

# Internationalism in disaster management and its foreign language requirements

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**Abstract.** Disaster management is a rather complex and integrated activity, in which multiple international dimensions can be observed. At each stage of the activities, namely during prevention, response and recovery, cooperation with other states or international organisations is justified. Recognising its importance, organisations for disaster management both in Hungary and Romania have built up an extensive system of international professional relations and actively participate on the international stage. One of its practical conditions is the knowledge of a common language, most typically English, including general as well as specialised language. This article reviews the activities of disaster management reaching across the border and the major international platforms of cooperation with special emphasis on the professional relations between Hungary and Romania. Furthermore, the authors elaborate on the conditions of successful cooperation, focusing on the foreign language requirements on the personnel of the professional disaster management organisation and makes recommendations on its improvement. The majority of countries strive to form and maintain professional relations with other countries and international organisations to join their efforts and increase effectiveness. The knowledge of specialised English for disaster management is a means to facilitate sharing best practices, experience and information that can contribute to this purpose.

**Key Words:** disaster management, internationalism, language teaching.

**Introduction.** The right to personal safety is among the rights each and every citizen is entitled to, as prescribed both in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Basic Law of Hungary. Thus, the question arises what we mean by safety and how it can be guaranteed to the citizens.

While the concept of security used to be primarily a military issue, today it has taken on a much broader sense, including economic, societal, political and environmental security. The potential threats are not only armed conflicts or terrorist attacks – in fact, they are less likely in Hungary – but we also have to face other types of challenges. What threats are present in our everyday lives? Disasters, whether they are natural or man-made disasters, unfortunately pose a real threat. Some of them can be forecasted, thus their damaging consequences can be mitigated or prevented with due preparedness, while others strike unexpectedly. However, they can be tackled with the help of previous experiences, due preparedness and information. Fortunately, in the world of globalisation, countries are not left alone in this fight, as coordination agreements are concluded between countries, organisations.

This paper explores international dimensions of disaster management and reviews the main platforms of cooperation, with special emphasis on Hungary's international relations. Then, the authors assess the importance of foreign language knowledge, which is a means of professional networking.

**International dimensions of disaster management.** The establishment of disaster management in Hungary on 1 January 2000 is set out by the Act LXXIV of 1999 on the management and organization for the prevention of disasters and the prevention of major accidents involving dangerous substances (Legislation 1). However, the establishment of the disaster management that is unified at all levels did not happen until more than a decade later, on 1 January 2012, based on the Act CXXVIII of 2011 concerning disaster management and amending certain related acts (Legislation 2).

Despite the above, we should not come to the false conclusion that the history of disaster management goes back to only about 15 years. As disaster management in Hungary can be seen as an umbrella term comprising fire protection, civil protection and industrial safety, the background of these pillars are worth exploring. It immediately becomes clear that activities now under the scope of disaster management have surrounded us for a long time, and many of them require international cooperation.

The ability to control fire brought fundamental changes to our ancestors' lives, but it still continues to pose a great threat to our lives, possessions as well as the environment. Not only the fire incidents themselves are addressed, but preventive steps are also taken, as every building and facility has to comply with strict fire safety requirements in order to reduce risks. These requirements are set in national legislation or in harmonised European standards, most of which are only available in English before they are translated by certified translation agencies. In terms of international operations, cross-boundary fires, for example vegetation fires are also worth mentioning, which local or regional units of both countries cooperate to tackle with.

Civil protection of Hungary, the second pillar, came into being about 80 years ago in response to the aerial threats in World War II, originally known as Air Defence. The change of name in 1964 implies changes in the sources of danger, since armed conflicts have become less frequent whereas new threats appeared, for example nuclear threats (Kozák & Hornyacsek 2012). Emphasis shifted to protection against natural and man-made risks, which can gain substantial support from information sharing between nations, for instance prior to a flood wave. Besides information, providing assistance is another benefit of international cooperation. The national HUNOR, the heavy urban search and rescue team of Hungary and also the volunteer HUSZÁR, a medium urban search and rescue team can be deployed in the case of disasters abroad. Both rescue teams comply with the UN International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) guidelines; the former team took part in its first real-life mission in the 2014 floods in Serbia.

The third and last pillar, industrial safety, could not have emerged until the industrial revolutions. Its regulation in an organised form stretches back to almost two decades in Hungary, hence it is quite a novel field, compared to the other two. Its national system of legislation and institutions has strong links with international and European Union legislation, regardless which of its activities is considered (dangerous establishments, transport of dangerous goods, critical infrastructure and nuclear accident prevention) (Kátai-Urbán 2014).

The national legislation on dangerous establishments in Hungary is the adaptation of the relevant European Union directive (Directive 2012/18/EU), commonly known as SEVESO III (Vass 2014). It is not only the authorities that benefit from the harmonisation efforts but also the operators, which may be multinational companies dealing with dangerous materials. They have to meet clear and transparent requirements regardless in which country the given branch or plant is. Another main activity of industrial safety, the transport of dangerous goods is also governed by international agreements, since in most cases transport routes run through many countries. Depending on the means of transport, we can distinguish the following regulations: ADR (road), RID (rail), ADN (inner waterway), IMDG (maritime) and ICAO TI/IATA DGR (air).

Regardless which pillar we consider, we have to note that in addition to providing/receiving international assistance, exchanging experience or research findings on an international platform is a further advantage of cooperation. It can be regarded as a mutual teaching process, where all players add something valuable to the common stock.

**International relations.** Definitions of disaster tend to include the fact that the given country's resources are not enough to cope with the disaster and its consequences, so international assistance may be needed.

Therefore, states can greatly benefit from an extensive international network. In the event of a disaster, they do not have to rely solely on their own resources and conversely, they can support other states. To increase the effectiveness of interventions, joint international exercises can be organised. Furthermore, international professional conferences can provide a platform for the exchange of best practices and for displaying new achievements. On the other hand, one has to keep in mind that membership comes with responsibilities as well. To achieve more successful cooperation in the field of disaster management, a common ground has to be found. Obviously, it does not entail that disaster management organisations in different countries have to have an identical

structure and functioning, but it means that for the common goal, we have to follow common guidelines, harmonise our activities and standardise our methods.

Accordingly, in Hungary the National Directorate for Disaster Management, Ministry of the Interior (NDGDM MoI) has established a widespread network of international relations, whose main ties are partly due to our membership in the European Union, United Nations and North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation and partly to our geographical location as regards the agreements with our seven neighbouring countries, including Romania (Website of NDGDM, MoI).

In order to get a comprehensive overview, it is worth examining the international stage of disaster management, which can be regarded as the fourth level above the local, regional and national ones. The next part of the paper describes the main actors of this upper level, their main organisations, strategies and objectives.

**United Nations (UN).** The United Nations, which was founded in the last weeks of World War II, promotes international peace and security. Since then the concept of security has taken on a broader meaning and potential threats have come to include more than just armed conflicts. The UN manages its activities accordingly, and due attention is paid to protection against disasters. Its Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), established in 1998, is responsible for this field at an international level. In fact, OCHA does not possess its own resources but coordinates the teams and equipment of the member states, as its name suggests. As regards its structure, in addition to its two headquarters in New York and Geneva, there are regional offices outside of Europe (Website of UN OCHA).

The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), operating within OCHA, deals with a special field of responses, urban search and rescue. The member states can form search and rescue teams, which can be deployed after a certification exam if passed (Website of INSARAG).

International assistance, however valuable and useful it is, places further tasks on the recipient country, because the additional personnel and equipment needs coordinating and synchronising with the already existing ones. The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC) takes part in this process (Website of UN OCHA).

The UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) was approved in December 1999 and the Office for Disaster Risk Reduction is in charge of overseeing its implementation together with the regional offices (Website of UNISDR). The activities of the UNISDR office were guided by the Hyogo Framework for Action from 2005 to 2015, which was recently replaced by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

The difference between the two main disaster management organisations of the UN, the OCHA and the UNISDR, is that the former focuses on responses and their effectiveness, whereas the latter promotes prevention of disasters (Muhoray 2002).

**North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).** At the time of NATO's establishment, in 1949, the horrors of World War II were still vivid in many people's memories, so its primary purpose became to achieve peace. Unlike the UN, which had a similar target, its nature was rather military. Civil Emergency Planning (CEP) has been a part of NATO's agenda since 1995. Similarly to UN OCHA, it is in charge of coordination, the facilitation of information exchange and the organisation of humanitarian aid. Hence the question: why are there two organisations with the same functions? CEP clarifies the roles, stating that OCHA is the primary actor in this field (Muhoray 2002). However, it does not take over responsibilities and obligations of the states, since civil emergency planning is still a national task. At the international level, only harmonisation and coordination takes place.

If we take a look outside NATO borders, its partnership programs, especially the Partnership for Peace (PfP) give opportunity for non-member states to form various forms of bonds with NATO, which also deal with disaster management.

Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) is related to NATO but it operates on a geographically more extended area. In addition to the coordination

of the operations, it also places great emphasis on preparedness and several countries have hosted drills and exercises. The closely linked, multinational Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Unit (EADRU) is set up when needed and sends professionals, equipment and other essentials to the site of the disaster (Website of NATO).

**European Union (EU).** Despite its economic and political nature, the European Union (EU) does not ignore disaster management either. A glimpse in the past reveals that even the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community in 1957, one of the predecessors of the EU, mentions the possibility of providing “aid to make good the damage caused by natural disasters or exceptional occurrences” (Legislation 3). It should be noted that it was not an obligation just a possibility which is allowed and does not violate free competition.

Since then, disaster management has gained a more pronounced position and since 2010 a separate department, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO) has been focusing on disaster management.

One means of prevention and risk reduction is to prevent incidents involving dangerous materials. To this purpose, the EU has devised common guidelines, called the Seveso Directive, which deals with the classification of dangerous substances, the requirements for dangerous establishments, the necessary reports and the authority tasks related to their inspections. On 1 June 2015, an updated version, Seveso III Directive came into force, which did not bring about radical changes compared to the previous version. Seveso Directives can be regarded as successful, as the number of incidents has decreased (Vass 2014).

**Cooperation between Hungary and Romania.** The organisations above include a great number of members often with different backgrounds. Depending on the situation, there are cases which do not demand so many players. Although more countries are or can be affected, they can handle the situation themselves effectively with joint efforts.

Hungary and Romania, as neighbouring countries with similar climate, have to tackle with similar types of disasters, such as extreme weather and floods.

The Agreement between the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Romania on mutual assistance in case of disasters and major accidents provides a framework for the bilateral cooperation, which is ratified by Act LXXXI of 2004 in Hungary (Legislation 4). On the whole, it aims for assistance during prevention, response and consequence mitigation when the countries' own resources are not sufficient. More specifically, the Agreement defines the following forms of cooperation: annual meetings of the Joint Committee; providing aid if requested in case of disasters which may take the forms of rescue teams, equipment and relief supplies; information and experience sharing on forecasting, preventing and assessing disasters, their causes and consequences; conferences, study trips, professional courses and joint exercises; cooperation of educational institutions; establishment and operation of harmonized monitoring and warning systems.

To demonstrate the many-foldedness of the relationship between Hungary and Romania, “Tisza” Multinational Engineer Battalion is a good example, although strictly speaking, it is not a disaster management organisation. Armed forces also participate in disaster management, which in Hungary is regulated by Act CXIII of 2011 on national defence and the Hungarian Defence Forces and on measures that may be introduced in case of a special legal order (Legislation 5). “Tisza” consists of Ukrainian, Slovakian, Romanian and Hungarian units and specialises in flood control (Somlai-Kiss 2011).

It is important to note that the organisations listed above do not act on their own initiative and rush to the disaster-struck area but they follow a pre-established protocol. In most cases, the affected state has to make a formal application for help. A guiding principle of the EU, the principle of subsidiarity is applied even in the area of disaster management, meaning that an issue is only taken to international level if it can be managed more successfully this way. A further feature these organisations have in common is that support is not limited to member states but they can also act outside their boundaries (Figure 1).

United Nations	North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation	European Union	Multilateral and bilateral agreements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC)</li> <li>• International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil Emergency Planning (CEP)</li> <li>• Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC)</li> <li>• Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Unit (EADRU)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO)</li> <li>• Seveso Directives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e.g. TISZA Multinational Engineer Battalion (Ukraine, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia)</li> </ul>

Figure 1. International relations and guidelines in disaster management (Source: compiled by the authors).

**Foreign language requirements.** All the above prove that tasks related to disasters cannot be confined by borders and might require cooperation between nations. Internationalism, maintaining international relations as well as international assistance demand that in addition to their professional knowledge, professionals are also equipped with foreign language skills. In many cases, up-to-date information can only be accessed from foreign sources, most commonly in English. These pieces of information contribute to the professional development of the staff and allow more effective interventions and responses.

In Hungary, Act XLII of 2015 on the Service Status of Professional Members of Law Enforcement (Legislation 6) – similarly to the previous act – sets out that a degree is required to advance to an officer rank (from second lieutenant), whose prerequisite is, in turn, a language exam certificate (Legislation 7). Therefore, in the future the number of disaster managers who can speak foreign languages is expected to grow.

Future supply of officers is mainly provided by Institute of Disaster Management, National University of Public Service. In addition to the specialist knowledge they acquire, due emphasis is placed on foreign languages as well (Bleszity & Grósz 2013). During the three-year bachelor programme, the foreign language course lasts for five terms with 300 lessons. The course aims to prepare students for the language exam, which is among the degree requirements. An additional aim is to familiarise them with the terminology of disaster management. Their professional knowledge equipped with foreign experiences allows them to have a broader perspective and work in more complex situations (Restás 2013; Kóródi 2014).

Hopefully, in the future the emphasis will shift from general English towards the professional one as more and more students pass a language exam even before they enter higher education. As education has to adapt to these changing needs, the system of teaching foreign languages for military purposes is an example worth following. Since human interoperability is at the core of NATO needs, the common training systems are preceded by the national military education and training as well as the language training, which may be later supplemented by the NATO Staff Officers' Military Terminology Course (Ujházy 2008).

**Conclusions.** In order to increase security in its broader sense, disaster management seeks to create and maintain a complex and extended system of international relations, which is justified by the international dimensions of its activities. The authors outlined the key players of the international stage of disaster management as well as the cooperation between Hungary and Romania as an example of bilateral and multilateral agreements.

This high extent of international openness reasonably expects foreign language knowledge, including the professional terminology as a facilitator of professional development. In the future, it represents an additional requirement as well as an

opportunity for professionals of disaster management. To answer the new challenges, higher education institutions offering disaster management courses ought to be the pioneers and incorporate foreign language courses, including the special terminology, into their curriculum to ensure that future supply of officers are able to work in the international environment.

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