



Final Report  
on the technical and financial implementation of the  
**PrepAGE Project:**  
**Enhancing disaster management and preparedness for the  
older population in the EU**

Grant Agreement: ECHO/SUB/2013/661043

covering the project activities from:  
01/04/2014 – 31/5/2016

## Final Report

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## 1) General reminder of project objectives, partnership and expected deliverables

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### Objectives

The project “PrepAGE” had the following objectives:

- Looking at existing disaster management procedures and the level of their inclusion of older people in the participating organisations and countries
- Identifying the needs, structures and measures to prepare and reach older people in emergencies and disasters
- Introducing special requirements of older people into emergency and disaster preparedness and prevention programmes
- Bringing together experts from the health and social sector, the field of disaster management and other civil society organisations as well as older people and volunteers from health and social care in order to raise awareness and improve readiness to assist others in case of emergency or disaster
- Taking into account the resources and resilience of older people for disaster preparedness and response

### Partnership

The partners of the PrepAGE project were the Austrian Red Cross, as the coordinating beneficiary and the Red Cross sister societies in Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia and Great Britain as well as the University of Innsbruck who was responsible for the evaluation of the project. These partners have worked together to reach the project aims. In the course of the project, a host of different stakeholders and experts from the field of health- and social services and disaster management and civil protection were invited to participate and provide input e.g. through national workshops, the European expert workshop and the national exercises. These partnerships were vital for the success of the project and worked very well. The details of the partners were the following:

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## Deliverables

Expected deliverables were:

- 1) A desk research and empirical research report to elicit existing disaster procedure aimed at older people, defining the target groups and their needs and resources
- 2) National workshops and five national workshop reports including national recommendations relevant to each partner countries
- 3) European workshop with experts from different countries to compare national recommendations and elicit European recommendations
- 4) Printed policy and practical recommendations relevant for the partner countries and European level and general recommendations in five languages
- 5) Five carried out community-based exercises (one in each partner country)
- 6) Guidelines for emergency and disaster management organisations and local authorities on how to run community-based exercises and incorporate the needs of older people into disaster preparedness and management plans
- 7) Prototype information and materials to be used by local stakeholders and adapting existing material to cater to older people

## 2) General summary of project implementation process

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### General overview of the project process

The PrepAGE project was conducted along the three main tasks outlined in the T-Forms of the Grant Agreement:

**Task C.** consisted in preparing the basis for further project work through **empirical and desk research**. This included screening existing emergency and disaster procedures as well as the legal framework in participating countries and defining target group including their special needs and challenges and their strengths and resources and compiling the desk research report. Also, an on-line questionnaire to Red Cross partners and members of the European Network for Psychosocial Support were developed. Summary leaflets for each report were made that were translated by project partners and were used to at the national workshops in Task D to disseminate research results, basis for discussion and elaborating country specific recommendations. During the course of the research and during the first partner meetings, the resources and potentials of older people within the disaster management cycle were also added as an important focus of the project which was not present in the proposal phase. A handbook summarizing best practice examples was compiled additionally.

**Task D.** consisted of developing **recommendations for integrating the needs and resources of older people in to disaster management programs** at national and European level. Five National Workshops were held in partner countries, bringing together more than 125 participants from the health and social services sector and stakeholders from DM and civil protection. National workshop reports with recommendations were compiled for each country. The reports were the basis for developing draft European recommendations that were discussed and elaborated at the European Expert workshop in Lozen, Bulgaria. The European expert workshop brought together more than 33 experts and participants from partner countries from 1-2 June 2015 in Lozen (Bulgaria). The National workshops also served to discuss and compile specific recommendations at national level, which were summarized in the national workshop reports. The National workshop reports are also available in English and in national languages. In addition to the national workshop reports and the European workshop report, the recommendations are available in print and pdf on the website in five languages (English, German, Bulgarian, Croatian and Latvian). The European workshop report including a summary of the expert workshop was compiled and sent to all participants of the expert workshop

The focus of **Task E.** was developing and running **community-based exercises**: one such exercise was carried out in each partner country. The exercises were conducted from September 2015 to January 2016. The exercises addressed different topics such as evacuation of a social centre and its older inhabitants (Latvia), reducing the fear of evacuation of older people and focus on psycho-social support (Croatia), exercise on flooding with a specific focus on older people and involving older volunteers (Bulgaria), networking between different organisations in a blackout scenario focussed on supporting vulnerable older people living in their own home (Austria) and a workshop on disaster preparedness and the needs of older people (UK). Diverse formats were tested, ranging from a table top exercise in Austria, workshops with the active involvement of older people in the UK as well as practical exercises and drills (Bulgaria) as well as combined with information sessions for older people (Latvia and Croatia). A large effort was also put into public relations and dissemination activities before and during the exercises. Partners prepared personal invitations, press releases, website articles and in Latvia and



Bulgaria even a national TV broadcasted the exercise. The experiences gained and lessons learned during the exercises sizes were summarized in the community-based exercise guide that is available in print and on the website in pdf in five languages (English, German, Bulgarian, Croatian and Latvian).

The accompanying tasks that were followed throughout the project were:

**Task A.** The project management involved establishing the project team with the country managers and maintaining contact and joint decision-making throughout. The basis for this were the partner agreements that were signed early in the course of the project as well as the five partner meetings which took place in Vienna (2x), Zagreb, Sofia and Riga. Communication between the meetings was kept up through monthly telephone conferences, email communication and bilateral phone calls. A monitoring plan and timeline was established and regularly reviewed and the British RC ensured had a supporting role in reviewing and editing all project outcomes to ensure a robust task outcome.

Within the **Task B.** dissemination, the focus was on three phases: 1) presentation and dissemination of the project and its planned activities at the beginning; 2) publicity for the events run within the project, such as the national workshops and the community based exercises and 3) disseminating the project products and spreading the results of the projects in different meetings and events towards the end and after completion of the PrePAGE-project. The website was developed and regularly updated.

The purpose of **Task F.** was to consolidate and finalise all the project products and complemented tasks D. and E. It consisted in finishing and adapting the guide and the recommendations to the national situation, translating both and preparing them for layout and print.

The project focused on the **Task G. Evaluation** from the beginning when an evaluation plan was compiled by the University of Innsbruck. The evaluation methodology was continuously revised and adapted to the individual activities in the partner countries. Especially the methods used for the evaluation of the community-based exercises were tailored to the needs of the partners and developed and implemented individually. The results of the evaluation of the national workshops, the European workshops, the community-based exercises, the partner meetings and the overall project process are summarized in the final evaluation report.

### **Comparative analysis of initial and actual time schedule / Expected and actual results**

Overall, the actual results are in line with the expected results of the proposed project. The Tasks A. Project management, C. Empirical and desk research, D. Procedures and recommendations and E. Community-based exercises were roughly carried out as planned and within the initially agreed time frame. We were confronted with delays within Task B. Dissemination and Task F. Adapting and Finalising. The delay in Task B. was due to a longer process in finding web designers in Latvia and negotiating the contract conditions with the web designer that was finally identified. After this delay the continuous updating of the website functioned well.

The completion of our guide for organisations on running community-based exercises with respect to disaster management and older people as well as the translation and printing of the European and National policy recommendations (Task F.) were also delayed. This was due to the fact that more exercise formats were tested than originally planned and that we had to wait for the completion of all exercises to compile the final version of the guide. Also, the refugee response in the Balkans end of



2015/beginning of 2016 has affected two of the partner teams in the PrepAGE project which has also led to some delays.

The initial time schedule proved to be quite tight, especially with respect to running completing the final translated, layouted and printed versions of the guidelines and recommendations in all country languages. The PrepAGE project was extended for two months to allow enough time for contracting and carrying out translation, layout and printing of the guidelines and the recommendations.

With respect to the planned deliverables, the deliverables were mostly carried out as planned. Individually planned recommendations and guidelines for policy and organisations were put together so that the main products are 1) recommendations for policy, national, regional and local authorities and disaster response organisations as well as health and social services on a national level and 2) guidelines to run community-based exercises and include older people in disaster management with a focus on the local level, including local authorities disaster response organisations as well as health and social services operating in local communities. Summary leaflets of desk research and empirical research were produced and translated in all national language, an activity that was not planned in the original proposal. The research and evaluation activities took more staff time and resources than originally planned (but were not delayed).

### Planned and used resources

All in all, less budgetary resources were used than planned. Travel costs, subcontracting costs as well as other costs were lower than planned and staff costs were higher than originally planned. The **personnel costs** were augmented because, as reported below, many of the local activities proved to involve more time, e.g. because of multiple meetings than planned originally. The overall coordination activities, especially the planning and organization of the European workshop as well as the coordination of the final products took more time than originally envisaged (AutRC). The research and evaluation activities proved also to be more time consuming than planned, the prepared reports are all quite extensive and the preparation and analysis of the exercises were also more extensive than foreseen in the proposal (University of Innsbruck). The British Red Cross used more staff resources than planned due to their additional activities to ensure robust products and good documents in English. **Travel costs** were underspent since originally planned site visits were not carried out. Instead of one site visit a dissemination visit to Brussels including the visit of the final meeting of a DG ECHO “sister project” SAMETS was carried out. Also the local travel costs for the national workshops and the exercises were not as high as foreseen in the budget. **Subcontracting costs** were underspent by approx. was less, website cost less and translation costs were less. **Other costs** were also somewhat underspent, while some partners had more costs than planned for their exercises and others less.

The partner budgets were somewhat **reshifted**, as it was decided that it was more practical for the coordinator to organize all the travel arrangements and the design and layout of the final products. Thus, a large part of the travel budget lies with the coordinator, other than in the initial budget. However, the partners travel costs was calculated as being part of the budget, which is why in their cost statements their own contribution is more than 25% and that of the ARC is less.

The **contribution in kind** was quite substantial for all partners who worked with many volunteers that contributed their engagement in time. Also, in most countries venues were provided by partners themselves or their partners (public authorities etc) free of charge. Finally, the staff of other



organisations involved in the project activities were not remunerated by the project, so their staff costs were covered by the respective organisations and also represent contributions in kind. The University of Innsbruck involved several students in the project who also wrote their master's thesis within the project. While some of the activities that were foreseen in the project were remunerated, a large part of the contributed efforts were not remunerated and can be counted as contribution in kind. All in all we estimate the contribution in kind over all partners to be at least 50.000 Euros, if not more.

Unfortunately, all partners besides University of Innsbruck forgot to add their contribution in kind to the budget and this was noticed too late in the process of finalizing the final costs statement to add it into the consolidated cost statement.




## Monitoring plan and timeline

The following monitoring table contains an overview of the initial and actual time schedule as well as the expected and actual results:







PrepAGE Monitoring Plan and Timeline 05/2016						
Task	Proposed		Actual		Status	Comment
	Start	End	Start	End		
<b>A. Managing and Reporting to the Commission</b>	01.04.2014	31.03.2016	01.04.2014	31.07.2016		On-going
A-D.1 Signed Partner Agreements	01.04.2014	30.06.2014	01.04.2014	31.07.2014	100%	Completed
A-D.2 Monitoring plan with timeline	01.04.2014	30.05.2014	01.04.2014	30.05.2014	100%	Completed
A-D.3 Progress report 1	01.04.2014	31.12.2014	01.04.2014	18.12.2014	100%	Completed
A-D.4 Progress report 2	01.04.2014	31.08.2015	01.08.2015	30.08.2015	100%	Completed
A-D.5 Final narrative and financial report	01.04.2014	30.06.2016	01.04.2016	31.07.2016	100%	Completed
<b>B. Publicity / Dissemination</b>	01.04.2014	31.03.2016	01.04.2014	31.05.2016		On-going
B-D.1 Website online (and continuously updated)	01.05.2014	31.08.2014	01.05.2014	31.05.2016	100%	Completed
B-D.2 Dissemination material (folder, etc.)	01.05.2014	31.10.2014	01.05.2014	31.10.2014	100%	Completed
B-D.3 Informational material for local stakeholders		31.05.2015	01.05.2014	31.05.2016	100%	Completed
<b>C. Research</b>	01.04.2014	31.01.2015	01.04.2014	31.01.2015		Completed
C-D.1 Desk research report	01.04.2014	30.11.2014	01.04.2014	30.11.2014	100%	Completed
C-D.2 Empirical report	01.04.2014	31.01.2015	01.04.2014	31.01.2015	100%	Completed
<b>D. Procedures and Recommendations</b>	01.09.2014	30.04.2015	01.09.2014	31.08.2015		Completed
D-D.1 Five national workshops reports	01.09.2014	30.04.2015	01.09.2014	30.04.2015	100%	Completed
D-D.2 European workshop report	01.09.2014	30.04.2015	01.09.2014	31.08.2015	100%	Completed
D-D.3 Key recommendations report	01.03.2015	30.04.2015	01.03.2015	31.08.2015	100%	Completed
<b>E. Community-based Exercises</b>	01.04.2015	31.08.2015	01.04.2015	31.05.2016		
E-D.1 Community-based exercise guide	01.04.2015	30.04.2015	01.04.2015	31.05.2016	100%	Completed
E-D.2 Emergency exercise carried out in each partner country	01.01.2015	31.08.2015	01.01.2015	31.01.2016	100%	Completed
<b>F. Adapting and finalising</b>	01.09.2015	31.03.2016	01.09.2015	31.05.2016		
F-D.1 Printed European policy recommendations in English	01.09.2015	31.01.2016	01.09.2015	31.05.2016	100%	Completed
F-D.2 Five national policy recommendations printed in national languages	01.09.2015	31.01.2016	01.09.2015	31.05.2016	100%	Completed
F-D.3 General guidelines for organisations in English	01.09.2015	31.12.2015	01.09.2015	31.05.2016	100%	Completed - combined with community-based exercise guide (E-D.1)
F-D.4 Specific recommendations for organisations in country	01.09.2015	31.03.2016	01.09.2015	30.04.2015	100%	Completed -combined with national workshop reports (D-D.1)
<b>G. Evaluation</b>	01.04.2014	31.03.2016	01.04.2014	31.05.2016		On-going
G-D.1 Interim evaluation report 1	01.04.2014	30.11.2014	01.04.2014	30.11.2014	100%	Completed
G-D.2 Interim evaluation report 2	01.12.2014	30.07.2015	01.12.2014	30.07.2015	100%	Completed
G-D.3 Final evaluation report	01.08.2015	31.03.2016	01.08.2015	31.05.2016	100%	Completed

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### 3) Evaluation of project management/implementation process

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#### Positive aspects

Overall, the project management and implementation went very well. Joint efforts guided by an experienced project coordinator allowed for the set-up of good project management structures. Also, communication and cooperation within the project management team, project coordinators and partners was established and carefully maintained throughout the entire project span. The project was characterised by settled and sound project partnership and effective and constructive communication with the European Commission.

At the end of the last partner meeting in Vienna in February 2016, a focus group discussion on the project process and project impact was held. Participants pointed out that the project process went well. Positive aspects that were identified were the motivated, professional and positive partners. Most of the project partners had experience in the field of disaster preparedness and work with older people. This helped very much for the good (and reasonable) planning of project activities.

Partners felt that an open climate in the group was facilitated by the coordinator and that the tasks within the project were split in a fair and cooperative way, communicated clearly and that the whole process was characterized by real team work. In earlier evaluation activities partners stated that the strengths of the project were learning from each other, good cooperation, experience exchange, the high relevance of the topic as well as the high satisfaction with the research results are mentioned as strengths of the project. The partner meetings and regular telephone conferences worked well. Some bi-lateral or tri-lateral meetings were added to help solve problematic issues.

All partners contributed continuously throughout the project and the current topic was very interesting for all the involved Red Cross societies. Partners were enthusiastic about the issues and very motivated. They felt that the topics at hand were new and relevant and that this was the right time for a project on looking at older people in disasters.

The shared experience and skills of many different experts contributed to the successful implementation of the project. These were experts from the participating National Societies, as well as participants from regional and local authorities and associations as well as the participants of the National and European workshops. This rich communication and exchange of knowledge led to substantial European added value and motivated the stakeholders involved to augment their activities with respect to older people and disaster management. The extensive partnerships that were built on local and regional level were very positive and will be sustained after the completion of the project.

#### Difficulties encountered

One of the main difficulties encountered were that all project partners had multiple commitments. In those cases where the disaster management departments were directly involved in the PrePAGE projects the refugee crisis in the second half of 2015 and first quarter of 2016 bound some of the staff resources that would have gone into the project. The crisis also caused some staff turnover. In other cases, partners worked on several projects and tasks simultaneously and sometimes peak times coincided. Finally, the multifarious activities within the PrePAGE project themselves competed with each other. Thus, some activities took longer to complete than initially planned.

As mentioned above, one of the strengths of the PrepAGE project were the many different stakeholders that were involved in running the different activities. The other side of this coin is that the cooperation with many different partners on European, national, regional and local level was very time and energy consuming. Many meetings were held to plan events and in some cases, conflicting interests had to be considered. Finally, the combination of having the responsible party (project partner) in the Headquarters and running the events locally were sometimes challenging. However, some participants perceived time lags and felt that the number of people was not sufficient for carrying out some tasks.

In the first part of the project challenges that were mainly perceived were the lack of information on the national situations and the insecurity about the community based exercise and the timeline of the project as a whole. However, these issues could be resolved in the course of the project. The biggest problem perceived by all partners were time constraints and a short timeframe to complete each of the project activities with respect to the fact that all those involved had many other tasks and responsibilities outside the project.

### **Cooperation with the European Commission**

We experienced smooth and effective cooperation with the European Commission, particularly with our assigned desk officer, Ioanna Sgourdopoulou-Karra. It was a pleasure working with her especially as we received immediate and qualified responses to all our queries. She also reminded us of certain issues from time to time, which was very helpful. Also, the request for an amendment to add some additional time for finalising the project products was processed very quickly and smoothly. We were also very pleased that Ms. Biljana Zuber could attend the European Workshop and appreciated her valuable inputs at the meeting and the informational material she sent us afterwards.

### **European value added**

The following aspects of European value added were observed during the course of the PrepAGE project.

- A clear European value added in this project was dealing with the issue of older people and disaster management in an international consortium consisting of experts in the field of disaster management and experts in the field of health and social care for older people. Many interesting discussions were held in the partner meetings and the European workshops that widened all participants' horizons and found their way into the recommendations and guidelines produced within the project.
- The European workshop that was run within the project and all the partner meetings clearly demonstrated European added value. Both formats can be carried out in a similar fashion with respect to different themes to foster transnational learning and exchange. The workshop in Bulgaria enabled avid exchange between representatives of different European countries and was very well received by all participants.
- Further European added value was generated through the compilation of the guide and the exchange of the different exercises during the partner meeting. Here it became clear how the different aspects tested in the different countries complemented each other and how methods tried out in one country can be used in other contexts in the future.



- Finally, the project leaflets, the summaries of the research phase, the recommendations and guidelines are all available in five languages: English, German, Bulgarian, Croatian and Latvian. This will facilitate the dissemination in the participating countries as well as in additional European countries.

### **Lessons learnt and possible improvements**

Lessons learnt for project management and implementation are the following:

- The process of the project with different activities building on each other has proved to be very useful: This was the desk and empirical research which was summarized in a very good and helpful way and leading into the national workshops where national recommendations were compiled. These in turn were discussed and merged within the European workshop. These project activities were then the basis for the exercises, which tested different aspects of the recommendations and led into the final product, the exercise guide.
- A clear lesson learned was that different structures in different countries have to be considered. It was good that partners had leeway in organising their own activities, especially the community-based exercises and adapted them according to the specific national, regional and local situation.
- It was very good to have a university as a partner that provided the research background and the evaluation methodology and implementation. This can be recommended for future projects.
- To deal with multiple commitments of partners, it is useful to engage in strict time and contingency planning. Nominating a substitute for partners who are suddenly absent due to unforeseen commitments is one possible solution.

## 4) Activities

In the period from 01/4/2014 to 31/05/2016 the following project activities were carried out:

<p><b>Task A</b></p> <p>Project Management and Reporting</p>	<p><b>Implemented activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project management team with country managers were established and kept up throughout the project (Action A.1 / A.2)</li> <li>▪ Signed partner agreements (Action A.1)</li> <li>▪ 5 Partner meetings (Vienna, April, 2014; Zagreb, October, 2014; Sofia, June, 2015; Riga, October, 2015 and Vienna, February 2016,) (Action A.2)</li> <li>▪ Monthly telephone conferences and bilateral phone calls have taken place (16 in all) (Action A.2)</li> <li>▪ Monitoring plan and timeline were established and regularly reviewed (Action A.3) and the British RC ensured robust task outcome (A.3/A.5)</li> <li>▪ Progress report and final reports have been compiled and delivered to the Commission (Action A.4)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Comparison between initially planned and actually implemented activities</b></p> <p>Tasks A1 to A5 ran basically as planned. Partners took part in 5 project meetings as well as regular telephone conferences (Action A.1/A.2). The partner meeting in Sofia in June 2015 was carried out before and after the European expert workshop. The final partner meeting took place in Vienna in February 2016 - the final meeting was originally planned for January 2016 but was carried out a bit later, after the national exercise in Austria had taken place. The British Red Cross and the Austrian Red Cross were in regular contact regarding the project monitoring and ensuring robust task outcome, which included proof-reading the documents and deliverables from the side of the British RC throughout the course of the project, providing feedback and monitoring of outcomes and time lines (Action A.3 and A.5).</p> <p>Apart from the telephone conferences and group emails, bi-lateral emails and telephone calls between coordinator and work package leaders have also been an important pillar of project management and haven proven to be helpful in solving arising challenges. All in all, the coordinator and partners were sometimes challenged to meet deadlines due to having many different tasks to attend to outside of the project.</p> <p>Overall, some activities were slightly delayed in comparison to the time planning projected within the proposal. The third part of the national exercise in Austria was only held in January 2016 due to organisational issues. However, this had already been planned early on in the process. The exercise was carried out in the framework of the annual exercise with the command body of the city Innsbruck and this was the only time slot available from their side. This also prolonged the finalisation of the community-based exercise guide.</p>

	<p>Bi-lateral agreements with partners as well as all reporting requirements by the European Commission were fulfilled as planned (Action A.1. / Action A.4). The CO applied for an amendment to the Grant agreement in order to allow for budget shifts and to extend the project by two months to finalise the layout and printing of the recommendations and community-based exercise guide.</p> <p><b>Qualitative evaluation of the activities</b></p> <p>Overall, the project communication went very well. Different partners hosted the meetings and always organised them excellently. Partners had regular email communication and telephone conferences. Bi-lateral phone calls and meetings were scheduled when necessary. Overall, the partners profited from a warm, friendly and collaborative atmosphere, which was also explicitly stated in the evaluation session at the last partner meeting in Vienna. All partners contributed to the success of the project and it was felt that work streams were fairly split. Although some staff turnover took place in Latvia and UK (due to maternity leave) and Bulgaria (the project manager undertook the task of a refugee coordinator in Greece) the motivation of all partners to make the project successful was sustained throughout.</p>
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<p><b>Task B</b> Dissemination</p>	<p><b>Implemented activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The website and logo were designed, the content was added and has been updated regularly during the course of the project. Most information is available in English, however there are also country pages with information in English, Bulgarian, Croatian, German and Latvian (Action B.1).</li> <li>▪ Website and hosting is in place and will be kept up after the project's end (Action B.1/). All project products are available on the website.</li> <li>▪ Project leaflets as well as summary leaflets about the empirical and desk research report were developed in English, Bulgarian, Croatian, German and Latvian and were distributed at exercises, conferences, seminars, national workshops, community-based exercises, etc. (Action B.2)</li> <li>▪ Information about the project has been posted on partners websites and through different channels, such as newsletters, press releases, articles, ... (Action B.2)</li> <li>▪ Dissemination activities in individual partner countries have been taking place (Action B.2) – please also see the dissemination list for further details</li> <li>▪ Information material for older people and local stakeholders was produced and disseminated in the national languages (Action B.3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Comparison of expected and implemented activities</b></p> <p>The development of the website (Task B.1) was delayed due to a longer process in finding web designers in Latvia and negotiating the contract conditions with the web designer. However, the website has been regularly updated since then, the design and</p>
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structure and content is seen as being very good by partners. All project material can be downloaded from the website and links to other relevant organisations and projects can be found under <http://prepage.eu/en/resources>.

The other activities could be implemented as planned. Dissemination of printed material will continue after the project's end and follow-up activities are planned in all countries. Within Action B.2. Dissemination material was prepared by all partners and project leaflets as well as summaries about the desk research and the empirical report are available in English and all partner languages. Also, partners disseminated leaflets and information about the project in conferences, seminars and national workshops. The project was for example presented at the European Commission's kick-off meeting in Brussels, in a National Care Conference, a Workshop on inclusive humanitarian aid in Austria and at the conference of the German-speaking Society for psycho traumatology as well as in the framework of a Meeting with the Minister of Social Affairs in Austria. (see Annex 3 dissemination list). The PrepAGE project was also presented in different newsletters, for example in the newsletter of the international cooperation department (reaching more than 500 persons) or the emergency response and independent living newsletter in the UK which was sent to 7000 staff and volunteers. A host of dissemination activities were carried out within the community-based exercises. A national and regional TV report about the exercise was aired in Latvia, a press release is planned in Austria and was sent out in the UK. The Latvian and Bulgarian RC have short video clips of their exercises that are available on the PrepAGE website (see the document "links to videos").

Different information material for local stakeholders (Action B.3) was produced and/or disseminated in all partner countries and included an emergency card with preparedness tips for older people that was distributed at a Senior Fair in Austria, information package for participants and experts of the community-based exercise in GB, preparedness leaflet in Latvia and family preparedness plans in Bulgaria and in Croatia. Also, "grab and go" bags were presented in UK, Croatia and Latvia.

#### **Qualitative evaluation of activities**

Dissemination activities have been on the agenda from the beginning of the project. All partners have been disseminating the project and its results regularly in meetings, conferences, workshops etc. Especially the national workshops in partner countries, the expert workshop in Bulgaria and the national exercises worked very well for dissemination activities as well as raising awareness on the topic. Very good publicity was also done by all partners in the framework of the community-based exercises, including press releases (Austria), TV and radio reports (Bulgaria, Latvia), producing video clips (Bulgaria and Latvia) as well as articles on the internet. The printed community-based exercise guide, recommendations and material for local stakeholders were also sent by mail to relevant organisations in the field of disaster management, civil protection and health- and social services in July 2016. Project partners have concrete plans for further dissemination activities as well as follow-up activities.

<p><b>Task C</b> Research</p>	<p><b>Implemented activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Screening existing emergency and disaster procedures and legal framework in participating countries (Action C.1)</li> <li>▪ Defining target group and their special needs and challenges and their strengths and resources and compiling the desk research report Action C.2)</li> <li>▪ Developing and on-line questionnaire to Red Cross partners and members of the European Network for Psychosocial support and compiling the empirical report (Action C.3)</li> <li>▪ A summary leaflet about desk research report and empirical report was developed for use in the national workshops (Task D)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Comparison of expected and actually implemented activities</b></p> <p>The desk research and empirical report was written as planned. However, the University of Innsbruck had to invest more staff resources than originally planned, due to the wealth of information found and compiled. During the course of partner meetings and research the resources and potentials of older people within the disaster management cycle were also put into focus which was not in the focus of the project from the beginning but came up as an important factor. A handbook summarizing best practice examples was compiled additionally. Summary leaflets for each report were made that were translated by project partners and were used to at the national workshops in Task D to disseminate research results, provide the basis for discussion and to elaborate country specific recommendations.</p> <p><b>Qualitative evaluation of activities</b></p> <p>The summary leaflets proved to be a valuable resource in order to provide an overview on research results and were very useful for the national workshops. The desk research report is very detailed and provides useful information and background material (best practice handbook). It was mentioned that the empirical research could have used more varied methods and the questionnaires could have been sent to a broader audience, however this would have needed also more resources.</p>



<p><b>Task D</b></p> <p>Procedures and Recommendations</p>	<p><b>Implemented activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Five National Workshops were held in partner countries with more than 125 participants (Action D.1)</li> <li>▪ National workshop reports were compiled in English and the country language including recommendations for the national context (Action D.1 and Action F-D.4)</li> <li>▪ A European Expert Meeting was carried out from 2-3 June 2015 in Bulgaria (Lozen) with 33 participants (Action D.2)</li> <li>▪ European and national policy recommendations were compiled in a key recommendations report (Action D.3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Comparison of expected and actually implemented activities</b></p> <p>The national workshops were held in the partner countries as planned and national workshop reports with recommendations were written. The reports were the basis for developing draft European recommendations that were discussed and elaborated at the European Expert workshop in Lozen. The National workshops also served to discuss and compile specific recommendations at national level, which were summarized in the national workshop reports. Thus, the deliverable D.1 was combined with the deliverable F-D.4 (work package F). The European Expert Meeting was combined with the third partner meeting and the day before and after was used for the partner meeting. All activities in work package D were implemented as foreseen, only slightly extended since the process of discussing and finalising the recommendations took some time. The National workshop reports are also available in the country language since they were sent to participants of the workshop afterwards as well as in English. The European workshop report covers the discussion of the European expert workshop and developed European recommendations.</p> <p><b>Qualitative evaluation of activities</b></p> <p>All in all the activities in Task D. went as planned. The <b>National workshops</b> were very valuable through the information exchange and inclusion of different stakeholders, bringing together more than 125 participants from the health and social services sector and stakeholders from DM and civil protection. Although some more stakeholders from the DM field would have been good especially in Austria, the national workshops were a good opportunity to raise awareness on the needs and resources of older people in disasters and disseminate project results like the project leaflet and summaries of research reports. Within the national meetings, it became also quite clear that the topic of older people and disasters was quite new for many stakeholders. Furthermore, the national workshops served to get in contact with experts and ask about their participation in the European expert workshop.</p> <p>The <b>European expert workshop</b> brought together more than 33 experts and participants from partner countries from 1-2 June 2015 in Lozen (Bulgaria). An expert from Italy (from the SAMETS project) and a representative from DG ECHO, Biljana</p>
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	<p>Zuber participated as well in the workshop. The workshop served to discuss research results and national recommendations with the main aim to compile draft European recommendations. The participation of experts from different fields and outside from the working group was perceived as very positive. The networking aspect and exchange of experience was also seen as very important. The European workshop report including a summary of the expert workshop was compiled and sent to all participants of the expert workshop.</p>
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<p><b>Task E</b> Community-based Exercises</p>	<p><b>Implemented activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing a community-based exercise guide: Exercise guide drafted and reviewed in several stages and finalized by the work package leader, Austrian RC and British RC (Action E.1)</li> <li>▪ Exercises were prepared with local RC branches involving local stakeholders and older people themselves as well as extensive preparation and dissemination activities (Action E.2)</li> <li>▪ Individual evaluation concepts for each exercise were developed and implemented by the University of Innsbruck (Action E.2 and E.3)</li> <li>▪ Exercises in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia and UK were conducted between September 2015 and January 2016 (Action E.3).</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Comparison of expected and actually implemented activities</b></p> <p>A structure of the <b>community-based exercise guide</b> (Action E.1) was discussed in the partner meeting in Sofia (June 2015), Latvia (October 2015) and finalized in the partner meeting in Vienna (February 2016). The Bulgarian Red Cross (WP leader) prepared a general structure of the CBE guide and a draft version in English which was finalized in close cooperation with Austrian Red Cross and British RC. The guide was translated in partner languages and also includes pictures from the different exercises. All in all, the process of drafting and completing the CBE guide took longer than originally envisaged.</p> <p>The process of <b>preparing the exercises</b> (Action E.2) began already before the second partner meeting in Zagreb. The national workshops in partner countries in spring 2015 and the European expert workshop in Bulgaria in June 2015 also served to discuss formats and aims of exercises with experts from different fields. Partners contacted regional and local authorities and other stakeholders from the field of civil protection and disaster management as well as health and social services. Within the preparation it became very obvious that a) older people need to be actively involved as participants and b) that aims and formats of exercises varied quite a lot from country to country. Therefore it was agreed at the partner meeting in Sofia that different evaluation tools according to the kind of exercise will be developed. The Bulgarian RC (work package</p>

leader) also developed checklists for the planning of the exercise and reporting templates that it distributed to partners to support their planning and implementation processes.

A **community-based exercise** was carried out in each partner country. The exercises were conducted from September 2015 (Latvia: 3. Sept, UK: 29. Sept. Croatia: 2. Oct., Bulgaria: December 2015) to 29. January 2016. The Austrian exercise was split in three parts, including a preparation meeting and workshop for the simulation exercise which aimed to discuss the current situation and to clarify interest in possible future cooperation on this issue in October 2015, an information stand at a fair for seniors, the “SenAktiv in Innsbruck in November 2015 and the actual exercise in January 2016. The reason for the late date for the exercise in Austria was that it was carried out together with the annual simulation exercise of the local emergency management authority of the City of Innsbruck. The longer timeframe of the exercises also resulted in a delay of the finalization of the exercise guide.

The exercises addressed different topics such as evacuation of a social center (Latvia), reducing the fear of evacuation and focus on psycho-social support (Croatia), exercise on flooding (Bulgaria), networking between different organisations in a blackout scenario (Austria) and a workshop for older people enabling their active participation (UK). The formats were more diverse than originally planned, ranging from a table top exercise in Austria, workshops in the UK as well as practical exercises and drills (Bulgaria) and combined with information sessions for older people (Latvia and Croatia).

A large effort was also put into public relations and dissemination activities before and during the exercises. Partners prepared personal invitations, press releases, website articles and in Latvia even a national TV broadcasted about the exercise.

#### **Qualitative evaluation of activities**

The exercises received very good feedback from experts as well as older people themselves. Also partners rated the exercise as very positive, bringing together different stakeholders and addressing the recommendations in practice.




The process from the first draft of the CBE guide to the final translated versions took quite long and was time-consuming and much more labour intense than envisaged. Some difficulties were experienced due to staff changes in the Bulgarian RC which was leading the work package. However, the final community-based exercise guide was seen as very valuable by partners and other stakeholders.

<p><b>Task F</b> Adapt and finalize</p>	<p><b>Implemented activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ European policy recommendations were finalized in English, adapted and translated to national languages, layouted and printed (Action F.1)</li> <li>▪ Community based exercise guidelines were finalized in English, adapted and translation to national languages, layouted and printed (Action F.2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Comparison of expected and actually implemented activities</b></p> <p>The guide is longer than originally planned (54 instead of 30), also because it was important to include pictures. Also, the guide was produced later than planned, since originally it was planned to conduct all exercises according to one mutual framework and present this one framework in the guide. However, in the course of the project, several very useful formats for the exercises have emerged with different focusses. These included practical exercises involving a variety of organisations and older people, awareness raising events for older people themselves as well as a joint table top exercise with the municipal disaster management and organisations responsible for older people. This has made it necessary to draft the guide after the exercises were completed and not before as originally planned and to elaborate on the differences between the different formats, which is taking more time than planned. Secondly, the current refugee response has affected two of the partner teams in the PrepAGE project. Within the Bulgarian Red Cross team, who are responsible for the work package concerned with drafting the community-based exercise guide a key staff member Jassen Slivenski has left to carry out operations in Greece and has been replaced by Lubomir Karakanovski.</p> <p>Due to these delays, it was not possible to contract the translation, design, layout and print of the guide within the originally planned project period. Thus, the coordinator applied for an amendment that was granted to extend the project duration by two months from 31 March 2016 to 31 May 2016. This enabled the coordinator and beneficiaries to go through the necessary contracting procedure and complete the project products as planned.</p> <p><b>Qualitative evaluation of activity</b></p> <p>Although there was a delay in the activities as just described, the final products have turned out very well in terms of contents and format (see below for evaluation of deliverables).</p>
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<p><b>Task G</b> Evaluation</p>	<p><b>Implemented activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An evaluation plan and tools were developed (Action G.1.)</li> <li>▪ The evaluation results were presented and discussed at all project meetings (Action G.2. and Action G.3.)</li> <li>▪ Evaluation designs for community-based exercises were developed (Action G.4.)</li> <li>▪ All five exercises have been evaluated (Action G.4)</li> <li>▪ Evaluation reports were compiled (two interim reports and one final evaluation report)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Comparison of expected and actually implemented activities</b></p> <p>Basically, all evaluation activities were carried out as planned. Basic templates for evaluation questionnaires were agreed by all partners. An evaluation plan and instruments for meeting evaluation, process evaluation, impact evaluation as well as evaluation of the national workshops as well as the expert workshop in Bulgaria and community-based exercises were developed. Since the formats of the community-based exercises were more varied than originally planned, individual evaluation designs specifically tailored to the format and aims of the exercises were developed by the University of Innsbruck. At the end of the last partner meeting in Vienna in February 2016, a focus groups discussion on the project impact was held. While all evaluation activities were provided on time, they proved to be more personnel intensive than planned which led to higher staff costs from the side of the University of Innsbruck.</p> <p><b>Qualitative evaluation of activity</b></p> <p>All in all the evaluation activities have been very useful to the project. It is seen as very good to have an evaluation partner that is only responsible for the evaluation and does not have to implement own operative project activities (apart from research activities in this case, which did not pose a problem). Some results were delayed due to the fact that the partners took longer to deliver the data and the evaluation partner had to send several reminders (For details see Final evaluation report Annex.)</p>

## 5) Technical results and deliverables

The activities described in section 5 resulted in the following deliverables:

<p><b>Task A</b> Project Management and Reporting</p>	<p><b>Deliverables according to T-Forms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ D-A.1 Signed partner agreements</li> <li>▪ D-A.2 Monitoring plan with timeline</li> <li>▪ D-A.3 Progress Report 1 to European Commission</li> <li>▪ D-A.4 Progress Report 2 to European Commission</li> <li>▪ D-A.6 Final narrative and financial report to European Commission</li> </ul>
	<p><b>FINAL PROJECT PRODUCTS</b></p> <p><b>Partner meetings</b></p> <p><u>Purpose and description</u></p> <p>Five Partner meetings were held throughout the project. They took place in Vienna, Austria (Kick- off meeting and final meeting); Zagreb, Croatia (2. Partner meeting); Lozen, Bulgaria (3. Partner meeting and European Expert Workshop) and Riga, Latvia (4. Partner Meeting) and usually lasted 2 days. The partner meetings served to discuss results and milestones of previous project work and to agree on further procedures and organisational issues. The Partner Meeting in Bulgaria was linked with the European Expert Workshop. All partner meetings were very important to make sure that partners had a common understanding throughout the project, to share experiences and learn from each other and to plan the next steps together.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">    </div> <p><u>Evaluation</u></p> <p>Meetings were always well organised by the hosting partners. Partners always appreciated the meetings and felt that they provided an important impetus for the projects' work. Evaluation questionnaires were filled in at each meeting and all in all the partners rated most aspects positively (see evaluation report page 21). The final partner meeting in Vienna also included a focus group discussion on process and outcome evaluation of the project.</p>

### **Partnership agreements (D-A.1.)**

#### Description and purpose

The partnership agreements were prepared according to a template provided by the Commission and in line with the Grant Agreement. The agreement includes provisions on responsibilities of partners, the work that they are to carry within the project as well as the partner budget and payment modalities.

#### Evaluation

Not all payments have been made as highlighted in the partner agreements since some partners have not claimed the costs continuously. The missing payments will be made as soon as all financial reports are completed. Otherwise, no shortcomings of the partner agreements have been identified so far.

### **Monitoring plan with timeline (D-A.5)**

#### Purpose and description

A monitoring plan with timeline was established in the beginning of the project and was regularly reviewed and also included in all progress reports. The British Red Cross had an additional monitoring function regarding outcomes in each work package and ensured robust task outcome.

#### Evaluation

The monitoring plan was a useful tool to keep the overview on whether the project was keeping to the timeline or not and allowed a quick overview. Also, having a partner who was additionally responsible for the proof-reading of documents and monitoring was seen as quite useful.

### **Progress reports and final report to the European Commission (D-A.3 / D-A.4 / C-A.5)**

#### Purpose and description

Two progress reports were handed in to the European Commission in the course of the project as foreseen by the Grant Agreement. They each consisted of a five page descriptive report, the monitoring plan with timeline, the revised T-forms, an overview of the financial statement as well as the deliverables that were finished at the time. They served to inform the Commission of the project's progress and to ensure that the project was on track. The final report to the Commission is being prepared according to the structure highlighted in the Grant Agreement. It includes this final narrative report in English, the final financial statement of the CO and the AB as well as the main project deliverables in hard copy and a complete set of deliverables electronically on a USB stick. Its purpose is to describe the project's process and outcomes and provide the basis for the European Commission to evaluate the projects' success.

#### Evaluation

Both progress reports were accepted by the European Commission, so we are assuming they were in line with the expectations.

<p><b>Task B</b> Publicity/ Dissemination</p>	<p><b>Deliverables according to T-Forms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ D-B.1 Website online (and updated)</li> <li>▪ D-B.2 Dissemination material</li> <li>▪ D-B.3 Information material for local stakeholders</li> </ul>
	<p><b>FINAL PROJECT PRODUCTS</b></p> <p><b>Website (D-B.1)</b></p> <p><u>Purpose and description</u></p> <p>The website aimed to provide information about research results and available tools and good practices, National and European Workshops, exercises in countries and country specific information in the respective partner languages. All project deliverables can also be downloaded from the website. The website is built according to the project structure and its main elements are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The home page, which provides information “<b>about the project</b>”</li> <li>▪ The page “<b>Research results</b>”, which refers to all activities and results under Task C, including the desk research report and the empirical report as well as summary leaflets about the two research reports</li> <li>▪ The page “<b>Recommendations</b>” which refers to all activities and results under Task D. Procedures and Recommendations, including .reports about the national workshops and the European Workshop report and Recommendations in English and country languages.</li> <li>▪ The page “<b>Exercise</b>” which refers to activities and results under Task E. Community-based exercise which includes information and pictures about the exercises in the countries as well as the guide in English and country languages.</li> <li>▪ The page “<b>Resources</b>” provides background information, tools and handbooks on this topic</li> <li>▪ The page “<b>News</b>” which contains information to relevant events and exercises .</li> <li>▪ The page “<b>project in countries</b>” provides information about events in the partner country in the country language</li> </ul> <p>Each page in turn consists of several subpages, explaining different aspects of the individual activities and the respective results (See <a href="http://www.prepage.eu">www.prepage.eu</a>). The project website is in English and information in <b>partner languages</b> is available under “project in countries” in Bulgarian, Croatian, English, German and Latvian.</p>





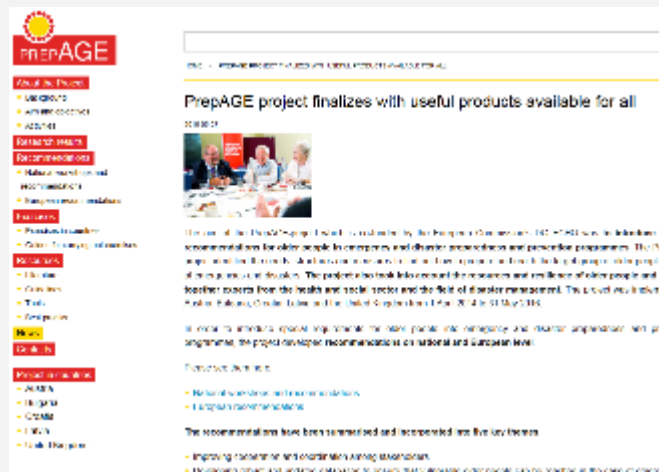
Screenshot of the website

**Evaluation**

The website has been used to promote the project events and results. It provides a good opportunity to share information and project’s results. All printed documents state the website prominently. The website will also be in place after the project’s end.

According to the final evaluation report the design as well as the content of the website at the end of project was perceived very positively by the partners. On a scale from 0 (low satisfaction) to 3 (high satisfaction) a score of 2.71 regarding the design as well as a score of 2.62 regarding the content (2.62) was given by the partners at the end of the project.

In the evaluation exercise on the project impact that was held at the end of the last partner meeting in Vienna in February 2016, participants pointed out that the design, composition, structure, content, information, pictures and videos provided, as well as the fact that the website is easy to use, are very good. On the other hand, the development and translation of the website took more time than planned and updates could have been conducted more regularly.



**Dissemination material (D-B.3)**

Description and purpose

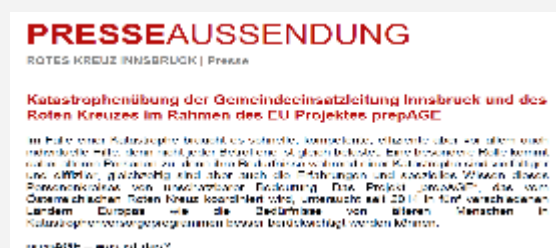
Partners carried out wide variety of dissemination activities throughout the project. At the beginning of the project, the project leaflets were distributed at meetings and conferences and the plans for the project and research results presented. The research results from the desk research report and the empirical report were summarised as a two-pager and were distributed at national workshops and are also available in all partner languages. One to two months before the Community-based exercises were held, partners initiated a host of dissemination activities to promote the exercises, including personal invitation letters, website articles, video clips, press releases etc ... The third phase of dissemination consists of disseminating the project products in dissemination meetings, other events as well as by mailing them to partners (see dissemination list in Annex 1). Results of the projects were also disseminated in different meetings and events e.g. at the SAMETS final event in Brussels, in a workshop on inclusive humanitarian aid or several newsletters. The purpose of these activities was to spread the word about the project and raise awareness on the necessity of considering the needs and resources of older people in disaster management. The University of Innsbruck prepared and is preparing several articles and has given presentations on the project in several meetings. Four masters theses of the University of Innsbruck were written within the PrepAGE project (see dissemination list) and two theses for the management training programme of the Austrian Red Cross (Veronica Biebel and Cornelia Hackl).

Evaluation

All in all, a large variety of dissemination activities were carried out over all partners (see Annex 3 List of dissemination activities). In comparison to other European projects that the coordinator and the partners engaged in, dissemination as had a very prominent focus in the PrepAGE project, which also had the important function of raising awareness for the topic amongst the older population but also among different stakeholders. Especially, the Latvian partner, who was also responsible for the dissemination work package, carried out exemplary dissemination activities on national level as well as on EU level.



Summary – desk research



Press release for the exercise in Austria

## Information material for local stakeholders (D.-B.3)

### Description and purpose

In the course of the project and in preparation for the community-based exercises information material was prepared by partners for local stakeholders. In most cases, these were leaflets and short checklists geared at older people with the purpose of informing them, which preparatory measures they should take to be prepared in case of disaster. These leaflets were mostly developed on the basis of existing material in the respective national societies and were distributed within the community-based exercises and later on distributed to other stakeholders.

### Evaluation

The information leaflets were received very positively by the local stakeholders participating in the exercises. In Latvia, local authorities asked for additional copies to distribute them to older people in several communities and the Latvian Red Cross had to print additional copies. One of the property management agencies involved in the exercise in Austria, asked for additional copies of the recommendations and guides so that they could disseminate them to their staff members. Also, they asked for 6000 copies of the information leaflet on disaster preparedness for older people, because they would like to distribute them to all their tenants in 6000 apartments. The British Red Cross is now sending out a marketing campaign to 200,000 people using the materials we designed for the PrePAGE exercise in the UK – a grab bag and emergency contact lists.



Emergency information leaflet (Latvia), Emergency card (Austria), Family preparedness plan (Bulgaria)

<p><b>Task C</b> Research</p>	<p><b>Deliverables according to T-Forms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ C-D.1 Desk research report</li> <li>▪ C-D.2 Empirical report</li> <li>▪ C-D.3 Summary of empirical and desk research in all partner languages (additional – also see dissemination Task B)</li> <li>▪ C-D.4. Good practice handbook (additional)</li> </ul>					
	<p><b>FINAL PROJECT PRODUCTS</b></p> <p><b>Desk research and empirical report (C-D.1 / C-D.2)</b></p> <p><u>Description and purpose</u></p> <p>The University of Innsbruck prepared two detailed research reports that are available on the project website. The purpose of the research work was to screening existing emergency and disaster procedures and legal framework in participating countries, define the target group and their special needs and challenges and their strengths and resources. Also, a questionnaire was developed asking experts from Red Cross Societies what the main challenges are with respect to older people and disaster management. Both reports describe used methods, detailed and well-structured results as well as summarizing the main findings.</p> <p>Several products and materials have been produced from the Research Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk research report</li> <li>• Empirical report</li> <li>• Leaflet desk research (summary)</li> <li>• Leaflet empirical research (summary)</li> <li>• Best Practice Handbook</li> </ul> <p><u>Evaluation</u></p> <p>The satisfaction of the partners with the research findings (2.77) and materials that have been produced from the research findings during the project (2.69) is very high. Scales ranged from 0 (not so good) to 3 (very good).</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="343 1630 1177 1787"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>Products and materials</i></th> <th><i>Mean</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Materials that have been produced during the project</td> <td>2,69</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Research findings</td> <td>2,77</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Project impact: Satisfaction with products and materials</b></p> <p>In the focus groups discussion on the project impact that was held at the end of the last partner meeting in Vienna in February 2016, participants pointed out that the materials produced are very valuable, provide an updated summary of research activities and therefore were very useful for future activities. They also stated that research could have been broader and better regarding varied methods and a more and varied sample. Materials could be more user friendly with a better layout</p>	<i>Products and materials</i>	<i>Mean</i>	Materials that have been produced during the project	2,69	Research findings
<i>Products and materials</i>	<i>Mean</i>					
Materials that have been produced during the project	2,69					
Research findings	2,77					

<p><b>Task D</b></p> <p>Procedures and Recommendations</p>	<p><b>Deliverables according to T-Forms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ D-D.1 Five national workshop reports</li> <li>▪ D-D.2 European workshop report</li> <li>▪ D-D.3 Key recommendations report</li> </ul>																							
	<p><b>FINAL PROJECT PRODUCTS</b></p> <p><b>Five national workshops and reports (D-D.1)</b></p> <p><u>Description and purpose</u></p> <p>Between March and April 2015, five national workshops, one in each partner country, were conducted. Participants came from national or regional authorities, care organisations, the Red Cross, universities and older people’s associations. The workshop served to discuss research results and national recommendations. The participation of experts from different fields and outside from the working group was perceived as very positive. The networking aspect and exchange of experience was also seen as very important. Summaries of the main contents and recommendation can be found in the final evaluation report on page 28 and following. The detailed national workshop reports can be found in the enclosed USB stick and on the project website.</p> <p><u>Evaluation</u></p> <p>In order to evaluate the workshops a questionnaire was given out at the end of each workshop. Scales ranged from 0 (lowest) to 3 (highest). Rather high mean ratings (all higher than the middle value of 1.5) show that the results of the national workshops were very good. Overall, the participants from all countries were highly satisfied with them. In all countries the expectations of the participants were fulfilled and the awareness about older people’s needs and strengths in disasters, the necessity of networking as well as about general recommendations and best practices regarding older people in disaster situations has improved.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="430 1747 1420 2027"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>Results</i></th> <th><i>Austria</i></th> <th><i>Britain</i></th> <th><i>Bulgaria</i></th> <th><i>Croatia</i></th> <th><i>Latvia</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Overall satisfaction</td> <td>2,71</td> <td>2,39</td> <td>2,44</td> <td>2,67</td> <td>2,78</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Expectations fulfilled</td> <td>2,45</td> <td>1,89</td> <td>2,55</td> <td>2,28</td> <td>2,29</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Awareness improved</td> <td>2,45</td> <td>1,89</td> <td>2,43</td> <td>2,26</td> <td>2,48</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Austria</i>	<i>Britain</i>	<i>Bulgaria</i>	<i>Croatia</i>	<i>Latvia</i>	Overall satisfaction	2,71	2,39	2,44	2,67	2,78	Expectations fulfilled	2,45	1,89	2,55	2,28	2,29	Awareness improved	2,45	1,89	2,43	2,26
<i>Results</i>	<i>Austria</i>	<i>Britain</i>	<i>Bulgaria</i>	<i>Croatia</i>	<i>Latvia</i>																			
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In the focus group discussion on the project impact that was held at the end of the last partner meeting in Vienna in February 2016, project partners pointed out that the national workshops provided valuable information through the information exchange and inclusion of different stakeholders. However, it would have been good for the outcome of the workshop to include more different stakeholders, and more people from the disaster management and civil protection field in some countries. While it was reported that there was very good cooperation with the stakeholders, in some cases it was hard to initiate the stakeholder's active participation.

### **European workshop and report (D-D.2)**

#### Description and purpose

The European Workshop was held from June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 to June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015 in Sofia, Bulgaria. Participants came from 7 different countries, including authorities, representatives from Red Cross societies and from other emergency organisations. In addition, partners from other similar EU projects were invited as well as a representative of DG ECHO.

#### Evaluation

In order to evaluate the European workshop a questionnaire was given out at the end of the workshop. Scales ranged from 0 (lowest) to 3 (highest). High mean ratings show that the results of the European workshops was very good. Overall, the participants were highly satisfied with the workshop. The expectations of the participants were fulfilled and the awareness about older people's needs and strengths in disasters, the necessity of networking as well as about general recommendations and best practices regarding older people in disaster situations has improved.

<i>Results</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Overall satisfaction	2,71
Expectations fulfilled	2,50
Awareness improved	2,29

#### European workshop results

Regarding the impact of the European workshop, the recommendations are perceived as excellent. The condition and organization was highly complimented. The wider expert participation outside the working group and experience exchange was perceived as very positive. More exchange on different experiences from the countries and more time along with less invoicing problems and financial challenges could have improved the event.



**Key recommendations report (D-D.3)**

Description and purpose

This was the basis for the final recommendations printed and layouted, see details under F. There was a draft, sent out to all for comments, put on website, later this was revised and finalized.

Evaluation

See F. for more details

<p><b>Task E</b></p>	<p><b>Deliverables according to T-Forms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ D-E.1 Emergency exercises carried out in each partner country</li> <li>▪ D-E.2 Draft community-based exercise guide</li> </ul>
	<p><b>FINAL PROJECT PRODUCTS</b></p> <p><b>Community-based exercises carried out in each partner country (D.-E.1)</b></p> <p><u>Description and purpose</u></p> <p>One based exercise was carried out in each partner country An overview of all exercises with dates and number of exercises is provide in the evaluation report on page 17. The exercises had several aims, for example linking different organisations together, enhancing disaster preparedness of older people, educating them to plan for emergencies and reducing fear and anxiety in emergency situations. Each exercise had a slightly different focus and used different methods. For an overview of the different types of exercises and their target groups, see the exercise guide (Annex 2) page 16.</p>

Community-  
based Exercises



Austria: In Austria, the exercise was divided into three parts. All three events took place in Innsbruck in cooperation with the Community of Innsbruck and the Austrian Red Cross (Innsbruck branch). The aim was to promote cooperation between different organizations regarding elderly people in disaster situations. 1. On October 21, 2015, a preparation meeting and workshop for the simulation exercise was arranged together with various organizations. The aim was to discuss the current situation and to clarify interest in possible future cooperation on this issue. 2. From November 20, 2015 to November 22, 2015 a trade fair for seniors, the “SenAktiv”, took place in Innsbruck. The main goal was to inform the people about preparation options for disasters and highlight what they themselves could contribute in a potential disaster. Information was given at an information booth of the Red Cross and during a presentation. 3. On January 29, 2016, the crisis management staff of the city of Innsbruck and the Crisis management staff of the Red Cross, together with some social organizations for older people, carried out a table-top exercise. The scenario was a longer blackout in a district of Innsbruck due to severe weather conditions in the winter.



Bulgaria: In Bulgaria, the local partner within the PrepAGE project was the Yambol branch of the Bulgarian Red Cross. Yambol region is one of the smaller rural underdeveloped regions of Bulgaria, situated in the South East in in the country. The community selected for the exercise was the village of Vesselinovo, which is close to the river Tundzha. This river poses the highest risk for the settlement and has repeatedly flooded houses throughout the years. The village has one of the largest populations in the region, over 1000 inhabitants, many of whom are older people, including many Roma families. For the purpose of the exercise, the Bulgarian Red Cross mobilised its specific units, including its national volunteer disaster response team and the volunteer disaster response teams from Yambol, the BRC flood response team, and a team of older people – a new type of disaster response unit. After an extensive



preparation with the institutional stakeholders, the Bulgarian Red Cross organized a simulation of a flood alert and flooding scenario with evacuation of affected families from their houses. The community based exercise, part of the PrepAge project, was carried out in early December 2015.



Croatia: In Croatia, the exercise consisted of a theoretical and a practical part. Within the theoretical part all the institutions and organizations presented participants the scope and method of their work, including examples from past crises. The participants themselves were actively engaged in the debate, citing examples from real life that have

happened to them. Presentations were done by representatives of the city of Slunj, the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, the National Protection and Rescue Directorate, Department for Emergency Management of Zagreb and the Croatian Red Cross. A special section was devoted to the problem of reluctance to leave homes when it is necessary. The team for the psychosocial support of the Croatian Red Cross organized a group work in which users shared their experiences, comments and fears about evacuation. The practical part of the exercise was carried out on a football field and on the river Korana. The employees, members of the emergency team and the Croatian Red Cross volunteers built a tent settlement for evacuated population on the football field in Slunj. Tents settlement with all the services and activities that can be organized within it were presented to users. Representatives of the Croatian Mountain Rescue presented their work and equipment, and made users familiar with all the services which they can expect from them in crisis situations. On the river Korana, members of the Water rescue Team of the Croatian Red Cross demonstrated several ways of rescue and evacuation of the population in case of floods. The beneficiaries were actively engaged in exercises simulating people who need assistance during evacuation. After lunch, the participants of the exercise were given space for additional questions and comments, and the evaluation of the exercise was made.



Latvia: In Latvia an emergency response training (community-based exercise), with a specific emergency situation simulation – a forest fire close to the social care centre, as a result of which 130 residents of the social care centre need to be evacuated to a safe place after noticing thick smoke inside the social care centre building – was organised. The training included firstly evacuating all the inhabitants of the centre by the Latvian Red Cross staff, and in parallel arrival of all rescuers, according to the civil protection plan. After all 130 inhabitants of the social care centre were evacuated to a safe place – a nearby church – the rescuers searched the surroundings and made a special “headquarter” for sharing the actual information among the rescuers. At some point it was “noticed” that 4 people were missing. Those were volunteering actors from the Latvian Red Cross, prepared to have 4 different specific roles (a broken leg, shock, burns, insensible) having a specific make-up in order to look as authentic as possible. That gave a more specific task for the rescue service to look for the missing people and to ensure the medical help when they were found. After the practical part of the training, demonstrations were carried out on how to use fire extinguishers and how to provide first aid. Also, the Latvian Red Cross informed about how it informs and prepares the public in emergency situations (One hour awareness raising session from project Aware & Resilient) including practical information on what is the needed the emergency kit that should be prepared and stored in the safe place in every household. The third part of the training was an evaluation discussion to assess the course of the training, as well as to clarify the main and topical issues related to all stages of rescue work. Also, there were several recommendations formulated during the discussions on how to further improve operative effectiveness and efficiency of the rescue work.



UK: The British Red Cross and Surrey County Council hosted a community based exercise and workshop aimed at over 65 year olds title ‘Be Prepared: Empowering Older Adults in Local Emergencies’. The exercise and workshop comprised of three sections; Helping us to help you, Helping you to help yourself, and Be Prepared. Helping us to help you was a scenario based exercise, in which a fictitious flooding scenario was presented, with 4 injects. Each of these developments built the severity of the scenario, beginning with the initial issuing of a flood alert, progressing through a power outage and evacuation, and concluding with the return to homes. At each inject delegates were asked to discuss within their groups three things: 1) What their needs would be at this time. 2) What actions they would take in each situation. 3) What their concerns would be. The second part, helping you to help yourself, was a panel discussion based around the needs and concerns that were raised by delegates during the scenario exercise. Local emergency responders had the opportunity to share how they can currently assist

	<p>in addressing these concerns. Panel members included representatives from Surrey Fire and Rescue, Environment Agency, British Red Cross, Affinity Water, Surrey County Council and Surrey Police. The third part, be prepared, was a market place style exercise. Delegates were invited to visit the stalls of services and organisations, where they were able to gain information and advice on areas including basic first aid, home and fire safety and British Red Cross emergency kits</p> <p><u>Evaluation</u></p> <p>Each exercise was evaluated thoroughly by the University of Innsbruck. The extensive evaluation including the methodology in each country and results for each country can be found in Annex 6 Final evaluation report (Austria: pp.45 ff; Bulgaria: pp. 73 ff; Croatia: pp. 82 ff; Latvia: pp. 100 ff; UK: pp. 92 ff).</p> <p>All in all the exercises were very successful in raising awareness, reducing older peoples fear of evacuation, increasing knowledge and skills as well as improving coordination between stakeholders. The four different types of exercise formats have been used as a basis for the exercise guide in order to show the different ways in which awareness of older people’s needs can be raised, networking between organisations can be improved and older people can be involved in disaster preparedness and response. As a UK delegate put it:</p> <p><i>“Thank you and your colleagues from the various statutory and voluntary organisations for a most interesting and informative day – we learnt a lot, which we hope not to have to put into practice! However, if we do, we shall be much better prepared than we would otherwise have been. We are also passing on what we have learnt to our friends and neighbours.”</i></p> <p><b>Draft community-based exercise guide (D-E.2)</b></p> <p>Based on the conducted Community based exercise a guide was drafted and then revised several times. The CBE Guide is available in Bulgarian, English, French, Latvian and Romanian. Details on the final printed guide as well as the evaluation are listed below under F.</p>
<p><b>Task F</b> Adapt and Finalise</p>	<p><b>Deliverables according to T-Forms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ D-F.1 Printed European policy recommendations in English</li> <li>▪ D-F.2. Five national policy recommendations printed in national languages</li> <li>▪ D-F.3. General guideline for organisations in English</li> <li>▪ D-F.4 Specific guidelines for organisations in each country</li> </ul>

## FINAL PROJECT PRODUCTS

### Policy recommendations (D-F.1 / D-F.2)

#### Description and purpose

One of the PrepAGE project's main activities was to develop recommendations at a national and European level on how best to incorporate the needs and strengths of older people into emergency planning and response. After collecting recommendations on national and European level a draft version was compiled (see Task D). This was then revised, layouted and translated.

The recommendations' document is 14 pages long in English. Next to a short introduction it contains the recommendations along the lines of five key themes:

- Improving cooperation and coordination among stakeholders
- Developing robust and updated databases to ensure that vulnerable older people can be reached in the case of emergency (at the local level)
- Raising awareness and providing information
- Encouraging community involvement
- Offering psychosocial support focusing on the needs of older people

The layouted, printed recommendations are available in English, German, Bulgarian, Croatian and Latvian. Details can be found in Annex 1 and an overview of the main themes can also be found in the Annex 6.



#### Evaluation

Generally the exchange with the stakeholders on national and European level was seen to be very fruitful and the partners are very satisfied with the recommendations. Participants of the workshops were very much satisfied with the recommendations formulated in the National workshops and the European workshop, with a mean rating of 2.85 on a scale from 0 (not so good) to 3 (very good). At the last project meeting the partners stated that they were very happy with the recommendations. Also, in the course of the dissemination process, partners' have receive feed-back from those that they were sent to. In some cases, more copies were requested to be able to hand them out to colleagues. The recommendations are a very good outcome of the project, and an excellent dissemination and awareness raising tool, as well as a good basis for developing the field of disaster management and older people.

## Community base exercise guide for organisations (D.F-3 / D.F-4)



### Description and purpose

This guide is based on the empirical and desk research carried out in the beginning of the PrepAGE project, and the national and the European workshops, and integrates the lessons learned from the community-based exercises in the five partner countries. It is intended to assist those who are interested in carrying out a community-based exercise with the focus on older people, but also including them as active participants.

The **aims** of the guide are:

- To provide information and ideas on how to organise such an exercise that has an added value for older people, as compared to the existing practice.
- To describe field-tested good practice examples and different exercise formats from five countries, including detailed recommendations for the organisation and process of the exercise.
- To address challenges and lessons learnt regarding how to involve older people and to improve cooperation between stakeholders.

It is intended to assist those interested in carrying out an exercise with older people, by providing:

- Information and ideas on how to organise such an exercise that has an added value for older people, as compared to the existing practice.
- Step by step organisation of an exercise.

The target group of the guide are those who can, and would like to, initiate, carry out or practically manage a community-based emergency exercise aimed at older people, and who are part of the civil protection and rescue system in a country, including:

- Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies (HQ and local branches)
- Local authorities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Civil protection actors – state institutions, or non-governmental organisations, having a role in civil protection</li> <li>▪ Private institutions and utility companies with a role in emergency response</li> <li>▪ Social services and organisations taking care of older people</li> </ul> <p>The guide is 54 pages long in English and includes an Introduction, a description of background information necessary to conduct the guide, detailed descriptions of each exercise, including lessons learned and recommendations and a final summary and conclusions of lessons learned over all exercises. It is available in print in English, German, Bulgarian, Croatian and Latvian.</p> <p><u>Evaluation</u></p> <p>The community based exercises were seen as very useful by all stakeholders (see above) and the interest is quite high to conduct similar exercises in other communities. Thus, the guide is a useful tool to support those who would like to conduct a similar event. Partners and stakeholders are pleased with the contents and the layout and this other core product of the PrePAGE project is highly valued.</p>
<p><b>Task G</b> Evaluation</p>	<p><b>Deliverables according to T-Forms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ D-G.1 Interim evaluation report 1</li> <li>▪ D-G.2. Interim evaluation report 2</li> <li>▪ D-G.3. Final evaluation report</li> </ul> <p><b>FINAL PROJECT PRODUCTS</b></p> <p><b>Evaluation reports (D-G.1 / D-G.2 / D-G.3)</b></p> <p><u>Description and purpose</u></p> <p>The purpose of the evaluation was to measure the process, outcome and impact of the activities in order to ensure sustainability and further development of the project and activities as well as to enable continued improvement in accountability towards beneficiaries, donors, stakeholders and partners.</p> <p>The project evaluation consisted of three reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In report one the kick-off meeting was analysed and the evaluation plan was presented as well as the intended indicators for process and outcome evaluation.</li> <li>▪ In the second evaluation report the project process during the partner meetings but also during the national workshops as well as during the European workshop was. In this report also the impact of the website as well as the products from the national and European workshops, namely the recommendations were highlighted.</li> <li>▪ The third and final evaluation report gives an overview of the whole project process and of the main deliverables. The main focus was put on the impact of the exercises. It describes the methodology used in detail, gives an overview of the contents of the main deliverables and introduces evaluation results elicited through questionnaires, focus groups and interactive evaluation exercises with partners.</li> </ul>

This included three main aspects:

- To evaluate the project process (process reach and process satisfaction): first and second evaluation report
- To evaluate the applicability and usefulness of the developed materials (implementation indicator/applicability): second and final evaluation report
- To evaluate national workshops and community-based exercises and their impact on the direct and indirect target groups (impact: changes in awareness): final evaluation report

Evaluation: While there was no formal evaluation of the evaluation, informal feed-back by partners indicates, that they were very satisfied with the evaluation process and the evaluation reports. Partners appreciated the fact that the evaluation of the exercises was tailored to their needs and could be incorporated into their exercises in a natural way. All the evaluation activities have been very thorough and the final evaluation report provides a good basis to understand the positive impact of the PrepAGE project and also provided valuable support in putting together this final technical report.

## 6) Evaluation of technical results and deliverables

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The overview and evaluation of technical results and deliverables can be found in great detail within the evaluation report (Annex 6). The main lessons learned and the recommendations concerning older people and disaster management are presented in detail in the Community-based exercise guide (Annex 2) and the recommendations (Annex 1). Thus, only some of the main issues will be highlighted as an overview.

### General lessons learned

- Importance of planning and information of all stakeholders: For all activities involving multiple stakeholders, including older people themselves, be it the national workshops, the European workshop or the exercises on community level it became evident that preparation was very important for the success of the project. Apart from that, the relevance of informing stakeholders participating in different events beforehand, either through face-to-face meetings, telephone or written information, was recognised by all project partners.
- Publicity and dissemination: In order to reach more people with the message of raising awareness for the needs and resources of older people in disasters, dissemination and public relations have proved to have an essential value.
- Key messages on disaster preparedness: With respect to providing information material on disaster preparedness for older people simple information material using a few key messages and providing a checklist on what to consider for a disaster situation has proved very useful in all five partner countries.
- Involving older people: Active participation of older people in all activities with respect to their needs and roles in disaster management is paramount. During the implementation of the project older people could participate actively through voicing their needs and opinions and participating in interactive disaster preparedness events.
- Addressing older people's concerns: There are various concerns and fears of older people related to emergency situations. The most common ones are of evacuation, associated with the fear of damage and/or loss of property, worry about animals, or anxiety over the fate of loved ones. It has proved to be very important to consider these in all activities that aim to enhance the disaster preparedness of older people.
- Networking / Linking different organisations : The whole project process showed quite clearly that there is a missing link, an information and communication gap, between the institutions dealing with daily individual needs of older people and those which are activated in emergency situations. It has also showed that different types of joint activities such as workshops and joint exercises can serve to close these gaps, but that continuous cooperation is necessary and one off activities are not sufficient.
- The role of civil society organisations and volunteers: The involvement of both civil society organisations and authorities in preparedness activities is essential, and provides valuable opportunities for complementarity, greater preparedness, and increased response capacity – ultimately, better services, support and inclusiveness of community, volunteers and older people themselves.



## Strengths of technical results and deliverables

All in all, it can be said that all of the exercise formats were successful in raising awareness, reducing older people's fear of evacuation, and increasing knowledge and skills, as well as coordination between stakeholders. The four different types of exercise formats implemented different ways in which these aims could be reached. They all reached their aims and were very effective in bringing different groups of stakeholders together. The benefits of the exercises for the participating Red Cross partners were that they could carry out a new activity with a new focus, they received positive feedback from co-organisers and participants and gained new ideas for partnerships and further similar activities in the future. Partners reported that more impact was gained than expected, and that many plans on a local level for dissemination and future activities have been made. Other participating organisations benefited by receiving information on older people and disasters, by becoming involved in partnerships for the future, and by experiencing exercises that they could also carry out in different contexts. These exercises are a good starting point for awareness-raising for disasters and older people, and for the reduction of older people's fears. The benefit for older people was also evident: walking people through how to prepare and react, and through the process of evacuation, reduces anxiety and apprehension and significantly increases preparedness. This includes letting them know how they will be informed, by whom, and where they will be evacuated to.

As outlined above and in the evaluation report, the research reports and the ensuing products provide a very good basis to link with other projects working in the field and to understand the main elements of older people and disaster management.

The recommendations provide a very good basis for raising awareness on the topic and encouraging different stakeholders to consider the needs and resources of older people when planning their disaster management procedures.

## Possible challenges and improvements

One challenge is that in working with older people, it is not enough to offer a variety of information on disasters on the internet. It will be important to develop other communication channels, since not all older people are computer literate or have access to computers.

While it is recommended to involve older people actively in exercises and events, it is also important to take into account physical and mental disabilities. During the course of the project it became clear that participants' physical or mental disabilities pose a challenge when involving them in different types of events. Important aspects to take into account are the accessibility of the venue, the timing of the event, and how information is presented during the meeting.

A challenge that has emerged is the missing links between emergency organisations and providers of health and social services for older people, that can result in frail older people and other vulnerable people finding themselves in a no-man's land, between the social institution that may consider its job done by evacuating its "clients" to the safe place stipulated in its emergency plan, and the rescue organisations that may not have the professional knowledge of the carers, and about the specific conditions of each client and the higher possible risks resulting from those conditions. A related issue is that often, institutional partners might attempt to deal with problematic topics that appeared to have been already solved by others. These issues are addressed in great detail in all of the project products (Annex 1, 2 and 6).

## Recommendations

Recommendations on policy level can be found in detail in Annex 1 and were formulated along five issues: These related to a) improving cooperation and coordination among stakeholders, b) providing databases to ensure that vulnerable older people can be reached in the case of emergency, c) raising awareness and providing information, d) encouraging community involvement, and e) offering psychosocial support focusing on the needs of older people.

Following specific recommendations have been summarized in the exercise guide (for details of recommendations in each country, see Annex 2 and Annex 6):

- **Planning:** When carrying out any event involving multiple stakeholders as well as older people, it is recommended to plan well in advance and inform participants and stakeholders as early as possible. Experience has also shown that, especially if disaster response staff are involved in the organisation, a back-up plan is crucial, since staff might be involved in actual disaster response at the time of the event.
- **Addressing older people:** It is recommended that all organisations in the field of disaster management and those that cater to older people, review their communications strategies and ensure the availability of clear, timely and accurate information via a diverse range of channels, in order to account for the needs of older, vulnerable groups.
- **Addressing concerns:** It is recommended that simple preparedness checklists and preparing emergency kits is promoted to older members of the community. Issues to be addressed are a list of essential items to include in the kits, copies of medication, insurance documents, important phone numbers, etc.
- **Linking organisations:** A strong recommendation arising from all project activities is to reflect on this issue and to actively capitalise on the potential of social and health institutions in both emergency situations, as well as in disaster preparedness activities, in the future. In the field of communication between institutional stakeholders, one particular issue should be tackled early and in close cooperation – namely, the unification of the different terminologies used by the institutional partners. Clarification of terminology should be one of the first tasks to complete for any future emergency communication system to be established between those different types of organisations.
- **Involving volunteers:** The involvement of volunteers is not only relevant in disaster situations, but also for preparatory activities. All of the implemented project activities relied heavily on volunteers, on their engagement and support. In cases where participants in the exercises are frail older people, it is also good to include a larger number of volunteers who will be able to support them.

## 7) Follow-up

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As already mentioned above, extensive follow-up activities to the PrepAGE project are being carried out and planned. All partners will use the recommendations and guidelines within their regular programmes. They will build on the impetus that the project has given them in strengthening their role in raising awareness for the needs and resources of older people with respect to disaster management.

### European level

The dissemination of the project and the outcomes have been continuing since the end of the project and many activities are still planned (see dissemination list). They are being carried out by the project partners and connecting with Red Cross networks and other civil protection networks. The local partners that were involved in the National Workshops and European workshops have all received the recommendations and guidelines as well as the information material for older people (where applicable) and are further disseminating them within their networks.

Also, the recommendations and guidelines are available on the website. This will give other civil society stakeholders and civil protection authorities the opportunity to use them as foundation for their own disaster preparedness plans, where the needs of older people should be taken into account.

The website will be continued and maintained beyond the project period and for the foreseeable future. The Austrian Red Cross will cover the costs for hosting and will ensure that it is moderately updated. The Latvian Red Cross has offered their support for this.

### Specific plans for follow-up in countries:

#### Austrian Red Cross

- A follow-up meeting took place with the City of Innsbruck and the stakeholders involved in the exercise planned to discuss the exercise and how to continue on municipal level and strengthen the cooperation between the health and social service providers and the in Innsbruck. Concrete plans have been made to include a representative of the social service providers in the crisis management team in the future.
- One of the property management agencies involved in the exercise in Innsbruck will distribute the preparedness checklist for older people to their tenants in 6000 apartments together with a cover letter explaining the importance of disaster preparedness, how to behave in case of disaster and which role their staff can play.
- The Austrian Red Cross has sent out the recommendations and guidelines to over 90 stakeholders, including national, provincial government representatives and representatives of other relevant organisations. Several of these stakeholders have written back thanking us for the material and stressing how important it is to develop this work further in the future. Presumably, further cooperation on the issue will emerge from this.
- The project and its results as well as the specific exercise in Innsbruck will be presented at the annual Fall-conference of the provincial branch representatives of the health and social services of the Austrian Red Cross.
- Also, the project coordinators are in the course of adapting the one hour awareness raising session developed by the French Red Cross and adapted for use in other countries within the Aware & Resilient project to be used with groups of older people. This adapted version will also be introduced at the Fall-conference of the Austrian Red Cross health and social service representatives and they will be encouraged to implement these within their provincial branches.

- One thesis for the completion of the internal Red Cross management training programme was prepared by Veronica Biebel within the project and a second such thesis is being prepared by Cornelia Hackl currently. The results of this work will be disseminated and discussed within Austrian Red Cross management and volunteer networks and will service as a basis for further work on the local level on disaster management and older people.
- Information about the project and its products was disseminated to 500 people via the newsletter of the international cooperation department of the Austrian Red Cross. The products are also being distributed to our partners in Southeast Europe and South Caucasus, who are carrying out projects in the field of disaster risk reduction and will be able to incorporate the recommendations in their work.
- As mentioned above the Austrian Red Cross will be keeping up the website with the support of the Latvian colleagues.

### University of Innsbruck

- Several articles are being written by the University of Innsbruck based on the PrepAGE project and presentations are being planned in future scientific conferences. This will serve to disseminate the lessons learned in the PrepAGE project in the academic field.
- The PrepAGE project is also being incorporated in the teaching activities of the Psychology department of the University of Innsbruck. Two master theses based on the PrepAGE project have already been prepared and two additional ones are in the course of being completed currently and will be available in Autumn.

### Bulgarian Red Cross

- The director of the local branch in Yambol is conducting meetings with local stakeholders and planning joint common future exercises like the one carried out in Yambol in other local villages.
- The recommendations and community based exercise guide as well as the details of the exercise were presented at the annual meeting of the directors of all local branches in Bulgaria with the aim that they will duplicate the exercise in their local communities.
- The annual training for the disaster preparedness team on national level that will take place in September 2016 will include an incident with older people and the participants will receive the guidelines and recommendations.

### Croatian Red Cross

- The project and exercise will be presented at next week's meeting for branch directors in Slavonski brod
- The Croatian Red Cross will include this topic in exercises in different local branches in the future. To date five branches already said that they are interested in conducting similar exercises.
- In the Croatian Red Cross there is a yearly exercise plan for exercises on local and national level. Exercises on older people, based on those developed in the PrepAGE project will be included in the future.

### Latvian Red Cross

- The municipality where the exercise took place has already organized additional trainings for a kindergarten and another social care center on the basis of the PrepAGE exercise in Latvia.
- There are already plans to organize similar exercises in other RC branches in the coming months.



- The Latvian Red Cross will continue to raise awareness among older people regarding disaster preparedness and distribute the leaflets that were developed within the PrepAGE project. There has already been a keen interest in these leaflets from the side of different local authorities and organisations.
- The Latvian Red Cross will also still continue projects and activities on disaster preparedness in general and for older people (future EU projects, other projects....).

### **British Red Cross**

- The British Red Cross is presenting the results of the project to local partners and governments, is disseminating leaflets and planning to work with several local branches on older people and disaster management.
- They will keep on running awareness raising activities for disaster preparedness for older people themselves.
- The British Red Cross is now sending out a marketing campaign to 200,000 people using the materials we designed for the PrepAGE exercise in the UK. The campaign will be sending out drawstring bags and advising people on what items should be placed in an emergency kit. Additionally, they will be signposting to our emergency response app. The British Red Cross runs winter marketing campaigns every year and the responsible colleagues were inspired by the success of the PrepAGE exercise in the UK to update the campaign this year and use some of the ideas that emerged from it. The campaign will not be able to specifically target older people, but instead will be targeting geographic areas that have responded well to marketing campaigns previously. If this is successful, there is scope to extend this and be able to target geographic areas that have been affected by flooding, for example. Currently, this is a 'test' to see how the public responds to these type of materials being sent to them.



## 8) Annexes

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Annex 1. Recommendations in English, German, Bulgarian, Croatian, Latvian

Annex 2. Community-based Exercise guides in English, German, Bulgarian, Croatian, Latvian

Annex 3. List of dissemination activities

Annex 4. Information material for older people and other local stakeholders

Annex 5. European workshop report

Annex 6. Final evaluation report



Enhancing disaster management and preparedness for the older population in the EU

# Community-based Exercise Guide

April 2016

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**Special thanks to all the co-organisers of and participants in the exercises that were conducted in the partner countries.**



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# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1. About the PrepAGE project

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The PrepAGE project “Enhancing disaster management preparedness for the older population in the EU”, a European project co-financed by the European Commission, aims to enhance disaster preparedness, response and recovery with respect to older people. It is co-funded by the EU Civil Protection Financial Instrument and is implemented in partnership by the Austrian, British, Bulgarian, Croatian and Latvian Red Cross Societies, and the Austrian University of Innsbruck.

The project is focused on exploring how the needs of vulnerable older people (e.g. those with mobility impairments or care needs) can be met within an emergency situation and how older people themselves can be enabled as a resource in an emergency, to support each other and people of all age groups, throughout all stages of the disaster management cycle.

The aim of the PrepAGE project is to raise awareness of the necessity of introducing the special requirements of older people into emergency and disaster preparedness and prevention programmes. It addresses health and social services for older people, those organisations responsible for disaster response, as well as disaster preparedness and the respective authorities. In the beginning of the project, desk research was carried out to identify studies, guidelines and recommendations on older people in disasters. Following this, an empirical study asked experts from across Europe about their organisations’ experiences of, awareness of and preparedness for dealing with the special requirements of older people in disasters.

Based on these results, national workshops were held in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia and the United Kingdom. Experts in the fields of health and social care and disaster management participated, as well as representatives from ministries, civil protection authorities, social care institutions, advocacy and other not-for-profit organisations to discuss the current status and national recommendations. A European expert workshop was held on 1st and 2nd June, 2015 in Bulgaria, and served to discuss research findings, compare national results and formulate European recommendations relevant to all participating countries.

Five community-based exercises were conducted in the partner countries, in order to identify and raise awareness of the needs of older people in an emergency. These exercises addressed the European recommendations formulated previously. The community-based exercises comprised a traditional exercise with active participation of older people, a table-top exercise, evacuation exercises, and an interactive awareness-raising workshop for older people.

This community-based exercise guide summarises the experiences from the exercises conducted in partner countries and provides practical knowledge and recommendations for organisations to carry out such exercises themselves.

## 1.2. Why focus on older people?

It is widely known that older people face additional risks, including isolation, lack of support, impaired mobility and frailty, resulting in greater levels of vulnerability in the event of power outages, extreme weather or flooding. In recent years, guidelines, handbooks and scientific research on the special requirements of older people in case of disasters have been published. Yet, despite this, integration of older people’s needs into emergency and disaster preparedness programmes remain insufficient in many European countries. Empirical and desk research reports were produced within the PrepAGE project, looking at current knowledge of older people’s special needs, challenges, vulnerabilities and strengths, but also collecting best practice examples in the participating organisations and countries, and interviewing experts from the IFRC European Network for Psychosocial Support of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and Red Cross experts from different national societies.

These two reports elicited the following main vulnerabilities that older people face and that leads to disadvantages for them in case of disasters:

<b>Main vulnerabilities: Empirical report</b> (interviews with experts)	<b>Main vulnerabilities: Desk research</b> (existing literature and analyses)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living alone</li> <li>• Isolation - no one to ask for help</li> <li>• Low level of education</li> <li>• Unattended or unknown impairments</li> <li>• Difficulty in coping with new situations – fear of change (older people need more time to adapt)</li> <li>• Difficulty in dealing with bureaucracy</li> <li>• Evacuation is difficult</li> <li>• Strong connection to home, in particular in rural areas in Central European countries</li> <li>• Psychosocial problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• Low level of education</li> <li>• Frailty and very old age</li> <li>• Poor physical health and chronic illness</li> <li>• Limitation in physical mobility</li> <li>• Sensory impairment</li> <li>• Cognitive impairment</li> <li>• Mental health problems</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Poverty</li> </ul>

One important finding from the research, which is very relevant and should be considered when planning a community-based exercise, is to understand that older age is not a stand-alone criterion for vulnerability. Vulnerability in

situations of emergency comes from the combination of age with other factors, such as gender, poverty, chronic illness, level of disability or even the simple fact of living alone<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, it is important to consider that older people also have strengths stemming from their previous disaster or war experience, their general life experience, the survival skills that they have developed throughout their lives and their roles in family and community. Often, the behaviour of older people in normal or abnormal situations is formed on the basis of those many factors. The needs and combination of factors which create vulnerabilities, as well as the many strengths of older people, must be taken into consideration in the process of planning of any disaster preparedness activity with older people that aims to build their resilience.

One important challenge in disasters is that older people are often dependent on various social services for their wellbeing in daily life. But in an emergency, their exposure to risks might be even higher if the functioning of these services is affected.

On the other hand, preparedness activities are usually led by civil protection actors, and these activities rarely, if ever involve social services providers working with older people. Care providers' lack of knowledge about emergency response, as well as responders' lack of particular expertise in regard to specific needs of this particular vulnerable group may lead to difficulties and insecurities on both sides. The experience of the PrepAGE project shows that both responders and caregivers have limited knowledge about each other's roles and capacities, activities and resources. Joint preparedness activities with sharing of information and resources have proven to improve efficiency, bring the focus onto real needs and improve the protection of older people in times of danger.

It has also been proven that through early involvement and adequate preparation, older people themselves can reduce the burden for the responders in critical situations and become a valuable resource, supporting the emergency response action.

### 1.3. About this guide

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This guide is based on the empirical and desk research carried out in the beginning of the PrepAGE project, and the national and the European workshops, and integrates the lessons learned from the community-based exercises in the five partner countries.

It is intended to assist those who are interested in carrying out a community-based exercise with the focus on older people, but also including them as active participants.

The **aims** of this guide are:

- To describe field-tested good practice examples and different exercise formats from five countries, including detailed recommendations for the organisation and process of the exercise.
- To address challenges and lessons learnt regarding how to involve older people and to improve cooperation between stakeholders.

It is intended to assist those interested in carrying out an exercise with older people, by providing:

- Information and ideas on how to organise such an exercise that has an added value for older people, as compared to the existing practice.
- Step by step organisation of an exercise.

The **target group** of this guide are those who can, and would like to, initiate, carry out or practically manage a community-based emergency exercise aimed at older people, and who are part of the civil protection and rescue system in a country, including:

- Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies (HQ and local branches),
- Local authorities,
- Civil protection actors – state institutions, or non-governmental organisations, having a role in civil protection,
- Private institutions and utility companies with a role in emergency response,
- Social services and organisations taking care of older people.

## 2. About the exercises

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### 2.1. What is an exercise?

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The word “EXERCISE”, having its roots in the Latin language, is now most often associated with deliberate physical activity and movements done with the aim of strengthening and improving the health of the human body, or with practical (sometimes repeated) activities, aiming at learning and reinforcing a particular set of skills.

In community-based disaster preparedness, exercises have a similar purpose, but not just on the individual level. Community-based exercises involve community members and stakeholders, who meet in order to get to know each other, to find out how to cope with threats together, to establish mechanisms, and to practice together activities strengthening community resilience.

People like to be involved in physical activity and they learn better when they see, discuss and participate. In disaster preparedness exercises, they also get to know what they can themselves do in an emergency, and they learn about the organisations and the people who will take care of them in situations of danger.

In particular, for older people, a community-based exercise is not only a learning experience they can benefit from, but it also supports their social inclusion and encourages them to take a more active role in their own preparedness, together with volunteers and other actors in emergency response.

Within the PrepAGE project, the term “exercise” was understood quite broadly to include actual simulation exercises, table-top exercises, and also interactive events involving round-tables, workshops, short interactive training sessions and bilateral information exchange. An exercise in this sense is an event that lasts from a half day to a day, and involves different stakeholders from a community or a region.

## 2.2. Aims of a community-based exercise

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Depending on the resources available, exercises can be planned as a small-scale activity with one simple objective, or as complex multipurpose events, involving many actors and aiming at achieving many objectives – related to the needs of older people, or the needs of the institutions taking care of them, or both.

The issues related to older people in emergencies lie in the lack of general awareness about such situations and how to prepare for them, in the fact that they are usually not involved in preparedness activities, or that often preparedness activities do not take into consideration the specifics of older people and their particular needs.

The challenges are also related to the lack of awareness of the civil protection organisations towards the specific needs of older people and the services they need, as well as in the often missing links between responders and social service providers, the second being an unexplored resource with a great potential value in emergencies.

Exercises can be planned in ways that tackle one or more of these issues, and such pilot events were piloted in the frames of the PrepAGE project.

Community-based exercises can effectively reach the following objectives:

- To link different organisations (social services, civil protection) – to improve cooperation and coordination by exercising together.
- To enhance preparedness of older people and empower them to give information to other older people to be prepared.
- To educate older people on how to plan for emergencies and be able to facilitate the work of rescuers.
- To include older people and caregivers in activities done at all stages of an emergency.
- To reduce the fear of older people during emergencies (e.g. of their safety, anxiety about the situation of their relatives, fear of evacuation, leaving their environment, fear of institutionalisation, and fear of leaving their animals).
- To identify and raise awareness of the needs of older people in emergencies.

There is no need to set multiple aims of an exercise, unless an extensive preparedness campaign has been carried out and many partners are fully involved. In most cases, the exercises will try to reach only one or two of the above mentioned aims and achieve more sustainable impact if they develop particular knowledge and a particular set of skills among the participants.

## 2.3. Planning an exercise

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Similar to real disaster situations where the response is a collective effort, an efficient community-based emergency exercise will be inclusive, to the extent possible, of all persons (especially the most vulnerable ones) and all organisations who play a role in the lives of the vulnerable people in peace time, as well as in situations of high risk. In order to ensure the success of the exercise, there are five main steps to follow: **assess, involve, plan, deliver, evaluate.**

### 2.3.1. Assess

---

In order to get to know the community where the exercise will take place, you will need to learn about its past and find the key stakeholders, equally responsible for the outcomes of the exercise:

- a. **The target community, in particular the older vulnerable people.** What are the specifics of the area and what incidents have happened there in the past? What are their needs and fears? What are their previous experiences in emergencies? Do they express a need to be better prepared? Are there existing traditions of events that are organised and well attended by the local community? Who is organising those? Who are the informal leaders in the community, and especially among the older people?
- b. **The local authorities and emergency response partners.** What are the organisations in charge of protection and rescue in emergencies? What are their experiences of the needs of older people in emergencies? What difficulties do they face in assisting this particular vulnerable group? What is their perception of the capacities of the older people? What are their relations with other organisations, associations or institutions providing health and care services for older people? Are there any particular assessments of the needs and/or specific activities for older people stipulated in the local disaster preparedness / disaster response plans?
- c. **The providers of social and health services for older people.** What is in the emergency plans of these organisations and how do they see their functions in an emergency? Is there existing communication among the social and healthcare providers, and with the local authorities and emergency responders? Do they participate in the development of local disaster plans? Have they participated in the past in disaster preparedness activities? How can they contribute in the emergency phase and what specific information of their clients do they possess, which could be vital for the protection of older people in disaster situations?



- d. **The informal partners and groupings.** Are there informal groups, associations, or other forms of organised civic activity, which can be mobilised for emergency preparedness activities, or in the emergency response? Are there previous experiences of involvement in organised or spontaneous volunteering in emergencies? Would they see a value of cooperation in an area which is distinctly different from their regular activities?

### 2.3.2. Involve

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It is simple. In order to ensure the best impact and relevance of the community-based exercise, once the main stakeholders and target groups have been identified:

Talk to them. Learn about their challenges and strengths. Propose cooperation and encourage participation. Initiate a joint meeting of all partners and agree on the next steps of the planning process. Begin to plan together.

### 2.3.3. Plan

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The simplest version of an exercise plan will include the list of partners, contact information, the idea of the scenario and the sequence of events during the exercise, the organisation or person in charge of each event, and the distribution of roles among all partners.

Other elements that should also be made clear are: the communication plan on how the community will be approached and attracted, how the participants will be invited, and lists of facilities, resources, materials and volunteers needed for each element of the exercise.

Many of the roles and resources will be ensured by the partners and would not need to be paid for if the preparation is done early and in an open and inclusive manner. If needed, agree with them on the phases of preparation and deadlines, take notes and keep them informed about the progress, or of any challenges encountered. Build the scenario for the exercise.

#### **Plan a series of learning events that:**

- are interactive (allow two-way communication between community members and organisations/authorities),
- are of different types – combination of provision of information by any means (leaflets, for example), general plenary sessions, smaller working groups, physical exercises with participation of older people themselves, intensive demonstrations by professionals and volunteers, or even competitions,

- seek variety, but do not let the event dissolve in a jumble of creative ideas that are off-topic,
- allow sufficient breaks (consider the needs of the older people) and the possibility for participants to leave if they wish to.

Work together to prepare a very detailed plan of the exercise, with final clarification of the expectations from each element. Secure the resources needed, including facility, public space (for some areas permissions may be needed), equipment, food and water, sanitary facilities, medical staff or ambulance and transport means. Organise a briefing or training for the volunteers and other staff who will take part in the exercise. Prepare, together with the partners, the public messages about the upcoming event and encourage them also to disseminate them through their channels.

- Prepare media material.
- Send out the invitations to participants.
- Check everything once again on the day before the exercise.
- Brief the organisers / volunteers one last time.
- Prepare plan “B” for different types of contingencies (very few or too many participants, an important partner cannot arrive, weather has rapidly changed and outdoor activity is not possible, electricity or other failure, possible behaviour issues with individual participants, etc.).

**The actual process of planning can take a long time, and that depends very much on the level of participation and contribution of other stakeholders, especially of the local authorities.**

#### 2.3.4. Deliver

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Follow the plan and carry out the exercise. Don't forget to:

- Thank everybody for their time, contributions and efforts.
- Inform all participants about the agenda of the exercise and provide technical information.
- Record conclusions, proposals and commitments (appoint note-takers if needed).
- Let people talk, but have good facilitation to keep time and avoid long monologues.
- Take pictures after obtaining the consent of participants (or inform them in the invitation).
- Prepare yourself to, or appoint others to, communicate with the media.
- Switch to plan “B” if needed.

### 2.3.5. Evaluate

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The evaluation plan and tools should be prepared in advance. This is a very important element of the exercise, which will not only allow measurement of the level of success or satisfaction of participants, but it will inform any possible improvements to be made in the future, for example, to introduce different methods in emergency preparedness, to involve another relevant partner, or even to propose changes in the legislation.

The minimum evaluation includes two aspects: the first aspect is to verify whether the exercise has achieved its objectives. The second is to extract the meaningful lessons learned from the event. It is important that the evaluation process captures the feedback of all stakeholders participating in the exercise. This is quite reasonable, because the sum of subjective opinions leads to the objective reality, while it also reflects the different needs and expectations of the different stakeholders.

There are various evaluation tools – simple and complicated ones – which can be used in an exercise. It is best to combine different methods in order to receive relevant information sufficient to understand the results and the process of the event.

Usually for events involving larger groups of people, questionnaires are preferred to collect feedback to the most important key questions (long questionnaires could push people away). Mostly closed-end questions (yes or no) are used to make easier filling-in and follow-up analysis of the results. Those surveys are good for quantitative measurement of results, but provide only limited qualitative information. Note that older people with visual impairments might have difficulty with questionnaires.

Discussion-based feedback sessions, with the possibility of expressing opinions other than answering questions, can produce good qualitative information and unforeseen findings that can be very important outcomes of the evaluation. Focus groups can produce an in-depth analysis of results, but lack the quantitative dimension.

Modern technologies, including free online surveys, are frequently used for various purposes, while simple tools, such as smileys, used to measure satisfaction and learning are both entertaining and quite appropriate for any audit.

The further sections of the guide show a variety of evaluation methods, which have been used in the community-based exercises, part of the PrepAGE project, as well as their findings.

## 2.4. Formats of community-based exercises

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All the exercises that were carried out addressed all of the aims mentioned in 3.2. However, different priorities were given to certain aims. Also, while most exercises had the same target groups, some had a stronger focus on older people themselves and others focussed more on staff members and volunteers of different types of organisations. The methods used also varied.

Two exercises involved actual drills: one was an evacuation exercise of a social centre in Latvia, and the other one was a practical exercise involving a whole village. The evacuation exercise in Latvia offered information sessions, for example on first aid or on disaster preparedness in the afternoon. Likewise, the exercise in Croatia included a practical aspect and information sessions. Two exercises in Austria focussed mainly on exchanging views and providing information for older people: one was a stand-alone event and the other was part of a bigger fair for seniors. Finally, one of the exercises in Austria focussed on involving organisations responsible for health and social services for older people in the regular table-top emergency response exercises.

Depending on the aims chosen, a community-based exercise can be planned in a variety of forms, corresponding to the aims and to the target groups. Consider the best type of exercise corresponding to the real situation and the needs.

**Drills and simulations**, for example, work well when the actors involved are fully aware of their roles and functions. The purpose of drills is usually to build practical skills of responders and improve the interaction between actors involved in emergency response. Also, these can provide a good way for the general population, specifically older people themselves, to gain a clear understanding of what a real disaster situation is like and help reduce fear.

If the purpose of an exercise is to clarify issues, give and exchange information and initiate building of new systems and relationships (for example between emergency responders and caregiver organisations), **a discussion, round table or information event** is a better start for the process than a drill.

When involving older people in these events, it is important to consider that many might have a shorter attention span than professionals, who are better used to longer meetings and discussions on complex subjects. Most citizens, regardless of their age, are more likely to join shorter, interactive

events or chains of events, which include movement, physical activity and two-way information. This is particularly relevant for older people. In the case where the main aim is to improve the cooperation of different types of organisations, **workshops** as well as **table-top exercises** or **practical exercises** can be beneficial.

Within the PrepAGE project, the project partners successfully implemented different models of exercises. In some cases, they used a combination of formats in order to reach multiple objectives with many stakeholders. In others, they focused on small numbers of particular issues related to the older people in emergencies, and built practical exercises to tackle those



The exercises conducted within the PrepAGE project can be generally presented in the following way:

**Table 1 Types of exercises**

Type of exercise	Target group 1	Target group 2	Country	Specificity
1. Practical exercise (drill)	General population + older people	Responders and trained older people	Bulgaria	Addressing participation: Trained older volunteers providing information
2. Practical exercise (drill) combined with information sessions	General population + older people	Responders and trained older people	Croatia Latvia	Addressing fear of evacuation by providing practical information
3. Events including exchange with older people	Older people	Responders and organisations for older people	United Kingdom  Austria (Part 2)	Participation and preparedness raising by establishing a dialogue: Big event with older people as main delegates Establishing a dialogue and reducing fear: Discussing emergencies and disasters at a Seniors Fair
4. Events to improve cooperation of responders and organisations for older people	Responders and organisations for older people	-	Austria (Parts 1+3) Latvia	Inclusion in regular table top exercises in Municipality Focus groups with different stakeholders at the end of the exercise

**When planning the format of the community-based events, it is important to consider all resources available, including space and safety (for drills), number of materials (for distribution), equipment and power supply (for presentations), and not to forget – the people with particular knowledge and/or skills needed for each type of exercise. This requires that for each exercise, a detailed plan is developed with the roles and tasks of each partner organisation and resources needed and available for each element of it.**

### 3. Good practice examples of community-based exercises



The following section contains detailed descriptions of five community-based exercises carried out by the partners of the PrepAGE project in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia and the United Kingdom.

They provide a variety of approaches to disaster preparedness with older people, closely linked to the national and local context. Each of these good practice examples is structured in the same way, in five parts – **background, objectives, description, main lessons learned, and recommendations**. Given the variety of events, this structure is chosen to allow the reader to understand the context and the reasoning for each exercise, to visualise what happened and to benefit from the lessons learned and recommendations.

These exercises constitute good practices, because they are built on the European recommendations, produced in the frames of the PrepAGE project after extensive research and consultations. They are valuable, with the great variety of activities for building disaster resilience, which may be drawn upon, and which can be combined and replicated in other locations and with other communities. Their value is even greater as they provide answers for some problematic questions of disaster risk related to the older people (gaps in the disaster response system, specific vulnerabilities of older people, etc.), and prove in practice the existing potential for reduction of this risk (better linkage between responders and social services, willingness for common activities in risk education, involvement of older people as responders, etc.).

These examples also show some fundamental rules which are necessary for effective organisation of such events (early identification and involvement of all stakeholders, joint planning and sharing of resources, usage of simple tools appropriate for all target groups: disaster kits, family disaster plans, etc.).

All examples below are concluded with recommendations made by participants and organisers in the evaluation sessions, with the purpose of making any future events of this kind even more efficient. These recommendations are then summarised in section 4.

### 3.1. Exercise in Austria: Linking disaster response and services for older people and raising awareness for disaster preparedness amongst older people themselves



#### 3.1.1. Background

The local partner within the PrepAGE project was the Innsbruck branch of the Austrian Red Cross. It was decided that it would be useful to benefit from the PrepAGE project by conducting one of the obligatory table-top exercises of the City of Innsbruck on the subject of older people. As it was deemed necessary to improve the cooperation between emergency responders, the providers of health and social care for older people and municipal property management agencies, a workshop was carried out to bring emergency responders and organisations working for older people together in preparation of the joint table-top exercise, which was then carried out three months later. These activities were complemented by bilateral information and presentations for older people on disaster preparedness at a trade fair for seniors. The main focus here was to raise older people’s awareness on disaster preparedness and give them simple and easy-to-follow preparedness tips.



### 3.1.2. Objectives

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The aims and objectives of the community-based exercise, the half-day workshop and the provision of information at the senior fair were:

- To raise awareness about older people and their needs and possible roles in disaster preparedness and management within organisations and the population.
- To improve cooperation and networking between organisations in the social field, disaster management and estate management.
- To discuss the role of social services organisations in supporting older people in the case of a disaster, and how they could support the command structure.
- To discuss suggestions for improving disaster management for older people in the future in the City of Innsbruck and in other cities.

### 3.1.3. Description of the exercise

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#### Venue

As described above, the exercise consisted of three parts. The location for all exercises/events was Innsbruck, since the Red Cross of Innsbruck was the implementing partner. The table-top exercise was carried out in the town hall of Innsbruck, where the command centre is installed, whereas the half-day workshop was hosted in the premises of the Red Cross of Innsbruck. The trade fair was held in a big convention centre, likewise in the City of Innsbruck.

#### Description

##### **Part 1: Half-day awareness-raising and preparation workshop**

The **half-day workshop to improve cooperation between different stakeholders** and raise awareness for older people in disasters was on 21 October, 2015. The half-day workshop served to present the PrepAGE project and discuss ideas for the table-top exercise with interested organisations in Innsbruck. 23 people participated in the workshop, including representatives of the organisations: meals on wheels, social services and home care services of Innsbruck, seniors' organisation, municipal property management agencies, the Red Cross of Innsbruck and a representative of the local emergency management authority of the City of Innsbruck. Participants had the chance to discuss the following questions in small groups:

- Which needs do the organisations have regarding information in disasters?
- What can the organisation contribute in the case of disasters?
- What could possible fields for cooperation be in the future and how could one go about this?
- What has to be considered regarding older people, disasters and urban areas, especially with respect to the City of Innsbruck?
- How can older people themselves be included in disaster preparedness and response?

Some of the main issues discussed were:

- There has been little experience with disasters until now. One experience was a big fire in a high-rise apartment house and it became obvious that many evacuated people did not have their medicine, and additionally they did not know the names of their medicines. This caused some problems, especially for people with diabetes or high blood pressure.
- Activities in order to foster social networks and neighbourly help were seen as helpful.
- It is important to know which people living at home have special needs and how to contact them in case a disaster strikes.
- Education and training of disaster management staff was suggested.

## **Part 2: Trade fair for seniors “SenAktiv”**

A **trade fair for seniors “SenAktiv”**, a big three-day event with more than 8900 visitors, took place in Innsbruck from 20-22 November 2015.

The main goal was to inform older people about disaster preparedness measures and give them tips on how they can prepare themselves. Information was provided at the Red Cross stand through leaflets and bilateral conversations and during two presentations. Generally, the stand is very popular as seniors can have their blood pressure taken and their glucose level measured, and they receive different types of health-related information. This was a good opportunity to reach the target group and raise awareness for disaster preparedness. Information about the PrepAGE project was presented, and a leaflet was distributed with easy steps for older people to prepare for disaster. These leaflets on how to prepare for and respond to disasters for older people were distributed to more than 300 people, with a total of 1600 visitors to the stand in three days. Initially, two presentations about disaster preparedness and older people were planned, but one had to be cancelled due to a lack of participants, which was connected in part with the early timing of the presentation. Nevertheless, older people were interested in the topic in general when addressed individually, and appreciated these bilateral conversations on issues of disaster preparedness and response, and the role they had to play (52 persons in total).

### Part 3: Table-top exercise

The annual simulation exercise of the local emergency management authority of the City of Innsbruck was carried out as a **table-top exercise** together with the Red Cross of Innsbruck, with organisations providing health and social services for older people and municipal property management agencies. The fictional scenario was a blackout in a district of Innsbruck due to harsh weather conditions with -15 degrees and snowstorms, expecting that the situation will last for several days. Several homes for older people, the kitchen for meals on wheels and the tele-alarm service are located in the affected district. 29 persons participated from different organisations, for example an organisation that offers a mobile service for people with mental health problems, the Red Cross, meals on wheels, a tele-alarm system that is offered by the RC, providers of home care services, municipal property management agencies, and 25 participants took part from the local emergency management authority of the City of Innsbruck. The task of the participants from health and social services and the municipal property management agencies was to respond to questions that were raised by the command. Apart from this, they were asked what their needs were and which problems they could solve on their own.

Questions that they were asked to answer included:

#### *Health and social services*

- Number of people that are cared for by social services organisations?
- What are the main needs of the older people cared for at home by these organisations?
- What are the relevant issues regarding transport/evacuation (oxygen, mobility impairments, artificial respiration)?
- Which human resources are available in the social service organisations to support those people at home needing support in case of a power cut?
- Which capacities are available in nursing homes in non-affected areas to accommodate the people evacuated from the home? How can the organisation support the local emergency management authority in this situation? Which tasks can the municipal property management agencies take over?
- Number of housing objects in the affected district that belong to each housing agency?
- Number of persons with special needs living in these houses?
- What are the possible problems with regard to the current scenario?
- Where and what support is needed – what issues can the agencies solve autonomously?

## Marketing and public relations

Participants in the workshop and the table-top exercise were invited by a personal letter, signed by the mayor of the City of Innsbruck and the Red Cross, explaining the aim of the exercise, what is expected from the organisations and questions that will be addressed, as well as information about the PrepAGE project. About 50 people were invited to the preparation meeting for the table-top exercise. A press release was sent to local media after the table-top exercises explaining the main elements of the PrepAGE project and the exercise.

### 3.1.4. Main results / lessons identified

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#### On the half-day awareness-raising and preparation workshop

- The preparation meeting was a good opportunity to introduce the topic of disaster management and older people, for networking between organisations and getting the organisations on board for the table-top exercise, as well as for further cooperation on older people and disaster management in the City of Innsbruck.
- It became clear that organisations have a host of data and information, but how to share information in a structured way was seen as a challenge.
- The workshop showed that municipal property management agencies are able to provide certain information (e.g. tenants lists) as well as technical information that could be helpful in a disaster.
- Enhancing prevention and preparedness of older people themselves was seen as an important topic.

#### On the senior fair

- The results show that generally there is a big interest in the topic of disaster preparedness, and the leaflet provided on how to prepare in disasters was perceived as very helpful by the older visitors.
- The trade fair and the stand offered the opportunity to talk with the visitors about disaster preparedness and to raise awareness of this topic. Personal talks also provided a good impression about fears, concerns and opinions older people have about disasters.
- The offer to measure the blood pressure and glucose level at the Red Cross stand was a good entry point to get in contact with people.
- Face-to-face contact and the possibility of talking about personal experiences was very important for older people, whereas general presentations on disaster preparedness were not of big interest.
- Terrorist attacks were a very present concern, also because of recent attacks, for example those in Paris.

- The issue was raised whether enough resources would be available in case of a disaster, and if medicine is provided.
- Personal preparedness measures such as a “grab and go bag” (emergency kit) or family disaster plans were seen as important, as well as information about how one can prepare for disasters.
- Filling out the medication list on the handout was partially classified as difficult, and support in filling it in was needed.

### On the table-top exercise

- **Raising awareness among different stakeholders**  
The exercise is also a good tool to raise awareness, since needs and gaps become very obvious, as well as to network and exchange experiences, not only between health and social service organisations, but also with the command body.
- **Capacities of health and social service organisations and responsibilities**  
Competencies and knowledge of health and social services organisations were not used to their full extent by the local emergency management authority of the City of Innsbruck. This was also reflected in a different perception of problems and responsibilities between the organisations and the emergency management authority. For example, some problems discussed by the emergency management authority had already been solved by the organisations themselves.
- **Information flow**  
There is no structure in place to share data or information between the local emergency management authority and organisations.
- **Common terminology**  
The local emergency management authority and organisations in health and social services used different terminology within the exercise, which made it difficult to communicate clearly.
- **Joint database**  
It was hardly possible to find out whether the same client is cared for by different organisations, since there is no joint database to see what special needs the person has and what services are provided by which organisation.
- **Clarification of legal issues**  
A lot of issues and uncertainties regarding legal issues were raised, since it was not clear for health and social service organisations what and how certain aspects are regulated in the disaster management law.
- **Property management agencies can be used in the urban settings as an entry point**  
During the exercise, it became clear that the municipal property management agencies had many resources to help vulnerable people living in their houses in case of disaster. On one hand, they have

the most appropriate information about the apartments inhabited by vulnerable people. On the other hand, they have enough employees that can distribute information to residents if necessary.

### Organisational issues/preparation

- The interest and commitment of the lead agency in disaster management is important in order to have all relevant stakeholders on board.
- Personal invitations to organisations and follow-up by phone were important, since some questions needed to be clarified beforehand. It also helped that the mayor of the City of Innsbruck signed the invitation letter for the half-day workshop as well as the table-top exercise, raising the importance of the event and the topic.
- A clear description of what organisations can expect, their role within the table-top exercise and what information they are expected to provide at the exercise, is important. It also needs to be clearly stated that it is only a simulation, in order to avoid misunderstandings.
- It is important to plan time for a joint meeting after the exercise for feedback and discussion between the emergency management authority and invited external organisations working in the fields of health and social services. Ideally, this joint meeting should also allow for planning for future cooperation and coordination within different organisations.

### 3.1.5. Summary of recommendations for the City of Innsbruck

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#### **1. Carry out interactive information events allowing for bilateral communication on disaster preparedness for seniors**

The information stand at the senior fair proved to be a good opportunity to raise awareness about this issue and reach the target group. It is key to have enough time for discussions, exchange and to actively encourage input/questions from older people so that they feel valued.

#### **2. Establish clear information chains and procedures/structures for how information can be exchanged between those institutions responsible for disaster management and health and social services organisations**

This should include the following:

- Contact persons and a clear information chain from organisations to local emergency management authority have to be defined.
- It is important to have a common terminology and define terms in order to facilitate decisions and a better two-way communication between the crisis management staff and the participating organisations.

- Include a representative of health and social services organisations in the local emergency management authority, or establish a separate command body of health and social service organisations.
- Development of guidelines and protocols for organisations regarding contact persons and processes that should be followed in case of a disaster. This could also include checklists/information sheets for the affected population (e.g. in a blackout situation to check if the oven is turned off ...).
- It is important to allow for the exchange of data between organisations and to know which people are being cared for by different organisations. A central database in the responsible department of the provincial government, that contains up-to-date information on which services the client receives from which organisation, would be helpful.

### **3. Establishment of a task force to continuously improve coordination and networking in the City of Innsbruck**

- A task force for the City of Innsbruck should be established that will allow for increased networking between emergency responders and health and social services for older people.
- The property management agencies should also be included in this task force, as they have proven to be important actors with respect to vulnerable people in emergency situations.
- This should involve regular information exchange, defining clear tasks and responsibilities in disaster situations beforehand, and discussing specific issues and tasks in this regard.
- This task force should also have the task to clarify legal aspects of questions that were raised during the exercise.

## 3.2. Exercise in Bulgaria: Practical exercise with the active participation of older volunteers



### 3.2.1. Background

In Bulgaria, the local partner within the PrepAGE project was the Yambol branch of the Bulgarian Red Cross. The Yambol region is one of the smaller rural underdeveloped regions of Bulgaria, situated in the south-east of the country. The community selected for the exercise was the village of Vesselinovo, a few kilometres away from the regional town and next to the river of Tundzha. The river of Tundzha poses the highest risk for the settlement and has repeatedly flooded houses throughout the years. In times of heavy rains, the local people are also concerned that several dams in the area could overflow.

The village has one of the largest populations in the region, over 1000 inhabitants, many of whom are older people, including many Roma families.

For the purpose of the exercise, the Bulgarian Red Cross mobilised its specific units, including its national volunteer disaster response team and the volunteer disaster response teams from Yambol, the BRC flood response team, and a team of older people – a new type of disaster response unit.

After an extensive preparation with the institutional stakeholders, the Bulgarian Red Cross organised a simulation of a flood alert and flooding scenario with evacuation of affected families from their houses. The community-based exercise, part of the PrepAGE project, was carried out in early December 2015.



### 3.2.2. Objectives

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The aims and objectives of the community-based exercise in Bulgaria included the following:

1. To identify and raise awareness of the needs of older people in an emergency, in order to inform PrepAGE recommendations.
2. To train the network of local stakeholders for coordinated emergency response, in accordance with the Bulgarian National Plan for Protection of Population.
3. To provide adequate support for vulnerable groups (older people, people with disabilities, children, etc.).
4. To use the capacity of trained and prepared active older people as active responders.
5. To provide information to the local community members on how they can prepare for disaster situations and to experience a realistic evacuation simulation.

### 3.2.3. Description of the exercise

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#### **Venue**

The venue of the exercise was the village of Veselinovo. There were a number of set locations according to the scenario: four houses to be evacuated, the river area for the rescue operation, road sections blocked for registration points, as well as the school of Veselinovo (evacuation point and shelter).

#### **Number of participants**

A total of 139 participants took part in the exercise, including Bulgarian Red Cross national and regional staff members, national and regional volunteer disaster response teams, flood response team with rescue boats, youth rescue teams of Yambol Red Cross branch, older people's disaster response teams, and the following institutional stakeholders: Regional Government of Yambol, Municipality of Tundhza, Mayor of Veselinovo village, Police Department of Tundhza, regional department for "Fire Safety and Protection of Population", Regional Social Assistance Directorate of Yambol, Emergency Medical Service of Yambol, and the "Four Paws" Foundation, dealing with animal rescue and community members.

It is worth noting that the exercise in Bulgaria also involved a team of older people specifically trained to assist and inform others in disaster situations. These older people teams are a result of a longer-term initiative of the

Bulgarian Red Cross, related to promotion of active ageing and advocacy with older people, who are activists in their communities, involved in cultural, social, educational activities, and – lately – in disaster response.

### Description

In order to build the content of the exercise and create a realistic emergency situation with all relevant actors, the local branch of the Bulgarian Red Cross identified and involved the key institutional stakeholders in the area, from the community to the regional level. The preparation included obtaining consent from and having discussions with the mayor, and field visits to identify appropriate locations for carrying out the exercise.

The mayor of the village was a key stakeholder and proved to be a strong driving force, not only providing initial information about the risks and the vulnerable older residents and full range of assistance needed for the organisation of the event, but also a strong motivator for better preparedness in the face of the flood risks regularly threatening the community.

Based on the initial information about the risks and challenges regularly occurring in Veselinovo, in particular during the rainy seasons of the year, the scenario of the exercise was built to cover a flood alert and a flooding scenario, with consequent evacuation of the population.

A series of introductory meetings and two preparatory workshops were organised with all stakeholders to present the project, to obtain their consent for participation in the exercise, and to prepare the detailed exercise plans together. These were based on the elaborated scenario and contained a concrete time and description of each activity, the responsible partner for its implementation, the person in charge, and a description of resources allocated. The plans were revised several times. After each preparatory meeting, the minutes were shared between partners and proved very important for efficient collaboration.

Together with the partners, a meeting was organised with the local community of the village of Veselinovo prior to the exercise, to provide information about the exercise and involve participants. Four families volunteered to participate and play victims in the evacuation exercise. They agreed to allow access into their homes and received instructions for their individual scenarios.

The exercise was conducted as planned and all stakeholders successfully implemented their tasks, in coordination with the other partners. The scenario, based on the national plan for disaster protection, was implemented as follows:

- The Monitoring Centre at the Ministry of Interior issued an alert for high flood risk. All institutions were alerted.

- The flood alert was received by the mayor of the village, who installed a crisis centre in the mayor's office. Civil protection actors were asked to assist.
- Civil protection, police, EMS, Regional Social Assistance Directorate Experts and Red Cross teams were deployed to the area and started working on the field.
- The immediate actions were to alert the population about possible flood and potential evacuation.
- An evacuation centre and points for distribution and registration of the victims were established.
- Red Cross volunteers alerted people house by house and distributed family disaster plans. Those include the necessary personal and household preparedness measures and lists of important items for evacuation. The volunteers also provided information to the families, for example, that they should prepare medicines and documents in bags, should turn off the electricity in the house, etc.
- After two hours, "flooding" occurred in the village, endangering a number of households.
- The evacuation of four houses inhabited by older people, and families with older people and disabilities, was carried out in accordance with the individual scenarios. These scenarios addressed, for example, fear of evacuation to the unknown, robbery, disabilities, preventing evacuation, and feelings of stress.
- Evacuation:
  - o All the people from the village were safely evacuated to the evacuation centre.
  - o Bulgarian RC, Health and Social Services collected information about the evacuees: names, age, chronically ill people, and registered missing members of their families.
  - o Bulgarian RC volunteers provided first aid and psychosocial support to the affected community members at the evacuation centre.

The exercise concluded with a debriefing of the partners, including the community members who took part in the exercise.

#### 3.2.4. Lessons learned

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- The main needs of the older people in cases of disaster are: health and social services; to receive more information about their relatives and neighbours; to be prepared before the disaster – the information for disaster preparedness to be provided to older people within the community periodically.

- Older people appreciate it if they are informed properly. After the exercise, many more community members came to the mayor's office to ask for family disaster plans, which were made available by the Bulgarian Red Cross.
- Older people need to know in advance how they can protect their safety, pets and property (disaster kits, documents), but also to be reassured that their pets and property will be protected if they must evacuate.
- Older people need to know which assistance they will receive from whom and how, after an emergency. A particular focus should be put on acute emotional needs.
- Older people will be able to deal with the impact of an emergency much better, if they have been introduced to a realistic scenario beforehand and have established personal awareness on what happens, and how they can help themselves and those around.
- Preparation meetings with all proper stakeholders before the exercise are absolutely necessary to clarify the roles and mandates of the different organisations before any joint activity.
- Social services have a very important role in the evacuation phase and in recovery. They are those institutions who have information about the most vulnerable persons and they are also involved in the damage assessment and state support to victims after disaster.
- The involvement of both civil society organisations and authorities in preparedness activities is essential, and provides a valuable opportunity for complementarity, greater preparedness and increased response capacity; ultimately – better services, support and inclusiveness of community, volunteers and older people themselves.
- The local authorities need to be aware at all times about names and locations of older people and people with disabilities, especially those who live alone in their houses. Social services possess this information, but they need to be involved better in preparedness in order to avoid delays in time of urgency.
- Police involvement and visibility of authority is reassuring for people and helps overcome the fear of property loss during evacuation. It also decreases the level of anxiety and gives a feeling of control.
- When older people are well prepared and informed, they can be involved as volunteers to support the local stakeholders and can be very reliable in situations of disaster. Trained and active older people can support emergency services in the following ways: educating the community in “peace” time, alerting their neighbours when disaster approaches, providing very valuable peer-to-peer support to people evacuated in shelters, especially when all other emergency services are busy responding in the affected area.
- Trained older volunteers should not be involved in activities in areas of immediate danger, and have to be reminded not to exceed their abilities for action. In all cases they should receive special care and attention.

### 3.2.5. Recommendations

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- For drills and practical exercises designed to test and improve interaction of rescue organisations, it is necessary that there is one commander in charge of the whole event, although there can be separate team leaders and persons in charge.
- The community will be better involved if trained older people are involved in the introductory community meeting, and they are the ones to provide information to their peers.
- Given the important role of social services in the response and recovery phase, it is imperative that they are also actively involved in the preparedness activities with the responding organisations.
- The list of older people and people with disabilities should be available at the responsible authority – in Bulgaria this is the local authority (mayor) – at all times, while their personal data remains well protected.
- Police and any other authority, in addition to their response activity, should make everything possible to demonstrate the presence of the state during emergency, guiding and instructing people, thus preventing unnecessary fear and possible chaos.
- Especially in rural areas, evacuation can be hampered by the fears of the community members about their animals. Animal rescue organisations can be trained and involved in preparedness activities, thus facilitating the evacuation process.
- When planning an exercise, it is not sufficient to rely only on what is stipulated in the local disaster response plan. Plans are incomplete or might not be interlinked, therefore preliminary preparatory meetings are crucial to define, and if needed, to redefine the concrete role of each partner.

### 3.3. Exercise in Croatia: Presentation, discussion, evacuation and demonstration

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#### 3.3.1. Background

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The Croatian Red Cross national community-based exercise was held on October 2, 2015, in Slunj, a town of 1600 inhabitants, situated in the mountain areas of Central Croatia, on the meeting of the rivers Korana and Slunjčica. It brought together experts from the fields of protection and rescue, the health and social sectors in the Republic of Croatia, and beneficiaries (older population).

#### 3.3.2. Objectives

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The aim of the exercise was to inform and train all relevant factors in the system of protection and rescue in situations where, because of crisis or disaster, evacuation of the population is necessary. A particular objective was dedicated to the older population, aiming at creating awareness of the roles played by institutions in emergencies, and in particular on reducing the fear of evacuation among the community members, both through discussion with experts and through participation in a practical evacuation exercise.

#### 3.3.3. Description of the exercise

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A call for participation in the national exercise was sent to experts in organisations dealing with matters of protection and rescue, as well as those from the health and social sector who are providing care for the older population. Since the objectives of the exercise were linked to the

problem of evacuation in emergencies and disasters, representatives of local governments and users themselves (the elderly) were invited. Overall, there were 84 participants in the exercise.

The exercise was conducted in the area of Slunj, and consisted of a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part was organised in such a way that all the institutions and organisations presented to users the scope and method of their work, including examples from past crises. The users themselves were actively engaged in the debate, citing examples from real life that have happened to them. Presentations were made by representatives of the city of Slunj, the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, the National Protection and Rescue Directorate, the Department for Emergency Management of Zagreb, and the Croatian Red Cross.

A special section was devoted to the problem of reluctance to leave homes by their owners in situations when it is necessary. The team for psychosocial support of the Croatian Red Cross organised a group work in which users shared their experiences, comments and fears about the evacuation.

The practical part of the exercise was carried out on the football field and on the river Korana. The employees, members of the emergency team and the Croatian Red Cross volunteers built a tent settlement for the evacuated population on the football field in Slunj. Tent settlements with all the services and activities that can be organised within them were presented to users. Representatives of the Croatian Mountain Rescue presented their work and equipment, and made users familiar with all the services which they can expect from them in crisis situations. On the river Korana, members of the Water Rescue Team of the Croatian Red Cross demonstrated several methods of rescue and evacuation of the population in case of floods. The beneficiaries were actively engaged in exercises, simulating people who need assistance during evacuation.

After lunch, the participants in the exercise were given space for additional questions and comments, and the evaluation of the exercise was made.

#### 3.3.4. Lessons learned

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All participants expressed their satisfaction with the idea of organising such exercises, involving all organisations and institutions from the system of protection and rescue, and the beneficiaries themselves.

Representatives of institutions and organisations shared the opinion that joint exercises contribute to better coordination and a better response to emergencies and disasters, as well as raising awareness for assistance providers and recipients themselves, significantly increasing the resilience of the entire society. It was recommended that such joint exercises would

be good if organised in other places in Croatia. The beneficiaries (the elderly) actively participated with great interest during the entire exercise. New information about the functioning and organisation of the system is considered to be very useful.

### 3.3.5. Recommendations

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- **Active participation of older people in the exercise:** When you are looking at the concept of an exercise, it is important to plan activities which will involve the users as much as possible. During the implementation of the exercise in Croatia, it has been observed that due to the active participation of the beneficiaries, their concentration and interest in the subject was at a very high level.
- **Planning in advance:** The planning of an exercise and informing the participants needs to be done at least six months before implementation. When people who are involved in the organisation and implementation of the exercise come from the department or organisation involved in the protection and rescue activities, it is very important to have a backup plan, because there is a possibility that at the time of implementation of exercises they will be included in the actual events (Plan A; Plan B).
- **Networking:** Organisation of exercises that include more experts from the protection and rescue system, with the goal of presenting their work to the general population, has a double benefit. Beneficiaries will get useful information, and experts will have the opportunity to meet colleagues from other departments and share experiences. In real-life situations, cooperation between different organisations is very important, and it is good for rescue organisations to know each other.
- **The duration of the exercise:** In cases where the audience is older, the optimal duration of an exercise is no longer than half a day, and it is recommended to end with a joint event (lunch).
- **Inclusion of a larger number of volunteers; help; exchange of experiences:** If participants in the exercise are elderly members of the population, it is necessary to include a larger number of volunteers who will be their assistants.

It is also good for volunteers who are mostly younger people to be more familiar with the needs of elderly people and to hear their life experiences from them. Such a method leads to a better understanding between the generations.



### 3.4. Exercise in Latvia: Evacuation drill in residential home including dialogue with stakeholders and older people



#### 3.4.1. Background

On 3rd September 2015, the Latvian Red Cross (hereafter – LatRC) organised an emergency response training (community-based exercise) with a specific simulation of an emergency situation – a forest fire close to the social care centre that required the evacuation of the 130 residents of the centre.

The inhabitants who live in the centre on a daily basis are mostly older people with mental (mainly dementia) or physical disorders, which requires a specific approach towards communication and work with this target group.

#### 3.4.2. Objectives

The aims and objectives of the community-based exercise were:

- To test the response preparedness of the older people and staff of the social care centre.
- To test the cooperation between services in emergency situation.
- To raise awareness of the needs of older people and to enhance the preparedness in an emergency.

### 3.4.3. Description of the exercise

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#### Venue

The community-based exercise took place in the Talsi region, Laidze parish, at the LatRC social care centre *Sturisi*. The specific type of the emergency was chosen because a forest fire is one of the most common disasters in Latvia, especially during summer and autumn periods. The location was chosen both because the social care centre is located in a peaty neighbourhood, prone to waterlogging, right next to a forest (a high risk of fire), and also because it is a facility where a large group of 130 inhabitants who are vulnerable because of their mental (mainly dementia) or physical disabilities, live on a daily basis.

#### Number of participants

188 people attended the event, including 130 older people who were active participants at the evacuation training, 58 observers during the training and active participants at the workshops, 20 participants at the evaluation discussion (1 to 2 people from each stakeholder / participant group).

The participants in the community-based exercise and active participants at the workshops and evaluation discussion were:

- leading representatives of Talsi municipality (including the Chairman of the Council),
- rescuers from the State Fire and Rescue Service, the State Emergency Medical Service, the State Forest Service, the Latvian State Police, the Municipal Police, and the Latvian National Guard,
- employees of the security company “TalComm”,
- staff and volunteers of the Latvian Red Cross social care centre.

The observers of the community-based exercise and the active participants in the workshops and evaluation discussion were representatives of:

- Ministry of Welfare,
- Riga Municipality Social Welfare department,
- Several social care centres run by NGOs,
- Local inhabitants of the nearby areas,
- Estonian Red Cross.

#### Marketing

Information about the event was targeted and circulated to the local community, and also at the national level. In order to address a larger audience, different communication channels were used:

- Two radio advertising announcements to the local community before the community-based exercise through regional radio: Kurzemes Radio.
- Official invitation letter to stakeholders and possible participants.
- Press release to the media.
- One news item in Radio SWH (national level).
- Report on TV news on the day after the community-based exercise:
  1. Local TV news: *Talsu TV*
  2. National TV news: *Latvijas Televizija (LTV1)*
- Article in local newspaper
  1. Webpage news:
  2. Latvian Red Cross: [www.redcross.lv](http://www.redcross.lv)
  3. PrepAGE: [www.prepage.eu](http://www.prepage.eu)
  4. Red Cross EU Office: [www.redcross.eu](http://www.redcross.eu)
- Facebook posts:
  - o Latvian Red Cross
  - o Red Cross EU Office
- All participants received leaflets concerning the main activities to do for older people in emergency situations. They were provided also to Talsi municipality to be shared among different local social centres, as well as to the Latvian Red Cross home care service staff, to provide them during home visits to older people in different cities of Latvia.

### Event expectations and agenda

Before the event, there were preparatory meetings with stakeholders and staff of the social care centre in order to discuss and inform about the planned event and expected results.

The community-based exercise had three different parts: 1) practical evacuation training; 2) practical and educational workshops; 3) evaluation discussion.

The first part of the training was evacuating all the inhabitants of the centre by the LatRC staff, and – in parallel – the arrival of all rescuers, according to the civil protection plan. After all 130 inhabitants of the social care centre were evacuated to a safe place – a nearby church – the rescuers searched the surroundings and established a special “headquarters” for sharing the actual information among the rescuers. At some point it was noticed that four people were missing – those were Latvian Red Cross volunteers-actors, prepared to have four different specific roles (the first – a broken leg, the second – shock, the third – burns, the fourth – insensible) and had specific make-up in order to look as authentic as possible. That gave a more specific task for the rescue services to look for the missing people, and to provide them with medical assistance after they were found.

After the practical part of the training, the audience watched demonstrations and took part in workshops to learn how to use fire extinguishers and how to provide first aid. They also learned about the experience of how LatRC informs and prepares the public in emergency situations (project “Aware & Resilient”), including practical information on what is the needed content for the emergency kit bag that should be prepared and stored in a safe place in every household. All participants received leaflets on what to do in emergency situations – they were also provided to the municipality to be shared among different social centres, the Latvian Red Cross home care centre, and also to be distributed during home visits to elderly people.

The third part of the training was a discussion to evaluate the training course, as well as to clarify the main topical issues related to all stages of the rescue work. Several recommendations were formulated during the discussions on how to further improve operative effectiveness and efficiency of the rescue work.

#### 3.4.4. Planning activities

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One of the most crucial requirements for a successful exercise is good planning of the necessary activities.

- Planning the event: 1) preparatory meeting with stakeholders, 2) preparatory meeting for inhabitants and staff of the social care centre; 3) community-based exercise: a) evacuation training; b) practical and educational workshops; c) evaluation discussion.
- Delivering official invitations to the participants (direct meetings and by post).
- Designing leaflets – information with top points (what should be done during the specific emergency situation, for distribution to older people).
- Briefing before evacuation training to all the participating parties (stakeholders, leaders of the rescue teams, local social care centre staff and people whom it may concern).
- Event – practical evacuation process.
- Event – practical workshops.
- Event – evaluation discussion.
- Coming up with recommendations – outcome of discussions.
- Distributing leaflets – during the event and, if possible, after the event as well, thus securing sustainability.
- Sending thank you notes to all the participants for their responsiveness and active participation at the event.

### 3.4.5. Main results / Lessons learned

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#### **Regular prevention work**

The involvement of the older people is one of the milestones of the exercises, as they are the main target group / beneficiaries who should be involved in the processes, so that these people would obtain the knowledge, necessary skills and practical experience on how to behave during emergency situations. To ensure that, it is necessary to perform regular preventive work. Being ready for a certain type of possible circumstances can help to avoid many unfortunate situations, and to save lives of older people. It is crucial not only to give the information once, but also to make it a regular practice for sharing and repeating the recommendations.

#### **Specific communication**

In order to involve older people, it is necessary to keep in mind the specific mindset that is often noticed among older people. They should receive clearly formulated and explained information, by using simple language terms and specific practical examples, which would convince people to try to pay attention and to remember the information.

It is also challenging to organise an event like this, while taking into account the nature of the clients if they have physical or mental disabilities. Therefore, one of the most important tasks would be to continue ensuring the annual practical training in the long-term social care and rehabilitation institutions for action in emergency situations, strengthening the knowledge and skills of staff for operational action. Repeated training experience reduces the anxiety and stress of the clients, as well as strengthening their experience and understanding. Such events are important for the local community, and it is necessary to have regular repetition of such training (at least once a year). In particular, such training should be organised at institutions for older people with reduced mobility and mental problems, since this population group is the least prepared for emergencies.

#### **Cooperation between partners (all involved groups) is essential**

The training gives an opportunity to test the preparedness of all involved parties and their ability to cooperate in an emergency situation, as well as an opportunity to develop mutual communication and identify the weaknesses in the cooperation among the stakeholders, as the situation of the exercise requires active participation and mutual cooperation from all the included parties.

In order to ensure the possibility of examining the situation from all aspects that could appear in a similar situation if it happened in reality, it is crucial to get the interest of all the stakeholders who should be included in the

activities to be present and to actively participate in the activities. Contacts that are made between stakeholders and different NGOs during such exercises can be of great assistance in similar situations in the future.

### 3.4.6. Summary of recommendations

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The practical participation during the training and in the discussion of the training progress afterwards has shown both strengths and weaknesses of such a process. In collaboration with stakeholders, rescuers, caregivers and older people, recommendations were developed that could improve the emergency response and specifically, evacuating older people from the affected territories.

The recommendations:

- Have clear responsibilities of all the involved parties in the emergency situation.
- Improve the mutual communication between the rescue services, and take all necessary steps in order to make available a common radio communication for the services throughout the territory of Latvia. It is essential to provide nursing staff with radios.
- Include in the evacuation plan of public buildings (e.g., school, care home, etc.), a clause on the shelter location of the people evacuated in emergency situations, where the residents of a care centre would be accommodated, keeping in mind their need of both psychological support and medical assistance.
- Include information about 2-3 local officials in the evacuation plan of a public building, who may give an order to arrange assistance in emergency situations of the institution (e.g., to provide additional machinery for the elimination of an emergency situation, to ensure transportation to evacuate the people to a safe location, etc.).
- Perform regular preventive work to update the civil protection plan (e.g. to check and restore water supply points, restore evacuation plans, check emergency exits, etc.).
- Continue to ensure annual practical training for action in emergency situations in the long-term social care and rehabilitation institutions, strengthening the knowledge and skills of staff for operational action, while taking into account the nature of the clients (physical and mental disabilities).
- Produce educational films and videos, create booklets with stories of various emergency situations and practical actions, and prepare different teaching materials in an “easy” language for persons with mental disabilities.

- Continue to provide regular training on preparedness, paying particular attention to people with special needs (especially to persons with psychological disabilities), including this topic in regular workshops (led by the employees of the social care centre).

After the training, several participants have expressed their interest in organising similar exercises in other cities in Latvia, which shows the need for such evacuation training and the necessity to focus on raising awareness among older people by involving them as active actors in the processes.

### 3.5. Exercise in the UK: Empowering older people by exchanging information



#### 3.5.1. Background

On 29 September 2015, the British Red Cross and Surrey County Council, with the support of Woking Borough Council, hosted a community-based exercise and workshop aimed at over-65-year-olds under the title '*Be Prepared: Empowering Older Adults in Local Emergencies*'. 60 delegates (65+ years old) participated in the workshop, which was facilitated by a range of 20 statutory and non-statutory local emergency responders. The community-based workshop and exercise aimed to facilitate a two-way exchange between members of the community and statutory/non-statutory responders in order to raise awareness of the needs and strengths of older people in an emergency, and to enhance their preparedness.

#### **British Red Cross and Surrey County Council partnership**

In order to deliver the community-based workshop and exercise, the British Red Cross – partners in the PrepAGE project – partnered with Surrey County Council. Surrey was chosen as a geographic location because of its high population of older people and recent experience of severe weather emergencies. 200,000 (17%) of Surrey's population (1.1 million) is over 65

years (slightly above the national average). Since 2001 there has been a 13% increase in those over 65 years and a 25% increase in people over 85 years (2011 census). In February 2014, Surrey experienced its worst floods in decades, which saw two major incidents being declared and 14 severe flood warnings issued within two months. Around 2000 households suffered from internal flooding, including 38 in Woking, and hundreds of people were forced to leave their homes. Risk of local/urban flooding (fluvial or surface water run-off) is rated as 'very high' on the community risk register. Coupled with this, the prompt identification and assistance of vulnerable people in an emergency is a key priority for Surrey County Council Emergency Management Team and Adult and Social Care services. As part of the Council's ongoing activities, a digital solution is being developed to improve on the existing best practice of organisations within Surrey's Local Resilience Forum for responding to vulnerable people in emergency incidents, by automating the collation, validation, analysis and consolidation of data required to support these individuals. Furthermore, since the introduction of the Flood and Water Management Act in 2010, Surrey County Council leads the coordination of flood risk management for surface water, groundwater and smaller watercourses in Surrey. The Environment Agency remains responsible for main river flooding.

### 3.5.2. Objectives

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The overall objective was to enhance local resilience partners' knowledge of the specific needs and strengths of older people in an emergency, through the facilitation of a two-way exchange between members of the community and local resilience partners, in order to adapt emergency plans accordingly.

The aims and objectives of the community-based exercise and workshop included:

1. To identify and raise awareness of the needs of older people in an emergency in order to inform PrepAGE recommendations.
2. To raise awareness of the services available locally, which older people can access to prepare for and withstand an emergency.
3. To enhance the preparedness of older people in an emergency.

### 3.5.3. Description of the exercise

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#### **Venue**

The community-based exercise and workshop took place at the HG Wells Centre in Woking, a fully accessible venue in the heart of the Woking community.



## Number of delegates

60 delegates who were over 65 years old attended the event.

20 statutory and non-statutory partners and facilitators, including the Mayor of Woking and Woking Borough Councillors, as well as:

- British Red Cross
- Surrey County Council
- Surrey Sussex Police
- Surrey Fire & Rescue
- Affinity Water
- Environment Agency

## Marketing

Details about the event were targeted and circulated to local community groups in Woking, Surrey aimed at the over-65-year-olds. Invites were emailed directly to British Red Cross Independent Living service users in the local area, and flyers promoting the event were displayed in community centres, day centres and church groups, and promulgated through the networks of other organisations including Age Concern and Neighbourhood Watch. The event was also advertised on the Get Surrey website - <http://www.getsurrey.co.uk/all-about/woking> - and the Healthy Surrey website - <http://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/news/copy-of-be-prepared-event/be-prepared-event/>.

## Event expectations and agenda

The exercise and workshop comprised three sections; *Helping us to help you*, *Helping you to help yourself*, and *Be Prepared*.

1. *Helping us to help you* was a scenario-based exercise, in which a fictitious flooding scenario was presented, with four injects. Each of these developments built the severity of the scenario, beginning with the initial issuing of a flood alert, progressing through a power outage and evacuation, and concluding with the return to homes. At each inject, delegates were asked to discuss within their groups three things:
  - What their needs would be at this time.
  - What actions they would take in each situation.
  - What their concerns would be.
2. *Helping you to help yourself* was a panel discussion based around the needs and concerns that were raised by delegates during the scenario exercise. Local resilience partners had the opportunity to share how they can currently assist in addressing these concerns. Panel members

included representatives from Surrey Fire and Rescue, Environment Agency, British Red Cross, Affinity Water, Surrey County Council and Surrey Police.

3. *Be Prepared* was a marketplace-style exercise. Delegates were invited to visit the stalls of services and organisations, where they were able to gain information and advice on areas including basic first aid, home and fire safety, and British Red Cross emergency kits.

#### 3.5.4. Main results / Lessons identified

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##### **Information is key**

A commonly identified need throughout each of the four flooding scenario injects was the need and desire for information. Delegates asked questions including “How would I know what is going on?” “How do I get sandbags?” “Which areas will be affected?” “Where do I get information from?” “How can we share our knowledge with neighbours and peers?”.

Information is both empowering and provides a sense of control, which *is* important to the older population. There was no clear understanding of the defined roles and responsibilities of each emergency service. Without a definitive source of information regarding the situation, or an understanding of where to find information, participants stated that they would feel confused and helpless, with many of their concerns unanswered, in an emergency situation.

With the diversity of actors in UK civil protection arrangements, which organisation is – or provides – the official source of information or status on current emergency events is unclear. A clear, joint communications strategy is essential for emergency preparedness and response, with consistent and coherent messaging from all statutory and non-statutory agencies involved. The introduction of a ‘one-stop shop’ website or telephone line should be considered at times of major incidents, in order to provide up-to-date information, answer questions and allay concerns.

##### **A diverse range of communication channels is essential**

A common catchphrase throughout the community-based exercise and workshop from statutory and non-statutory responders was “information can be found on our website”. There was an overwhelming appeal from delegates that a wide range of communication channels ought to be used to communicate to the general public about how to prepare and respond to an emergency – and that websites alone should not be relied upon. Many of the participants were not computer literate or did not have access to computers and related technology. Therefore many participants were not able to

access many of the services available to them prior to, during and after an emergency. Awareness of priority service registers, for example, was not well known by participants due to the service mainly being promoted online.

It is recommended that statutory and non-statutory agencies review their communications strategy and ensure clear, timely and accurate information is available via a diverse range of channels in order to account for the needs of older, vulnerable groups. The Local Resilience Forum Warning and Informing Group should take a more proactive role in this process.

### **Personal (and pet) safety and security of property concerns**

A key concern raised during the scenario was regarding personal safety, including that of relatives and pets, and home security. Apprehension about how to secure property adequately and protect personal items, when to turn off utilities, fear of crime, and staying safe during an emergency were repeatedly raised. Of particular concern was security of a home if people were required to evacuate their homes, and readily available access to insurance companies and information if required. Pet safety, and whether pets could be taken if evacuated, caused a great deal of anxiety amongst participants.

As previously mentioned, the provision of timely and accurate information is critical. It is recommended that resilient partners make information available to the older population on these specific subjects in order to increase awareness, understanding and preparedness in light of an emergency, and reduce any anxiety. It is also recommended that preparing emergency kits is promoted to older members of the community, including a list of essential items to include in the kits. Copies of medication, insurance documents, utility suppliers, pet vet records, important phone numbers, etc. can and should be stored in 'grab bags' ready to refer to – all in one place – at the time of a response.

### **Fear of evacuation**

Many of the delegates participating in the scenario voiced their fear of evacuations. There was limited understanding of when they might be required to evacuate their homes, who would tell them to evacuate, did they have to evacuate, who helped them evacuate, what could they bring with them, where would they be going, whether they would have to pay for services at a rest centre, etc.

It is recommended that community-based live exercises and events are conducted with the older population, focused on emergency preparedness and response – with a specific emphasis on evacuation – to address some of these fears. Exercising and preparedness activity should not be limited to the resilience partners. Indeed, experience has shown that by exercising the community and walking people through how to prepare and respond, as

well as the process of evacuation – including how they will be informed and by who, and where they will be evacuated to and the facilities available – reduces anxiety and apprehension and significantly increases preparedness.

### **Focus on recovery**

It was apparent in the exercise and workshop that once people return to their homes, they have questions and concerns that they struggle to find answers for. These include: safety of houses (electricity), how to clean up or attend to any damage, insurance concerns and paying for repairs, and questions such as “will this happen again?” Some raised particular and acute emotional needs. It is recommended that resilience partners work together to specifically address the recovery needs of older adults in the aftermath of an emergency. Tailored recovery activity which takes into consideration accessibility, for example, and the specific needs of older people, should be properly considered, planned for and implemented. The recovery needs of this section of the population should not be underestimated.

### **Partnership working between statutory and non-statutory partners is essential**

The event highlighted the need for further cooperation, collaboration and enhanced partnership working between resilience partners, with a specific focus on preparing and meeting the needs of older people in an emergency.

Many of the non-statutory and voluntary sector partners involved in UK civil protection arrangements / community services have a focus on the vulnerable or older parts of the community. The voluntary sector has an extensive network of volunteers who can reach out to those most vulnerable, and provide information, and individual and tailored support. Indeed, many volunteers are themselves over 65 years old and can provide valuable peer-to-peer support.

Statutory responders are encouraged to engage with these partners regularly and consistently prior to an emergency. Further cooperation would enhance understanding between statutory and non-statutory partners and provide a clearer understanding of how voluntary sector partners could support statutory responders to address many of the concerns raised by older people in the exercise and workshop. There are many capabilities and services provided by the British Red Cross, for example community-based first aid, which could help enhance preparedness amongst the older population. Preparedness information could also be incorporated into existing community services for older people provided by non-statutory agencies and promulgated through existing channels (e.g. Neighbourhood Watch). During a response, closer collaboration between statutory and voluntary sector partners is also recommended. In order to increase

emergency preparedness amongst older people and meet their needs during a response, it is essential the statutory partners engage with and work in partnership with voluntary and community groups in order to achieve their common objectives.

### 3.5.5. Summary of recommendations

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Research and experience has shown that an informed population is better prepared and more able to respond to, and recover from, an emergency. It is therefore essential to include and involve older people in emergency preparedness and response activity, in order to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience and recovery. Current budget constraints, the diversity of actors within UK civil protection arrangements, and the often complex and sometimes disparate networks between stakeholders in planning, response and recovery to emergencies, add to the challenge of warning and informing older members of the community, and adequately responding to their needs. Ultimately, it is recommended that the following areas are prioritised in order to respond to this challenge:

- 1. Enhanced cooperation, collaboration and partnership working between resilience partners before, during and after an emergency to address the needs of older people.**
  - A good understanding of the network of statutory and non-statutory partners operating locally in emergency response, in addition to organisations which provide services for older people, is required.
  - Consideration of how to use existing networks and services to promote preparedness, share response information and enable effective recovery is necessary.
  - Use of volunteer networks and peer-to-peer support to meet the specific needs of older people is advised.
- 2. Information should be made available through appropriate communication channels, and consistent messaging should be made available and shared by all responding partners.**
  - Attention should be given to the use of appropriate communication channels for older people – do not just rely on websites.
  - Focus on preparedness information to facilitate empowering feelings of control.
  - A 'one-stop shop' for people to find information should be considered. Potentially a support line during a response where people, including older members of the community, can find out information and ask questions.

- 3. Emergency kits for older people in areas of risk, containing information about what to prepare in advance of an emergency, should be promoted / provided.**
  - Older people should be encouraged to make up, or be provided with, 'grab bags' to use in case of emergency.
  - Grab bags should contain essential items and copies of personal documents which may be required in an emergency.
  - Statutory responders should include information about how to secure yourself and your property in a response.
- 4. Preparedness, response and recovery exercising involving older people should be encouraged.**
  - Reduce fear and anxiety of what might happen in an emergency, including evacuations, by exercising in the community and sharing / showing older residents what might happen in a response.
- 5. Due attention needs to be provided to the recovery phase of an emergency, particularly for older people.**
  - Emotional needs of older people following a response need to be adequately addressed. Recovery activity should be accessible and tailored to the specific needs of older members of the community, in order to reduce anxiety and placate any residual fears.

## 4. Summary and conclusions



### General impact of the exercises

As mentioned above, five different exercises were run with the aims of raising awareness among older people of disaster preparedness and response, to improve cooperation between responders and health and social services with respect to older people in disasters, and to elicit and raise awareness for the needs of older people in disasters.

All in all, it can be said that all of the exercise formats were successful in raising awareness, reducing older people's fear of evacuation, and increasing knowledge and skills, as well as coordination between stakeholders. The four different types of exercise formats implemented different ways in which these aims could be reached. They all reached their aims and were very effective in bringing different groups of stakeholders together.

In the final joint evaluation of the project, project partners summarised the results and impacts of the exercises. One important aspect named was that the exercises confirmed the content and focus of the recommendations formulated in the National and European workshops (see final recommendations). These related to a) improving cooperation and coordination among stakeholders, b) providing databases to ensure that vulnerable older people can be reached in the case of emergency, c) raising awareness and providing information, d) encouraging community involvement, and e) offering psychosocial support focusing on the needs of older people.

The benefits of the exercises for older people were that they were empowered and gained confidence to deal with disaster situations in the future. Their views were taken into account and they were encouraged to participate actively in the exercises. Finally, the exercises succeeded in reducing fear and anxiety of older people with respect to disasters, including evacuation.

The benefits of the exercises for the participating Red Cross partners were that they could carry out a new activity with a new focus, they received positive feedback from co-organisers and participants and gained new ideas for partnerships and further similar activities in the future. Partners reported that more impact was gained than expected, and that many plans on a local level for dissemination and future activities have been made. Other participating organisations benefited by receiving information on older people and disasters, by becoming involved in partnerships for the future, and by experiencing exercises that they could also carry out in different contexts.

These exercises are a good starting point for awareness-raising for disasters and older people, and for the reduction of older people's fears. It became evident that this type of work on prevention and preparedness has to be done regularly, and that one-off events have a limited scope. It is not enough to provide the information once, but regular activities must be offered. Repeated awareness-raising activities not only reduce the anxiety and stress of the clients, as well as strengthening their experience and understanding.

The following issues were identified over all exercises:

### **Planning and information of stakeholders before an exercise**

In all five exercises, it was highlighted that preparation was very important for the success of the project. Within the PrepAGE project, the national workshops already provided an opportunity to inform and make links with some important stakeholders. Apart from that, the relevance of informing stakeholders participating in the event beforehand, either through face-to-face meetings, telephone or written information, was recognised by project partners in all five countries.

In Austria, a preparatory workshop was held in advance of the exercise, and in Bulgaria and Latvia, which both conducted practical simulation exercises, meetings with the stakeholders involved took place one or two days in advance, to ensure that everyone knew what their role and mandate was. In Latvia, where frail and disabled older people were involved, the briefing before the evacuation training to all the participating parties (stakeholders, leaders of the rescue teams, local social care centre staff and residents) proved to be of the utmost importance.

When carrying out an exercise, it is recommended to plan in advance and inform participants and stakeholders as early as possible. Experience in Croatia and Bulgaria has shown that, especially if disaster response staff are involved in the organisation, a back-up plan is crucial, since staff might be involved in actual disaster response at the time of the exercise.



## Publicity and dissemination

In order to reach more people with the message of raising awareness for the needs and resources of older people in disasters, dissemination and public relations have proved to have an essential value in preparing and running exercises. On the one hand, public relations activities are necessary beforehand to inform participants of, and invite them to, the exercises and to ensure widespread participation. On the other hand, dissemination serves to inform other segments of the population who are not involved in the activities, and raise general awareness of the needs and resources of older people in disasters.

Over all exercises, participants were invited using multiple channels. For example, in the UK details about the event were targeted and circulated to local community groups for over-65-year-olds, invitations were emailed directly to British Red Cross service users, and flyers promoting the event were displayed in community centres, day centres and church groups, and distributed through the networks of other organisations. In Bulgaria, information leaflets were distributed to all households in the village by volunteers.

The Latvian exercise proved to be a successful example for public relations before and after the exercise. The exercise was reported on television, radio, and local and national newspapers, as well as on the internet. It is highly recommended to collaborate with local media when carrying out an exercise, to reach a maximum multiplier and awareness-raising effect. Also, it is important to use different types of communication channels in targeting older people, including those that do not involve IT.

With respect to providing information material on disaster preparedness, in all the exercises, organisers put together simple information material using a few key messages and providing a checklist on what to consider for a disaster situation. In the UK exercise, representatives of all organisations mentioned repeatedly that they offered a variety of information on disasters on the internet. The older participants reminded them that this was not enough, since not all older people are computer literate or have access to computers. It is recommended that all organisations in the field of disaster management and those that cater to older people, review their communications strategies and ensure the availability of clear, timely and accurate information via a diverse range of channels, in order to account for the needs of older, vulnerable groups.

## Involving older people

It became clear within all exercises that active participation of older people is paramount. During the implementation of the exercise in all countries, older people could participate actively. Firstly, they could voice their opinions and concerns and they were listened to by the representatives of the different organisations, which is a first step for empowerment. Secondly, practical demonstrations and group work, explaining the most important elements of disaster preparedness in an easy and clear way, ensured that the older participants' concentration and interest was at a very high level.

Thus, all the elements in the exercises that fostered interactive involvement with older people were successful. In Latvia, older people were involved in the evacuation exercise as active participants, and in Croatia, in the demonstration of water boat rescue. In both countries, interactive information sessions on different aspects of disaster preparedness were offered. In the UK, the older delegates were encouraged to ask questions and voice their opinions in interactive round-table sessions.

In Austria, two methods were used to target older people at a trade fair for senior citizens: presentations and bilateral conversations at the stand of the Austrian Red Cross. Here it became very clear that the bilateral, interactive communication worked well, and that frontal presentations were not as interesting for older people. It is recommended that older people should be provided with clearly formulated and explained information, with practical examples, which they can discuss with others.

Older people were involved the most in Bulgaria, where they were trained as volunteers and helped provide information in the preparation phase of the exercise, and participated in the exercise by providing information in providing peer support to the older population of the village. It is important to remember that older people have experience, skills and capacities. They should not only be treated as beneficiaries who receive information to learn what measures they should take in disasters, or experience evacuation to become better prepared and reduce their fears, but they can also be active actors in the emergency response.

While it is recommended to involve older people actively in exercises and events, it is also important to take into account physical and mental disabilities. Within all exercises, it became clear that participants' physical or mental disabilities pose a challenge when organising an event like this. Important aspects to take into account are the accessibility of the venue, the timing of the event, and how information is presented during the meeting.

## **Addressing older people's concerns**

There are various concerns and fears of older people related to emergency situations. Most of those fears come from the information known, or presumably known, such as possible terrorist attacks, which was voiced by older people participating in the senior fair in Austria, and previous bad experiences with emergencies, including fear of institutionalisation. Other fears come from the unknown, and the most common ones are of evacuation, associated with the fear of damage and/or loss of property, worry about animals, or anxiety over the fate of loved ones.

In connection with evacuation, many questions were asked by older people in the UK event, such as who would tell them to evacuate, did they have to evacuate, what could they bring with them, where would they be going, or whether they would have to pay for services at a rest centre.

It became clear that the exercises addressed some of these fears and that it is important to include the (older) population in exercises, rather than having these exclusively for responders. Walking people through how to prepare and react, and through the process of evacuation, reduces anxiety and apprehension and significantly increases preparedness. This includes letting them know how they will be informed, by whom, and where they will be evacuated to.

Preparedness is valued. Older people appreciate being informed and make good use of the preparedness information provided. In some cases, they search for it themselves. This was the case in Bulgaria, where participants asked for a family disaster plan after the exercise. In others, there was an explicit demand for information which is available, concrete, and very importantly, adapted to the needs of, and easily accessible by, older people, preferably in one place such as a one-stop shop. Information on, and demonstration of, emergency kits was very well received. This was a topic in all exercises. It is recommended that preparing emergency kits is promoted to older members of the community. Issues to be addressed are a list of essential items to include in the kits, copies of medication, insurance documents, important phone numbers, etc.

## **Networking / Linking different organisations**

All exercises showed quite clearly that there is a missing link, an information and communication gap, between the institutions dealing with daily individual needs of older people and those which are activated in emergency situations.

As a result, in the case of a disaster, frail older people and other vulnerable people could find themselves in a no-man's land, between the social institution that may consider its job done by evacuating its "clients" to the safe place stipulated in its emergency plan, and the rescue organisations that may not have the professional knowledge of the carers, and about the specific conditions of each client and the higher possible risks resulting from those conditions.

This is partly due to the fact that organisations and institutions are highly professionalised and specialised in narrow fields of activity. Not only is there lack of communication and coordination with others, but in some cases their own internal units which are engaged in different sectors may not have effective communication within the large structure, or knowledge of each other's capacities and potential. This issue was addressed in Latvia, where it is recommended to include nurses in radio communication and provide them with the necessary equipment.

A related issue is that often, institutional partners in the community-based exercises have been attempting to deal with problematic topics that appeared to have been already solved by others, as was the case in Austria, where the responders were trying to solve problems that had already been solved by the social service organisations. Likewise, a common finding was that other institutions possess unutilised resources, including material and human resources, and, often, much-needed knowledge and expertise. This was shown in Austria, where the expertise and resources of property management organisations in disaster situations were evident, or in Bulgaria, where certain information on older people and people with disabilities is only accessible through social services.

A strong recommendation arising from the implemented exercises is to reflect on this issue and to actively capitalise on the potential of social and health institutions in both emergency situations, as well as in disaster preparedness activities, in the future. In the field of communication between institutional stakeholders, one particular issue should be tackled early and in close cooperation – namely, the unification of the different terminologies used by the institutional partners. Clarification of terminology should be one of the first tasks to complete for any future emergency communication system to be established between those different types of organisations.

## The role of civil society organisations and volunteers

The involvement of both civil society organisations and authorities in preparedness activities is essential, and provides valuable opportunities for complementarity, greater preparedness, and increased response capacity – ultimately, better services, support and inclusiveness of community, volunteers and older people themselves. In the UK, an important point was the existing networks of volunteers working in the voluntary sector and community groups, who can greatly contribute in both preparedness and response.

The involvement of volunteers is not only relevant in disaster situations, but also for preparatory activities. All of the implemented exercises relied heavily on volunteers, on their engagement and support. In cases where participants in the exercises are frail older people, it is also good to include a larger number of volunteers who will be able to support them. Also, it is helpful for volunteers, who are mostly younger people, to be more familiar with the needs of older people and hear their life experiences from them. This can lead to better exchange between generations. Likewise, training and actively involving older volunteers who work together with younger volunteers, will lead to better peer support, as well as intergenerational exchange.

The aim of the PrepAGE-project which was co-funded by the European Commission's DG ECHO was to introduce specific recommendations for older people in emergency and disaster preparedness and prevention programmes. The PrepAGE-project identified the needs, structures and measures to find out how to prepare and reach the target group of older people in case of emergencies and disasters. The project also took into account the resources and resilience of older people and brought together experts from the health and social sector and the field of disaster management. The project was implemented in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia and the United Kingdom from 1 April 2014 to 31 May 2016.

For more information see: [www.prepage.eu](http://www.prepage.eu)



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Enhancing disaster management and preparedness for the older population in the EU

# Recommendations

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# 1. Introduction

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The PrepAGE project, a European project co-financed by the European Commission, aims to enhance disaster preparedness, response and recovery with respect to older people. The project focused on exploring how the needs of vulnerable older people (e.g. those with mobility impairments or care needs) can be met within an emergency situation and how older people themselves can be enabled as a resource in an emergency, able to support each other and people of all age groups, throughout all stages of the disaster management cycle. One of the PrepAGE project's main activities was to develop recommendations at a national and European level on how best to incorporate the needs and strengths of older people into emergency planning and response.

In the first stage of the project, desk research was carried out to identify studies, guidelines and recommendations on older people in disasters. Following this, an empirical study asked experts from across Europe about their organisations' experiences, awareness and preparedness on dealing with the special requirements of older people in disasters. Based on these results, national workshops were held in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia and the United Kingdom, followed by a European workshop, where experts were invited to input into the research findings through focus group discussions.

At the national workshops, experts in the fields of health and social care and disaster management participated as well as representatives from ministries, civil protection authorities, social care institutions and not-for-profit organisations. The national workshops had between 15 and 45 participants, amounting to 130 expert participants across all partner countries. The discussions on the status quo in each country and national recommendations were recorded in individual reports which are available at [www.prepage-project.eu](http://www.prepage-project.eu).

After the national workshops, a European workshop with representatives from Red Cross National Society partners, national authorities and service providers was held on 1st and 2nd June, 2015 in Bulgaria. Research results were presented, national results were compared and a set of European recommendations were formulated that are relevant to all participating countries.

The recommendations have been summarised and incorporated into five key themes and are described in detail below:

- Improving cooperation and coordination among stakeholders
- Developing robust and updated databases to ensure that vulnerable older people can be reached in the case of emergency (at the local level)
- Raising awareness and providing information
- Encouraging community involvement
- Offering psychosocial support focusing on the needs of older people

## 2. Improving cooperation and coordination among stakeholders

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The system of protection and rescue within the European Union is based on the principle of subsidiarity. It is of great importance to encourage cooperation and coordination between stakeholders, starting with local municipalities and regional governments, up to the national level in each country, as well as at the European Union level among the Member States. In crisis situations, especially large-scale emergencies, the engagement of all emergency and rescue services is often required. Cooperation and coordination between organisations and authorities, as well as activities conducted within each of the three phases of the disaster management cycle, is important. Experience has shown that cooperation and coordination among the agencies gives better results in terms of providing assistance to the affected population and returning vital infrastructure to a state that allows the community to function again. With respect to the needs of vulnerable older people, the cooperation of additional organisations that are not normally part of the response capability, such as health and social care providers or advocacy organisations for older people, may be required. All countries identified a lack of contact, knowledge and understanding between emergency organisations and those responsible for caring for and supporting older people.

Recommendations have been formulated to address three main points:

### 2.1. Improvements in coordination

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- In general, the connection and coordination between stakeholders from the protection and rescue field and those from the health and social care sector requires improvement.
- Roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder should be defined at an early stage to increase awareness and understanding between protection and rescue organisations and those in the field of care and advocacy for older people. Organisational charts with clear roles and responsibilities should be developed at a local level.
- Roles, responsibilities, and crosscutting issues that require cooperation with respect to vulnerable older people should be actively communicated between stakeholders.
- Organisational awareness in the fields of disaster management and health and social care for older people should be improved through joint training, networking activities and workshops.
- In situations of large-scale disasters, there are no administrative borders between countries. It is necessary therefore to promote bilateral and

multilateral cooperation between the protection and rescue organisations and regional authorities in order to be better prepared and better equipped to deal with the consequences of a disaster. Specific issues concerning vulnerable older people should be addressed as one topic between organisations cooperating across borders.

- Lead agencies should ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the disaster management cycle and clarify which stakeholders have responsibility for specific phases according to local legislation.

## Disaster Management Cycle



Graphics: Winston-Salem State University;  
<https://wssu.edu/administration/campus-police/emergency-management/default.aspx>

### Good example for cooperation on the local level:

There are 42 Local Resilience Forums located in **England and Wales** which have a joint budget and also exercise together. The website of the Local Resilience Forums summarises them as:

“The local resilience forums in the UK (LRFs) are multi-agency partnerships made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency and others. These agencies are known as Category 1 Responders, as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act. LRFs are supported by organisations, known as Category 2 responders, such as the Highways Agency and public utility companies. They have a responsibility to co-operate with Category 1 organisations and to share relevant information with the LRF. The geographical area the forums cover is based on police areas. LRFs also work with other partners in the military and voluntary sectors who provide a valuable contribution to LRF work in emergency preparedness. The LRFs aims to plan and prepare for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies. They work to identify potential risks and produce emergency plans to either prevent or mitigate the impact of any incident on their local communities.”

<https://www.gov.uk/local-resilience-forums-contact-details>

## 2.2. Exercising together

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The most effective way to improve cooperation between stakeholders, with respect to older people in emergencies, as well as raise awareness among the population, is through regular joint exercises. While there are some good examples for this on a general, disaster management level, specific exercises which include older people explicitly are rare.

- It is recommended that regular exercises involving all stakeholders are carried out in order to develop, adapt and test local emergency plans that consider the needs of vulnerable older people.
- These should be multi-agency exercises that include all responders, services, local government, community groups as well as vulnerable and active older people.
- One main aim of these exercises should be to practically test individual and organisational roles and responsibilities in a disaster situation and to check organisational procedures that have been agreed in advance.
- Exercises should be carried out regularly (at least annually), so all of those involved stay familiar with procedures. They should take place on a local level and involve small groups and community networks. The local population should be included rather than role play scenarios using actors.

### **Good examples for involving local representatives in disaster preparedness**

**Austria:** In the City of Innsbruck all responders conduct table top exercises two or three times a year together with the municipal authorities. In January 2016, this exercise focussed on considering the needs of vulnerable older people living at home in the context of a power outage scenario in the framework of the PrepAGE project.

**Italy:** In Sicily which is at high risk of earthquakes, there are very good examples of regular table-top exercises for an earthquake scenario involving all key stakeholders.

### 3. Developing robust and updated databases to ensure that vulnerable older people can be reached in case of disaster (at the local level)

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In many countries there is little to no information available on where vulnerable older people live and those organisations that do hold this information, are not always in contact with emergency responders. The challenges in accessing older vulnerable people in the case of a disaster were addressed in all countries and the following is recommended:

- Creation of an electronic database of vulnerable older people that is regularly updated and shared between stakeholders in order to be able to accurately identify the target group at a local level (including micro level such as a block of flats or neighbourhoods).
- Ideally, the database should be available on a national level, but must include the ability to analyse and use the data for local or defined regions.
- Development of a procedure on how to generate the data for compliance with legal regulations or adaptation of legal regulations accordingly.
- The database must be structured in a way that provides important information about all vulnerable people that have special requirements in the case of a disaster.
- A table should be constructed detailing who the target groups are according to need. Groups should be prioritised according to vulnerability.
- Information on the following issues should be collected: health status, chronic illnesses, medication and other medical needs, social care needs and provision, dietary needs, mobility and emergency contacts.
- Information sharing must be in compliance with legal regulations and only the necessary information should be shared.
- An organisation at the local and/or national level should be nominated to lead coordination activities in terms of the database. In some European countries implementation could be most effective if the responsibility and management is left to national or local governments (ministries, municipalities, cities), in others, organisations like the Red Cross could be more effective in dealing with this task due to the fact that they are often responsible for both the care of older people and disaster management.

- Development of a guide or a memorandum of understanding on how to access and exchange information between organisations, before, during and after crises or disasters. This should also ensure that information in the database is entered by a reliable source and shared in an appropriate and proper way. It should also define who has access to the database and how the information can be used.
- Databases alone are not enough to ensure that the needs of vulnerable older people are considered in all phases of disaster management. Personal preparedness of older people and their families/caregivers as well as strengthening neighbourhood networks is very important, including awareness raising and providing accurate and accessible information (see points 4. and 5.).

## 4. Raising Awareness and providing information

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In all participating countries, a lack of awareness about disaster preparedness among the population as a whole –older people included– was identified. Effort needs to be made to improve (older) individuals' preparedness for disasters and that these individuals also need to be made aware of how they can help themselves, and their peers, in an emergency. It is not enough to rely on institutional solutions (such as vulnerability lists or the expectation that responders will be available at all times). Fear of evacuation or lack of knowledge about procedures in case of disasters was seen as being especially pertinent among older people.

### 4.1. Raising awareness

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- It is necessary to encourage the entire community to get more involved with activities in the preparedness phase of the disaster management cycle, in order to increase overall resilience in the response phase and to achieve more effective results in the recovery phase.
- All members of the population should be encouraged to create action and household emergency plans, starting with the family, through small communities and to large cities and regions. This should include an emergency kit. Questions to include in the action plan could be: What can I do to increase the resilience of my family and community in case of emergency situations and disasters? Special focus should be placed on older people and their families.
- Activities should be run to inform older people and their families of procedures in disaster situations, to familiarise them with emergency shelters and to reduce fear of evacuation.
- Educational and preventive activities such as information campaigns should be created for three distinct target groups:
  - o organisations that are professionally dealing with activities related to the protection and rescue challenges or health and social care for older people
  - o the local community – with a focus on older people and their friends and family
  - o local government.
- Procedures, exercises and workshops should be developed to encourage the local population to participate in activities that lead to better preparedness and effective response to disasters.



## 4.2. Encouraging local governments and local authorities to fulfil their legal role

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In all of the partner countries, local governments have a legally binding role in coordinating disaster response. However, due to factors such as the rapidly changing political environment, sometimes other pressing issues are given higher priority. This has led to a lack of specific training; representatives such as mayors cannot always fulfil these roles. With respect to older people in disasters the following recommendations are made:

- Provide campaigns and training for local government representatives, including local mayors in all activities, e.g. database as well as joint exercises (see Recommendation 2.2. and 3.).
- Raise awareness among local authorities that it is their responsibility (in most cases it is their legal obligation) to coordinate all actors in their community. Encourage local authorities to take the lead in the coordination of emergencies, prepare them through meetings and training events.
- Specifically, emergency training sessions for local authorities should be offered with a focus on vulnerable (older) people together with other organisations.
- Joint exercises should be conducted with local authorities, e.g. table-top exercise with local authorities involved (see Recommendation 2.2)

### Good examples involving local representatives in disaster preparedness

**Austria:** The Lower Austrian Civil Protection Organisation trains mayors with respect to local disaster plans regarding real risks. These plans also consider the recovery phase. 200 such training sessions are carried out in Lower Austria per year.

**Croatia:** In a town with regular flooding, many older people did not feel the need to be evacuated during the day, but at night they started to become anxious and numerous people called the emergency services at night and asked to be evacuated. The services advised the mayor that a publicity campaign should be launched to inform residents that everyone would benefit from conducting the evacuation in the daytime. The mayor accepted the advice and informed the radio stations and thus a publicity campaign was started. This improved the situation substantially.

### 4.3. Ensuring accurate and adequate information to the (vulnerable) older population and other stakeholders

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The use of appropriate language and the types of media used to communicate with the (vulnerable) older population is important. In the national workshops it was established that often the language and media used to communicate disaster preparedness and procedural issues were not adequate for the vulnerable older population. Some older people do not use social media or the internet in general. Also, hearing and visual impairments need to be taken into account. The following recommendations should be considered with respect to information material and communication campaigns:

- Ensure that accurate information is delivered to everyone to empower him/her to prepare for a disaster and ensure that information is given appropriately.
- Use appropriate and positive language in communication to older people.
- Information must be accessible to the target group so the use of radio and television as well as telephoning and door knocking rather than emails, SMS, social media or WhatsApp is preferential.
- Develop materials and use terminology which will be understood by the general population, people with disabilities and the media.
- Use appropriate and positive language in communications with older people and provide clear and accurate information that will not spread panic, but will contribute to a better understanding of the procedures and activities before, during and after disasters.
- Use accessible language, pictures, symbols and photos to cater to those who do not speak local languages or who have problems reading due to visual impairments.
- Provide leaflets using images explaining what actions to take, before, during and after a disaster.

#### Good examples for communication

**Haiti, Japan:** There are some good examples of how mobile telephone providers worked together with responders to send warning texts to large portions of the population in recent disasters.

**UK:** The Alzheimer's Society produces a free guide 'The memory handbook: a practical guide to living with memory problems'. The guide contains a wealth of information and suggests creating permanent signs around the home, for example a laminated A4 sheet, as a reminder to do recurring tasks for example a sign to the inside of the front door to remind you to take your keys, purse, wallet or a shopping list with you.

## 5. Encouraging community involvement

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The principle of subsidiarity applies to all professional services with responsibility for emergency response and ensuring the safety of communities. Based on the experience of many organisations, it has been shown that assistance provided in an emergency is more effective if the providers are peers or people known by beneficiaries. In large-scale disaster situations, professional teams for protection and rescue cannot meet all the needs of the affected population. In general it is important to encourage the participation of older volunteers, to improve peer support and the self-help capability of communities. The recommendations are:

- Educate and train volunteers who can offer support to their peers and others in case of an emergency. Older people should be encouraged to volunteer and barriers eliminated, such as age limitations for volunteers in certain fields.
- Raise awareness among the local population of the importance of their active involvement and participation in the protection and rescue system and to encourage networking with neighbours in order to build up a better picture of the situation at the micro level (Who is my neighbour? Whether she/he needs help. Who should I call for help?). Active older people should be trained specifically to support their vulnerable peers.
- Community involvement should also include peer support and training in general. Recommendations should be developed on how to recruit and work together with convergent volunteers and how to encourage older people to participate in such programmes.
- Education for community groups should be provided on disaster preparedness and response with a focus on older people in the form of training for trainers, so that they can pass on this knowledge to the general population.
- Differences in urban and rural situations should be considered with respect to community involvement.

### Good example for peer support

**Bulgaria:** A practical guide for trainers was developed, which provides information on how to prepare for disasters and how to react appropriately. This guide was distributed in 12 regions in Bulgaria. Also a training session for trainers was provided in July 2013 (regional staff members, responsible for the Disaster Preparedness in the BRC Local Branches) on how to specifically train older people. These trained trainers provided 12 regional trainings to 300 older volunteers (25 per region). Some of the trained volunteers and the trained BRC staff then disseminated information among the older population on how to prepare for disasters. These activities took place in pensioners clubs and other regional NGOs (Plovdiv, Yambol, Montana, Shumen, Lovech).

## 6. Offering psychosocial support/help geared towards the needs of older people

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Leaving home because of an emergency can cause great stress for all. However, such situations can cause even more distress among the older population. One aspect is the emotional attachment to objects with sentimental value. The experience of many experts from previous disaster response situations is that psychosocial support and assistance has not been adequately provided to people in need. It is very important to encourage all institutions and organisations to pay more attention to psychosocial assistance/support in order to help people in need. A special focus should be put on supporting vulnerable older people who might be more sensitive to sudden changes than others. Recommendations on the psychosocial support of older people are:

- Provide specific psychosocial support for vulnerable older people in case of evacuation and shelters. Active older people should be trained as peers to support those who are in need of such support.
- A special focus should be put on isolated and lonely older people who might have lost touch with their caregiver or main contact person.
- Emphasis should be put on peer support or other support of responders who work with especially vulnerable people or who have experienced severe situations.
- Continuous training for all those involved in the psychosocial support of vulnerable older people should be offered.

### **Good example for psychosocial support**

In **Croatia** it has been observed that a few days after a disaster, responders and beneficiaries become restless and angry and that psychosocial support in this phase is especially important. The importance of providing support to responders was also recognised.



The aim of the PrepAGE-project which was co-funded by the European Commission's DG ECHO was to introduce specific recommendations for older people in emergency and disaster preparedness and prevention programmes. The PrepAGE-project identified the needs, structures and measures to find out how to prepare and reach the target group of older people in case of emergencies and disasters. The project also took into account the resources and resilience of older people and brought together experts from the health and social sector and the field of disaster management. The project was implemented in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia and the United Kingdom from 1 April 2014 to 31 May 2016.

For more information see: [www.prepage.eu](http://www.prepage.eu)



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