

Voluntary disaster management organizations in higher education

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Abstract. In addition to the relevant organisations, the involvement of the civilian population is also necessary in the protection against natural and man-made disasters. Socialisation of the protection against disasters requires not only the population but also other groups such as higher education students. Higher education students attend BA or MA courses related to the given profession. These courses lay down the basics of the students' professional knowledge, which may be supplemented with special knowledge specific to a certain field when students join volunteer disaster management organisations. Volunteer activities that students take on during their higher education studies provide a good basis for subsequent involvement in residential and workplace organisations for civil protection. This paper elaborates on this topic, taking into account the UN INSARAG guidelines as well as the relevant regulations on the European Union's civil protection mechanism.

Key Words: disaster management, volunteering, higher education.

Voluntarism in the protection against disasters. The protection against natural and man-made disasters (hereinafter referred to as disasters) requires the cooperation of the State and the broad sectors of society. The right to human life and property are fundamental rights that need to be protected in general. This protection includes prevention, the effective protection and rehabilitation tasks necessary for protection. Social solidarity is appearing and asking for more and more space in the implementation of tasks. A given State, depending on its type, ensures the scope of protection of these two rights. Bodies designed for defense and/or protection have never been lacking the support of society. In addition to the legions in the Roman Empire, also established for firefighting tasks, the emergence of firefighting organizations based on social voluntarism in the major settlements of the Empire are good examples thereof. The demand for the increased protection of human life, health and the right to property and its fundamental protection evolved in the 19th century, in relation to the establishment and development of modern manufacturing industry. The demand of society for the prevention of the occurrence of natural disasters (floods, etc.) appeared more and more, and also to make industrial activities safer. In these activities, the State, business owners and the larger and larger voluntary rescue organizations being established to protect against fires and disasters participated (Endródi 2012). The members of the voluntary rescue organizations came from different professions. The specific rules of protection efforts differed much by country and region just as the professional skills of the participants. In the prevention of disasters, the State primarily participated and is participating with legal measures, in which, amongst others, defines the general safety and security conditions, the scope of persons and organizations that may be involved in protection, the minimum technical requirements for protection and the support of voluntary organizations that may be involved in protection. The protection against disasters is requiring more and more the increased existence of specialized and ever widening knowledge necessary for the protection against a given type of disaster (Kátai-Urbán 2015). The increased requirements not only demand continuous learning from the professional organs but also from the members of the voluntary organizations emerging for the protection against disasters. In the protection against disasters, mainly the Red Cross, the charitable organizations and voluntary rescue organizations – firefighting associations, etc. primarily participate. Pupils and students, due to their age, are inclined to participate in such efforts. In Hungary, in the middle ages, students and pupils studying in the different towns primarily formed the voluntary force organized for the protection against fires. The “modern heritage” of this movement are the primarily firefighting youth teams of voluntary rescue organizations. The participation of pupils and students of primary,

secondary and tertiary education in voluntary rescue organizations contributes to the social expansion of protection against disasters.

Volunteering in education. One part of the resupply of those involved in disaster management are students participating in higher education. Students in higher education institutions are in a stage of mental development when they can decide independently and recognize the importance of the activities necessary for the security of society. Using this, voluntary disaster management organizations may be established amongst students in higher education. The involvement of students can be based on two main factors. Students of higher education institutions, established in certain regions, come from, on the one hand, from those living in the region, also meaning that the tasks of prevention, response to and the rehabilitation of disasters occurring in the region equally affect the majority of students.

The students during their voluntary activities get to know the main elements of protection against disasters, and take into account such knowledge in their jobs after obtaining their qualifications. Following their qualification, students participating in such activities can actively get involved in the work voluntary rescue organizations established in their communities, and so, the continuous resupply of these organizations is ensured. Last but not least, former students may also mean the resupply for different organizations designed for the protection against disasters. Students finishing their higher education have the latest theoretical knowledge in their specialized fields, which can be well utilized in some areas of protection against disasters. The organizational frameworks involving students are outlined by the INSARAG Guidelines issued in 2015, the "DECISION No. 1313/2013/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism" and "COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION of 16 October 2014 laying down the rules for the implementation of Decision No. 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism and repealing Commission Decisions 2004/277/EC, Euratom and 2007/606/EC, (2014/762/EU)".

The aforementioned regulations provide an opportunity for voluntary students not to prepare themselves for the full spectrum of protection. In addition, by establishing voluntary organizations - modules - the type of the higher education institution has to be taken into account. For example, students pursuing engineering studies can be trained to operate technical equipment, while in the case of the students studying communication, their training and their future use can be arranged to participate in crisis communication. On this basis, it is not necessary that the entire team of volunteers participate in the protection actions against a disaster. It is possible that small groups are involved in the execution of tasks in turns in the entire duration of protection against a disaster. Of course, it is necessary to acquire basic knowledge to be learnt by any entity, to which different specific knowledge can be added. In the European Union, faculty and student exchange programs (Erasmus, etc.) existing in the field of higher education are also very suitable to increase the efficiency of protection against disasters. The regulation of voluntarism, solidarity in the European Union support the participation of young people in voluntary activities. Students participating in an exchange program are also eligible to participate in the work of a voluntary organization of a particular higher education institution. Experience gained and learnt there may be passed on after return, thereby helping to increase the safety and security of the sending country. Disaster management BSc and MSc students of the National University of Public Service are trained for protection against disasters. The BSc students of disaster management have established their voluntary disaster management organization (Schweickhardt & Teknós 2015). During their training, the all-round system of protection has been defined in the field of both natural and industrial disasters. A highlighted area of their studies is to learn about the scope of rules in connection with accidents involving hazardous materials. The students acquire special natural science knowledge (Dobor 2014). If, in the framework of the ERASMUS program, members of voluntary rescue organizations also apply for such specialization in disaster management in Hungary, they can participate with great safety

and self-assurance in the response to disasters caused by industrial accidents in their countries.

Summary, assumptions. In Hungary, there are two higher education institutions that have voluntary disaster management rescue teams. The first one was the National University of Public Service where a voluntary rescue organization was formed (Schweickhardt 2015). The members of the rescue team, in addition to their theoretic studies, take part in disaster management efforts as well. They had one real-life intervention in 2013, during the Danube flood response operations. The rescue organization has participated in qualification exercises, thus has acquired eligibility to participate in real-life interventions. The Act on Higher Education in Hungary provides for the opportunity to take into consideration the achievements gained in voluntary activities. "It must be ensured for a student that during their studies, in order to acquire their diploma, up to the maximum of 5 per cent of the total credits prescribed, based on the Regulations of Organization and Operation of the institution, they may take up selectable subjects – or instead of these subjects – participate in executable voluntary activities, furthermore, choose from subjects with credit values exceeding all credits by a minimum of 20 per cent." (CCIV 2011). Besides the law on higher education, the Act on Disaster Management also regulates voluntary activities (Endrődi 2015). Voluntary activities in a higher education establishment are also supported by the European Union (CEC 2009).

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