



ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



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“Security for our children” Project

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The extent of human and material losses from all types of disasters is the reason why many international organizations are actively involved in preventing and reducing their impact. In this regard, the UN, UNESCO, the International Federation of National Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, UNICEF, UNISDR /United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction/, ActionAid /organization for social justice and gender equality and the elimination of poverty/ and other key regional bodies inside and outside the United Nations have long been involved in this regard. For example, UNISDR - the United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction Office focuses some of its efforts on ensuring the safety of students and is working in three main areas: security of school facilities, disaster management in schools and training in prevention and risk resilience.

Disaster response and risk management training aims to teach children to live in such situations in the most responsible way possible, to provide them with a culture of risk and an understanding of the dangers and challenges so that they can immediately adopt appropriate behaviours. Although an integral part of sustainable development education, this training is not yet widespread in the school environment, partly due to the lack of specialized curricula and materials or teacher training on this topic.

Given the importance of the above problem, "RDA and BC 2000" has developed and is currently implementing the project "Safety for our children", whose main goal is to unite the efforts of the Romanian and Bulgarian communities to participate in the planned joint activities, raising the awareness of the cross-border community for timely response to natural disasters and



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effective long-term risk prevention. One of the main project activities is aimed at developing new joint curricula and teaching materials, which will be used for extracurricular training of teachers and students from secondary schools in the cross-border region of Montana-Vidin-Dolj.

In the Republic of Bulgaria, the basic document for disaster protection is the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2014-2020, which provides for the inclusion of basic principles, objectives and activities related to disaster risk reduction in training programs on all possible levels. Romania has adopted and established a National Emergency Management System, which is characterized by shared responsibility between several participants, as an inter-institutional coordination system organized by areas of competence and which is based on the request for bottom-up assistance.

In connection with the implementation of the project, in-depth research was conducted in the districts of Montana, Vidin and Dolj, related to the study and analysis of:

- Current state of risk management in case of natural disasters and accidents, in particular in case of floods and forest fires;
- Models of behaviour of students and teachers in crisis situations and their level of preparation for the reaction in such cases;
- Preparation of teachers and students for first aid;
- Principles of volunteering and the attitude among students and teachers for volunteering, sharing good practices in other European countries;
- Consideration and analysis of the level of relations between the main stakeholders: school institutions, civil protection services, fire safety, BRC and others relevant to the project.

The studies were performed using the following methods:

- Office study;
- • Quantitative research through self-completion surveys;
- • Qualitative research.
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In the study for Montana district are included 339 students and the gender distribution was approximately equal - 49.4% boys and 50.6% girls. 285 nos. students participated in the study for Vidin district, of which 52.6% were girls and 47.4% boys, and 55 teachers and 55 students participated in the study for Dolj district. For the purposes of the surveys, the subcontractors prepared and used self-completion questionnaires.



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Brief presentation of the main points of the studies:

The current state of risk management in disasters and accidents, in particular floods and forest fires in the districts of Montana and Vidin is related to the way in which the preparation and training of students and teachers is planned and implemented.

1. In one of the main places, the process of disaster and accident risk management is related to the planning of protection activities. Disaster and accident protection plans have been developed in all surveyed schools in the districts of Montana and Vidin.

The plans are updated at the beginning of each school year and contain information about the planned activities and those responsible for their implementation. In some of the schools in the district of Montana there are new signalling systems, and in others such an action is forthcoming, which depends on the planned repairs in some of the school buildings.

In the newly renovated schools Secondary school of Mathematics and Science "Exarch Antim I" and "Tsar Simeon Veliki" Secondary school in Vidin district there are new signalling systems, and in the other schools the school bells are relied on until the forthcoming repairs of the school buildings.

In the Dolj County of Romania, the typology of natural disasters is quite broad and the forms of manifestation, the dangers that accompany them and preventive actions cannot be ignored in the process of developing management tools to prevent risk at the organizational level. Every high school must design a set of tools for each type of disaster. Particular attention is paid to fires (92.7%), earthquakes (90.9%) and floods (10.9%), and forest fires and landslides remain less rare natural disasters in Dolj County.

2. On the next place is the implementation of training on the implementation of these measures.

According to the interviewed headmasters and students in the Montana district, the implementation of the measures in practice and the training for disaster and accident response is more important because it leads to the formation of skills of both students and teachers. In practice, such training is conducted in all surveyed schools and 9 out of 10 surveyed students declare that there is such training in their school. According to some of the interviewees, sometimes training takes place at the Centre for Civil Protection in Montana. The data show that these on-site trainings are more interesting for students.

In Vidin district, according to the already mentioned normative framework, basic knowledge about the risks of disasters and the ways of behavior and action are provided during the training for acquiring primary education. In practice, such training is conducted in all surveyed schools. Only seven percent of students surveyed report that there is no such education in their school. Usually, the trainings are carried out in class, in civic education classes, within



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specialized subjects in vocational high schools and as practical classes for playing the different parts of the school's disaster protection plan. According to some of the interviewees in Vidin district, sometimes training is carried out by employees of the Regional Services "Fire safety and protection of the population" at RDFSP - Vidin.

In general, classroom instruction on disaster, fire, and emergency protection in the Montana and Vidin districts is provided by class teachers. Teachers prepare themselves for teaching topics, use materials /teachers' manuals/, search for information on the Internet, prepare presentations. Headmasters say that teachers are not always aware of the topics and are therefore not sufficiently prepared. These topics require demonstration and practical activities rather than lectures and presentations. Some vocational schools provide studies on topics related to disaster and accident response and within vocational training programs.

In Dolj county, the relations of secondary schools with the main institutional partners involved in risk management can be considered as quite close in relation to the Main partner - Dolj Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, 67.3% of the respondents mention that there were 2 years meetings, 23.6% one annual meeting, and 9.1% even four such meetings. It should be noted that all respondents (100%) had meetings with this important institution. The situation is somewhat similar in the relations with the School Inspectorate of Dolj County (43.7% of the respondents attended only one annual meeting, 32.7% at two and 9.1% at four) and with the Mayor's office (41.8% one meeting, 29.1%, two and 12.7% three such meetings per year). It should be noted that in the Dolj county the meetings with the State Construction Inspectorate are also important, which emphasizes the fact that this institution conducts visits to assess the risk of older buildings or to check compliance with newer buildings and facilities. Regarding the identification of the institutions involved in the training of the person responsible for emergency situations, the majority of the surveyed students (66.1%) mention that the trainings are conducted monthly, in the Management classes - 66.1%, 24.2% - once per school term, and 10.7%, whenever needed. A relatively small percentage of students (1.8%) state that such training does not take place in school. Most of the trainings and debates in the schools are conducted by the person responsible for emergencies in the high school, the class teacher occupies the second position with 33.9%, and the headmaster is mentioned with 1.8% of the total number of respondents.

3. Implementation of practical forms of evacuation, through which both training and a kind of skill test are carried out.



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The results of the surveys in the districts of Montana and Vidin show that the majority of the surveyed students confirm that practical classes are held twice a year, once per school term and they are similar in all schools. According to the interviewees, the teachers are notified and have the attitude to carry out the evacuation exercise until the students are informed and are expected to act according to how prepared they are to leave the building calmly and follow the instructions. The instructions include „*how to get out of the building, how far (on what distance) they should be, where to be built, how long need these to stay, etc.*“

More interesting for the students are the exercises with the participation of Fire safety specialists, but they do not always happen, according to the interviewees and depend on the available opportunities. Regarding the available materials for teacher training, some schools said that they have them on paper and provide them to teachers on request. However, some of the headmasters made recommendations that the programs and classes should be focused more specifically on the school and the area where it is located, and not be the same for all.

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4. Level of preparation of students for reaction/response in crisis situations

The models of behaviour of students and teachers in crisis situations, as well as their level of preparation for the reaction/response in such cases are determined by the degree of awareness, preparedness and interest. Despite the declared high level of preparation of students /data from studies in the districts of Montana and Vidin/, some headmasters of the surveyed schools express doubts about the level of preparation, which according to them is mostly theoretical and does not guarantee safe behaviour in case of real risk of natural disasters, in particular forest fires and floods.

Data from studies in Montana and Vidin districts show that students generally feel well-prepared, know the “112” Emergency number best, and have an idea of how to respond to fires and industrial accidents. The surveyed students and school principals share that the diversification of the teaching material with more presentations and practical classes, the on-site visit of the authorized services (fire, civil protection) are steps towards achieving the general desire “To be more interesting”.



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The results of the Dolj county survey show that the majority of students (82.1%) remember the evacuation plan, followed by the identification of shelters (80.1%), the symbols used in the evacuation (69.6%) and event alert signals (62.5%). Disaster simulations are available in all secondary schools, but opinions differ on their frequency - half of respondents say they are held when needed for one year, and 45% mention twice a year. Attitudes towards volunteering

Analyzing the differentiating elements of volunteering in different countries of the European Union and around the world, the fan-based volunteering platform identifies several models united by the tradition and culture of the countries involved in the analysis.

- Anglo-Saxon model. Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States; Northern model. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden;
- Continental model. Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland.
- Eastern European countries. Volunteering is less developed in Eastern European countries, where associations have been repressed by the totalitarian regimes that existed until recently. From imposing participation in "patriotic work" to democratic actions and voluntary organizations, the way is quite long and cumbersome.

A review of the literature related to volunteering in Bulgaria shows that there is a lack of a coherent policy at the national level in relation to this topic. According to the above-mentioned draft Law on Volunteering, the principles of volunteering are the following: "legality; free choice; equality; personal responsibility; gratuitousness. The data of the volunteer are protected according to the conditions of the Personal Data Protection Act.

Data from studies Montana and Vidin districts show the presence of volunteer initiatives in schools, but their presence depends on a number of factors that are not related to the activities of schools. Rather, these initiatives are the result of initiatives of external organizations and personal activity of some children.

The relatively slow pace of development of volunteering in Romania is explained by the rather late legislative intervention of the Romanian state. The most important aspects of the Law №.78/2014 (supplemented by Law 175/2016) define the concept, scope, specific activities, contractual aspects and human resources and the typology of organizations that can carry out voluntary activities.

In the Dolj county of Romania, volunteering is supported by various NGOs, international and national companies. One of the main organizers of the volunteer activity is the County school inspectorate, which mobilizes many students from different schools.



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Summarized conclusions from the studies:

- The conducted studies for Montana and Vidin districts show that there is a clearly structured normative framework, which indicates how and in what forms, as minimum requirements, the training on protection in case of disasters and accidents should be carried out.
- The training exercises arouse interest only when representatives of institutions participate and have a demonstration character;
- The training on the proposed topics in the Class' hour, including topics in the field of actions for protection and reactions in case of disasters and accidents is carried out mainly by the class teachers, who prepare independently or with materials provided to the schools;
- Volunteer initiatives are not widely represented in schools and are rather the result of external initiatives of other organizations or of the students themselves. The data show a clear attitude towards participation in volunteer initiatives and a variety of topics that motivate students to get involved;
- The relations of schools and other external institutions on topics related to preparation for protection in case of disasters and accidents are not systematic and are often limited to the implementation of their control functions.
- With regard to curricula and materials, it is recommended to diversify programs and information and develop presentation formats and materials, along with developing opportunities to demonstrate topics.
- Regarding the method of teaching, it is recommended to diversify and use more individual forms of students' work on independent sub-topics, observations, site visits to various services, presentations, etc.;
- Regarding the interaction with other institutions, the recommendation is aimed at initiating joint meetings and talks for joint planning of prevention activities, distribution of responsibilities, joint activities, etc.
- The relations of the high schools in Dolj County with the main participants in case of disasters (Emergency Inspectorate, County School Inspectorate, town halls, Red Cross Society, State Construction Inspectorate, etc.) are formalized through partnerships or other documents establishing the responsibilities, conditions of action and control for everyone. As a key partner in disaster management (a role provided for in current



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legislation), the Emergency Situations Inspectorate offers information, documents, advice and participates in various inspections in secondary schools.

- The theoretical training of human resources in high schools is conducted at three levels. The school headmaster and emergency responders are trained directly by the Dolj Inspectorate, usually only once a year, at the beginning of the school year. Teaching and non-teaching staff are trained by the principal or the person responsible for emergencies in the high school, once or twice a year. The students, third level, are trained by the teachers, in the classes, once a month, in accordance with a topic, which is included in the curriculum and which is approved annually by the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations;
- The training of teachers, non-teaching staff and students ends with a practical part, realized in the form of simulating real situations. These simulations are conducted once or twice a year and are testing the way in which high school students and staff apply the knowledge gained in theoretical training.
- An important point that should be noted in the process of disaster risk management for the Dolj County is the typology of disasters depending on the content of the concept implemented by each organization. There is separate documentation for earthquakes and fires in the secondary schools of Dolj County, and for the schools near the Danube River and for floods.

Opinions and proposals of the experts participating in the International Meeting:

- Volunteering is always aimed at the same part of the population, so experts from Romania suggest using an individual approach - to find, motivate and train students with an attitude, desire and positive regard towards volunteering. In many cases, especially in more remote settlements, volunteer activities in schools are initiated by teachers. In order to attract young people, it is necessary to develop attractive and practically oriented learning materials. It would be useful for the students to conduct the trainings by the specialized institutions;
- There is no Law on Volunteering in Bulgaria, but in each town there are voluntary formations established under the Disaster and Accident Protection Act. The participants in these formations are usually middle-aged. Bulgarian experts expressed the opinion that with the help of the curricula and materials that will be developed under the project, students between 16 and 18 years of age will be attracted. In addition, the experts hope that after their implementation in the project activities, more schools will show interest and benefit from them;



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- Experts from both sides expressed the opinion that the emphasis should be on the bilateral process of building and creating sustainable and beneficial partnerships between schools in the region and the responsible institutions.



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