

# An overview of disaster preparedness training in Hungary, with special regard to public administration leaders

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**Abstract.** Security policy environment has changed in Hungary, together with security threats and challenges affecting our country. The involvement of the civilians in addition to the relevant organisations and authorities in the response to emergency situations and the following reconstruction is vital. Recent disasters and emergencies have shed light on the significance of preparedness and preventive measures in managing situations and minimising losses. Prevention is a priority area within disaster management, with special focus on one of its component, citizen preparedness. Mayors are in charge of complex, disaster management tasks, therefore their preparation requires increased responsibility and an interdisciplinary approach from the disaster management organisation.

**Key Words:** preparedness, information, warning, prevention, emergency code of conduct.

**Introduction.** Europe's efforts to promote safety, the national security policy and defence administration all essentially include disaster preparedness of the citizens, government office heads, local government leaders and all those involved in public education (Ambrusz 2014).

Security policy environment has changed in Hungary, together with security threats and challenges affecting our country. The involvement of the civilians in addition to the relevant organisations and authorities in the response to emergency situations and the following reconstruction is vital.

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development continues to give priority to the prevention of natural disasters, the mitigation of consequences and the preparedness for the harmful consequences of climate change. Systematic actions are needed to confront the main challenges and threats of upcoming years, in line with sustainable development and increasing resilience through advanced national and local abilities. From the viewpoint of risk reduction and prevention, public information and self-reliance are essential issues.

Complex projects were launched to facilitate preparedness, whose common features are related to actual tasks of prevention, response and recovery, all being parts of the disaster management cycle.

Recent years' natural disasters and emergencies have proved the need for citizens' awareness of potential risks, codes of conduct in emergency situations and the circumstances of recovery. Based on previous experience, mayors, protection committee heads, public administration leaders, notaries and those involved in disaster management and defence administration play an important role in the protection of life, physical integrity and possessions of the population. Accordingly, they are responsible for major tasks and corresponding jurisdictions.

**Material and Method.** To research my topic, I collected and systematized primary and secondary data. The latter come from related legislation and relevant publications on disaster management preparedness. The primary database includes the analysis and assessment of the results of actual preparations, the conclusions related to methodology as well as my own several years' managerial experience. With the help of the primary and secondary databases, procedures and tasks related to preparations were explored and described.

## Results

**Legislative framework.** The highest level of legislation in Hungary emphasizing the importance of citizen preparedness is Act CXXVIII of 2011 on disaster management and the amendment of related acts. Paragraph 2 of Article 1 prescribes that every citizen and person has the right to get acquainted with the risks present in their neighbourhood and the rules of conduct related to protection. Moreover, it is their right as well as their obligation to participate in disaster management.

The professional organization for disaster management has revised and transformed citizen preparation at a varying yet steady pace (Hoffmann 2009). In Decree No. 234/2011 (X.10) on the execution of Act CXXVIII of 2011 on disaster management and the amendment of related acts, certain elements of preparation and potential tasks are markedly present. However, the framework of preparation can be specified on the basis of the Decree of the Minister of the Interior No. 62/2011 (XII.29), as it is shown in Figure 1. I consider it important to note that previous legislation also contained the target groups and instruments of preparation, but did not differentiate between the various methods of information.



Figure 1. Target groups of disaster preparedness. Source: author's own work (2016) based on the Decree of the Minister of the Interior No. 62/2011 (XII.29).

**Tasks related to preparedness.** The purpose of disaster management preparedness is to prepare for the tasks emerging during the prevention of, response to and recovery after natural, man-made or other types of disasters and emergencies, including the mitigation of consequences. These tasks primarily fall into civil protection functions (Mógor 2009)

Civil protection is in charge of getting the citizens acquainted with the standard codes of practice; organising and preparing civil protection organisations and ensuring the provision of necessary financial resources. Civil protection is also responsible for public information, notification and alert; providing personal protective equipment; maintaining defence facilities and evacuating, evicting and sheltering the population. Moreover, protecting means of subsistence and critical infrastructure; reconnaissance of disaster area; performing rescue, first-aid, decontamination, disinfection and related temporary recovery operations (Hornyacsek 2005).

In addition, the following tasks are also civil protection functions: vulnerability assessment of settlements based on risk assessments; emergency management planning; participation in the protection of cultural heritages; protection against floods as described in the legislation; sheltering of persons falling under the provisions of refugee

law; fire fighting; mutual information and assistance deriving from international agreements and ensuring temporary service of public utilities to avoid any damages to human life, health or possessions (Endrődi 2013).

It has to be noted that fire prevention tasks within citizen preparation are integrated into the functions of the professional organisation for disaster management. The training materials are gradually expanding in line with the appearance of new tasks of the organisation.

**Preparedness of civil protection organisations.** Preparing civil protection organisations and their members take place in theoretical and practical situations. As regards the theoretical training, it can be divided into basic training, vocational training, further training as well as managerial training (Endrődi 2013, 2014).

The National Directorate for Disaster Management, Ministry of the Interior (NDGDM, MoI) draws up an annual training schedule for theoretical courses, taking into account the risk assessments and emergence management plans. The basic training include the basic elements of the system of disaster management and civil protection; the organisation for civil protection; civil protection duties and the related rights and responsibilities; hazards; risk assessment and emergency management plans; population protection tasks; bodies and organisations involved in the response; information and alert; lines of command; equipment used in response, personal protective equipment and workplace health and safety.

Staff working for civil protection organisations attends vocational trainings in accordance with their positions and responsibilities within the organisation. The content of the training include responsibilities of the given position, their execution and procedures; relationship between the unit and the organisation; lines of command and reporting in the unit and in the organisation; tools and personal protective equipment used; bodies and organisations involved and workplace health and safety.

The assigned managerial staff attends managerial trainings, which comprise the material of the basic training; additional knowledge needed to fulfil their position; leadership studies; rules on the deployment of civil protection organisations and the cooperation of other organisations involved.

The practical training of civil protection organisations aims to deepen the knowledge acquired during theoretical trainings, to drill its practical application, to practice cooperation between them and other organisations involved in rescue and to achieve timely mobilisation of units.

**Disaster preparedness of public administration leaders.** The training of public administration leaders involves the training of those appointed by the head of the central organisation, the head and members of county protection committees, the head of the local protection committees, the lord mayor, the mayors, the notaries and all those involved in disaster management and defence administration (Ambrusz 2006).

Those appointed by the head of the central organisation attend trainings at least once a year. The content of the training focuses on the sectoral disaster management tasks of the central organisation as well as the tasks related to planning, organising and management in the course of prevention, response and recovery.

The county directorate for disaster management (directorate) provides trainings to the head and members of county protection committees at least annually. The content of the preparation comprises especially of joint regional activities of public administration, law enforcement and non-governmental organisations; alerting the population and those involved in response; forming regional organisations for civil protection; tasks in the course of prevention, response and recovery; providing basic necessities to the population as well as information on remote protection.

The directorate also organises trainings for the head of the local protection committee at least once each municipal electoral term. The content of the preparation includes especially the management of those involved in the response, the rules on the deployment of local civil protection organisations, providing basic necessities to the population, public information and alert as well as knowledge on remote protection.

Disaster preparedness of the lord mayor, mayors and notaries in the capital city covers risks Budapest is prone to; emergency planning; preparedness and prevention as well as the system of organisations involved in the protection against disasters.

At least once a year the directorate arranges trainings to the mayors and notaries of settlements that are classified into disaster management class I, while at least every second year to the mayors and notaries of settlements that belong to disaster management class II. The mayors and notaries of settlements that are classified into disaster management class III attend trainings at least once every municipal electoral term. Their preparation focuses on local risks, the classification of settlements, emergency planning, the system of disaster management, the rules on the deployment of local civil protection organisations, civil protection's authority of first instance, public information and alert as well as knowledge on remote protection depending on the risks identified (Table 1).

Table 1

Specifying disaster management classes with a risk matrix  
Source: Author's own work (2016) based on data from NDGDM, MoI (2011)

<i>Impact</i>	<i>Frequency of occurrence</i>			
	<i>Rare</i>	<i>Not common</i>	<i>Common</i>	<i>Very common</i>
Very serious	Class II	Class II	Class I	Class I
Serious	Class III	Class II	Class II	Class I
Not serious	Class III	Class III	Class II	Class II
Low-level	Class III	Class III	Class III	Class III

Those involved in disaster management and defence administration participate in theoretical and practical trainings at least once a year. They are organised by NDGDM, MoI at the national level, by the directorate at the regional level and by the branch office at the local level. Trainings cover the structure and tasks of disaster management; the system of defence administration and special legal order; special measures during special legal order; the system of disaster management; people and organisations involved; special tasks of different sectors; alert, information, communications and reporting systems as well as decision making procedures (Bolgár & Ambrusz 2012).

**Citizen preparedness.** The main purpose of citizen preparedness is getting them acquainted with risks typical to their area and with codes of conduct in the case of danger or alert.

Active public information specifically includes the different types of alert and signals, codes of conduct, natural and man-made sources of danger typical to that area and possible ways of averting danger.

Passive public information can be carried out with information booklets available for those interested both in printed and electronic formats or also with open days. Information booklets focus on the different types of alert and signals, codes of conduct, first aid, natural and man-made sources of danger typical to that area and possible ways of averting danger. Passive information does not ignore national and ethnic minorities either. Moreover, people with disadvantages and disabilities are informed through booklets that are suitable for them (Hornyacsek 2005; Mógor 2009).

**Disaster preparedness of those involved in public education.** The trainings are basically aimed at teachers and students, including those in kindergartens, primary and secondary education as well as higher education. The training material is differentiated based on their age characteristics (Nováky 2015).

Teachers appointed by the headmaster attend theoretical trainings at least once a year at the disaster management branch offices. The professional disaster management organs organise separate trainings for teachers at different levels of the education. When designing the education material, the age characteristics specific to students in kindergartens, primary and secondary education have to be considered.

Age differences between students in kindergartens, primary and secondary education determine the methods to be applied during their preparation. The central training material is defined by NDGDM, MoI – taking into account the national core program for kindergarten education – and the content of the training is compiled by the head of the disaster management branch office after having consulted with the teacher. Based on the central training material, the directorates develop regional and local teaching manuals and methodological guides and make them available to the teaching institutions. The central training material is developed by NDGDM, MoI in line with the requirements of the National Core Curriculum.

Professional bodies for disaster management assist and take part in planning and performing trainings in teaching institutions – both in in-school and out-of-school contexts –, in organising and holding disaster management youth contests regionally and locally. The finals of disaster management youth contests are organised and held by the non-profit Hungarian Civil Protection Association.

After having consulted with the leader of the given institution, the heads of the directorates and the branch offices design specific programmes for students of special education and conductive education institutions, considering their special educational needs. Students of adult education also form a separate group.

Trainings for the disaster preparedness of higher education students is initiated by the professional body for disaster management by contacting the head of the higher education institution. Recently civilian volunteer rescue teams have gained more importance in Hungary, which is also reflected in higher education institutions. Students of the Institute of Disaster Management, National University of Public Service and the Institute of Fire Protection and Disaster Management, Faculty of Architecture, Szent István University are also participants of these courses (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Voluntary Disaster Management Unit of National University of Public Service (NUPS-NKE) Source: Author's own photograph (2012).

**Conclusions.** Due to the increasing number of natural and man-made disasters and dangers in the past decades, the citizens have become more sensitive to personal and social safety. National Directorate General for Disaster Management, Ministry of Interior has developed the main directions and principles of citizen preparedness and information and made recommendations on their possible ways and methods.

By outlining the complexity of preparedness, this paper demonstrated the high importance of preparing public administration leaders for disaster management, since

they bear great responsibility and tasks in the protection against disasters as well as in the preceding preparation phase. These tasks have to be implemented at high standards. Their preparation can be assisted with an information-based application developed by NDGDM, MoI. The application called VÉSZ was designed for emergency public information on smart phones and tablets, so anyone holding such devices can have access to information and a repository of knowledge free of charge. This emergency public information system was developed with the help of Hungarian National Association of Radio Distress-Signalling and Infocommunications and Microsoft Hungary Kft. and it is available on Android, iOS and Windows phones.

In this paper I analysed that preparedness has a key role not only in prevention but also in response and in the mitigation of consequences with regards to crisis communication.

Disaster preparedness is a complex system in Hungary, in which preparation for national tasks is carried out within the system of public administration. Disaster preparedness is a bipolar process, which integrates activities and knowledge related to education, public information and alert that requires interactive involvement of the citizens as well as the interdependent information provided by various monitoring systems.

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