilities in them, and they came to the following conclusions:

CURRENT STATE

- Most of the available action plans do not mention PwD
- Different document names
- Unavailability of action plans on the official website
- Certain datas from the action plans are based on research without cooperation with persons with disabilities
- Terminological inconsistency
- Using inappropriate terms



4. RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO MAKE ACTION PLANS MORE INCLUSIVE

1. It is recommended that issues concerning persons with disabilities should be in a separate chapter, and if necessary, PWDs must be included in other chapters as well
2. It is recommended to establish cooperation with associations of PWDs in order to better prepare action plans
3. In the part that concerns the evacuation process, it is recommended to use Datasheet view for information on the types of difficulties and possible predominant difficulties in the evacuation process
4. It is recommended to clearly state who is in charge of carrying out activities related to the data collection of needs of the persons with disabilities (counties, cities, municipalities)
5. Civil protection action plans must be available and accessible on the Internet, where website navigation must be simple and intuitive
6. It is recommended to use appropriate terminology (for example, "persons with disabilities" for adults and "children with developmental disabilities" for children)
7. With the aim of transparency and easier handling, it is recommended to use Datasheet view in which the needs of PWDs for different types of crisis situations are presented by specifying the responsible entities and the timeframe in which they are mobilized and activated
8. With the aim of transferring information as quickly and as efficiently as possible, it is recommended to determine the ways of communication and dealing with PWDs in the action plans
9. It is recommended to describe in detail the way how to protect and provide assistance to the persons with disabilities, using Datasheet view of evacuation priorities and key information necessary for evacuations planning of the persons with disabilities
10. It is recommended to implement educations and exercises in cooperation with associations of PWD of all categories
11. When making plans, it is recommended to include data on places suitable for accommodation of PWDs because of medical equipment and hospital treatments required by PWDs, as well as the vehicles for transportation of persons with disabilities that are available



12. When detailing organization of rescue and evacuation of PwDs, it is recommended to include a Datasheet view of all participants and operational forces of the civil protection system in rescue and evacuation operations
13. With the aim of meeting the specific needs of persons with disabilities, it is recommended, in addition to the descriptive part, to attach a Datasheet view listing all tasks in civil protection measures - alerting, evacuation and shelter (temporary accommodation) as well as operational procedures, capacities, operational contribution and executors.
14. **CREATE CIVIL PROTECTION ACTION PLANS IN COOPERATION WITH PwDs ASSOCIATIONS**

More information about contacts of PwDs associations in the Republic of Croatia you can see in the brochure:

https://www.soih.hr/pdf/soih_editions/procitajte_bez_predrasuda.pdf