



Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for
South Eastern Europe – DPPI SEE

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OSCE area”

FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING

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**The Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Initiative
for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE)**

➤ **Introduction**

Human and economic losses due to natural disasters continue to increase and remain an obstacle to sustainable development in the South Eastern Europe (SEE). Disaster reduction policies must be implemented to build disaster-resilient societies and communities. This is necessary to reduce the level of risk in everyday life and to ensure that development efforts do not increase the population’s vulnerability to hazards. While governments have the principal responsibility for their citizens’ right to safety and security, they cannot - and should not - shoulder these tasks alone.

A number of shared risks clearly recognised by nations in SEE provided the impetus for mutual co-operation in disaster prevention and preparedness. In a number of cases the vulnerabilities as well as the risks are shared by neighbouring nations.

Upon the initiative of countries from SEE, in March 2000 the Office of the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact called a meeting to discuss disaster preparedness and prevention issues in the region. Participants included Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), and the Gorizia Research Area. The meeting led to the creation of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI) for SEE. Subsequently, the DPPI was placed under Working Table III “Security” of the Stability Pact.

➤ **Context and aims**

The overall goal of the DPPI SEE is to *foster regional co-operation across the region in disaster preparedness and prevention*. It addresses both natural and man-made disasters and seeks to operate without creating new structures or layers of bureaucracy.

The principle objectives of the Initiative are to *contribute to the institutional capacity building of disaster management organisations to enhance disaster prevention and preparedness in the countries of the SEE region by:*

- Serving as a regional network and facilitator in disaster preparedness and prevention of natural and man-made disasters in the SEE region;
- Enhance cooperation among the DPPI SEE member countries in view of the EU enlargement and the process of Euro-Atlantic integration;
- Strengthen good neighbourly relations and stability through the exchange of information and identifying and sharing lessons learnt and best practices in the field of disaster management;
- Supporting countries in the SEE region in their efforts to further develop disaster preparedness and prevention through common approach and cooperation with all relevant international organisations and bodies, especially the EU Civil Protection Mechanism;
- Strengthening and enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation, facilitating exchange of information in the field of disaster preparedness and prevention at all levels among competent national disaster management authorities and other relevant institutions in the SEE region, in accordance with the national regulations regarding the exchange of information.

➤ **Dynamics – evolution of the initiative**

The Idea (2000) - An ad-hoc Steering Group was formed in 2000 under the joint chairmanship of Croatia and Italy. As a first operational step, the Steering Group appointed an Operational Team, which led an assessment of the needs and capacities related to the disaster preparedness of 12 countries in the region. The multi-institutional and international composition of the team established to provide the technical background work was unprecedented. It benefited from expert personnel from Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Sweden, the United States, the IFRC, NATO, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). For team member organizations and nations, it was the first time that such a team was created around the issue of disaster preparedness and prevention in SEE.

Regional Assessment (2001) - As the first stage towards developing its strategy, the DPPI assessed the capacities of each country of the region in terms of its disaster preparedness and prevention needs and capabilities. The initiative's Operational Team reviewed natural and technological disaster risks and existing disaster management and preparedness plans. It also identified on-going emergency response projects, co-ordination structures and procedures. The assessments were based on a methodology developed by UNDP, with inputs from the other participant organisations and nations.

The Operational Team's Regional Report (the "Gorizia Report") was discussed at a workshop in Geneva in June 2001. Based on the findings, a "Strategy Outline" was accepted by the participants. The Strategy Outline encompassed several lines of work that the regional countries shared among themselves and on which they took lead roles. These included information sharing and networking, preparedness planning and exercises, strengthening local disaster management structures, and border crossing procedures.

Agreed Way Ahead and the Beginning of the Structure and the Commitment (2002 - 2006) - At the following DPPI Workshop in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in October 2001, regional countries brought several project proposals in line with the above mentioned subject areas and concluded together with international partners that there was a dire need for an appointed expert to manage the DPPI project in Brussels. As a follow-up, an Executive Secretary of the DPPI SEE was appointed in February 2002, physically located at the Stability Pact Office in Brussels (financially supported by Norway, Switzerland and US). The prioritisation of the projects was decided at the DPPI working meeting in Budapest, Hungary, in March 2002.

At the Stability Pact Regional Table in Bucharest, Romania, on 5 June 2002, the Declaration on Co-operation in Disaster Preparedness and Prevention in SEE was signed by 11 countries and the IFRC. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia associated itself with the Declaration.

At the DPPI Regional meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, 16-18 September 2002, a new DPPI structure was adopted and the DPPI Action Plan 2002–2006, with Terms of Reference for an Advisory Board to the DPPI, was endorsed by the participants.

During the meeting, DPPI partner countries, together with international partners and donors, also agreed to facilitate regional or multi-partner disaster management programmes and the development and implementation of projects.

***Transfer to the region - full regional ownership (2006 to date)** - In 2005, the DPPI Secretariat, which, over the time, was reinforced from initially one professional to three, moved to the region, hosted by the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. The donors and partners agreed that a firmer commitment from the founders was needed for further co-operation, in particular that the non-binding Declaration on Co-operation in Disaster Preparedness and Prevention in SEE, signed in 2001, should be re-confirmed by partners and that provisions for creating a legal entity should be established. After a lengthy and exhaustive consultation process the agreement to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the Institutional Framework for the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for SEE was reached.*

At the regional meeting in Bucharest, 16-17 April 2007, SEE partner countries, being aware of the importance and benefits of regional co-operation in this field, agreed to fully take over the management of the initiative and to provide human and material resources for the functioning of its Secretariat. With full support of all SEE partner countries Slovenia took over the first chairmanship of the DPPI SEE and put all the efforts to ensure transition of the Initiative from the Stability Pact to fully regionally-owned initiative. After intensive consultation process led by Slovenia, the consensus on the Memorandum of Understanding on the Institutional Framework for the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for SEE (DPPI SEE MoU) was reached. The MoU laid down the governing and coordinative structure of the DPPI SEE as well as the budget and financing of the Initiative. In September 2007 the MoU was signed by **Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Romania and Slovenia**, by May 2008, it was signed also by **Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Turkey**, and in 2009 by **Serbia**. Thus, DPPI SEE became and has ever since been fully regionally owned and coordinated.

During Slovenian chairmanship to DPPI SEE in 2007 and the Slovenian Presidency to the Council of the EU in first half of 2008 a lot of efforts were put in networking with international partners and donors with the aim to raise the visibility of the Initiative and its further activities. Among others the European Commission became fully engaged as a member of the Advisory Board of the Initiative.

To further enhance countries' commitment to continuously address disaster preparedness and prevention issues and to give to DPPI SEE its much-needed visibility, Bulgaria (as the holder of the SEECF Chairmanship) hosted the first SEE Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Prevention and Preparedness in April 2008. A Joint Statement adopted at this meeting requested the development of a comprehensive strategy and action plan to be drafted before the end of 2008.

With the 2007 DPPI SEE MoU coming to its end in December 2013, in the period 2012 - 2013 the DPPI SEE member countries negotiated and agreed upon the text of **a new Memorandum of Understanding** that was signed by eight SEE countries on the occasion of **the XXVII DPPI SEE Regional meeting (November 2013, Sarajevo)**¹. The three remaining countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Romania) are expected to finalize their internal procedures on the document and sign the new MoU at the DPPI SEE Regional meeting spring session 2014.

¹ <http://www.dppi.info/programmes-activities/meetings/xxvii-dppi-see-regional-meeting-sarajevo-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

➤ **Structure and Partners (since 2008)**

DPPI SEE Regional Meeting - The DPPI SEE Regional Meeting is a governing and decision-making body that acts in many ways like a forum. It is composed of Heads/Directors General of the Civil Protection and Disaster Management Agencies in DPPI SEE member countries whose actions are supported by the authorities and ministries responsible for disaster preparedness, prevention and management issues in these countries.

The Chairmanship of the DPPI SEE Regional Meeting rotates on an annual basis between the DPPI SEE member countries in an alphabetical order. *The DPPI SEE Chair-in-Office* is responsible for the implementation of the DPPI SEE in all its aspects, for overall co-ordination of the DPPI SEE and for its promotion at both regional and international levels.

Regional meetings take place twice a year. Duties include endorsing the annual work programme, work plan and budget, and approving specific projects and Working Groups.

These meetings provide the political framework and support to DPPI SEE. They serve as a platform for internal consultations and recommendations forwarded to appropriate national authorities to facilitate the decision-making process within the national governments.

DPPI SEE Advisory Board - The DPPI SEE Advisory Board is composed of experts with functional expertise, representing international partners of the DPPI SEE being invited by the DPPI SEE Chair-in-Office. The DPPI SEE Advisory Board advises on proposed and planned projects and activities, and contributes to sustained policy relevance.

DPPI SEE Working Groups - The DPPI SEE Regional Meeting may establish DPPI SEE WGs as technical bodies to develop and support specific DPPI SEE projects. DPPI SEE WGs are chaired on an informal basis by a country in the SEE region with the participation of national and international experts. DPPI SEE WGs report to the DPPI SEE Regional Meeting and are supported by the DPPI SEE Secretariat.

The Trio Mechanism is comprised of the present DPPI SEE Chair-in-Office and representatives of the previous and incoming DPPI SEE Chair-in-Office. The role of the Trio is to ensure the strategic coordination and planning of the DPPI SEE activities.

DPPI SEE Secretariat - The administrative/supportive structure for DPPI SEE is the DPPI SEE Secretariat with its seat in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The DPPI SEE Secretariat consists of the Head of the DPPI SEE Secretariat and the Administrative/Finance Assistant.

Budget and Financing of the DPPI SEE - The DPPI SEE Budget is composed of annual contributions by DPPI SEE Parties. The DPPI SEE Secretariat prepares, on the basis of the DPPI SEE Annual Work Plan, the Budget to be presented for approval to the DPPI SEE Regional Meeting during its autumn session. The DPPI SEE Secretariat also prepares additional work plans and budgets for projects, which may be implemented with the assistance of the DPPI SEE Partners.

➤ **Impact and challenges**

One of the main added values of DPPI SEE has always been that it is **“practically oriented”**. It only engages in project facilitation and implementation of specific activities following a proposal from a member country (countries) and based on the mutually agreed upon action. A fruitful co-operation has been established with international partners that have all supported this approach and with which the Initiative has collaborated within a number of its projects.

The success of DPPI SEE can be seen through some of its implemented and on-going projects:

- **The Joint Fire-Fighting Unit (JFFU) project** was created by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro in 2003. The move demonstrates how SEE countries have long been aware that natural disasters do not recognise national borders and politics. Eight fire-fighting teams from the three neighbouring countries established a rapid, jointly trained, fully equipped response unit to assist all fire-fighters in the area. This low budget project that was supported with €200,000 from international donors left a powerful message about the will to face common threats, such as fires, together, despite past differences. Taking into consideration the success of the past trainings, in May 2012 the 1st of the two JFFU Refresher Training Courses was organised by Croatia for Bosnia & Herzegovina fire-fighters, and in October 2012 the 2nd refresher training was organised for Montenegrin fire-fighters. 72 fire-fighters in total have been trained.

- **The Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP) - the project started in 2002 with a vision to create a pool of regional experts that can be exchanged in the region and to foster further co-operation among SEE countries.** In the first four years the project has been managed by Croatia and Slovenia, and partly or completely financed by DPPI SEE budget and very often co-financed by DPPI SEE partnering organisations. In 10 years over 1000 experts participated in different programme activities. The programme has focused mainly on the institutional capacity building of disaster management services of the SEE countries through exchange of information, lessons learnt and best practices in the field. Within the programme, a large number of *trainings, courses, workshops, seminars and conferences* have been organised by the DPPI SEE member countries and DPPI SEE partners, through which different topics were covered such as: *disaster risk reduction (DRR)/ Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), civil protection systems, fire-fighting/ fire extinguishing, floods management, cave rescue, disaster economics/ disaster risk insurance, psycho-social effects of disasters, disaster education for vulnerable groups*, etc. The project as a whole has been perceived as an outstanding success of the DPPI SEE with greatest potential for substantial capacity development in the field of disaster preparedness and prevention in the SEE.

- **The Harmonisation of Seismic Risk Hazard Maps Project** in countries influenced by the Vrancea earthquakes and the Project for Harmonisation of Seismic Hazard Maps for the Western Balkan countries were initiated under the auspices of the DPPI. Both projects developed further with the support of the NATO Science for Peace Programme. The implementation of these projects by Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey started in late 2004 and, for the Western Balkan countries, in 2007.

- Overall objective of **"The Project for Support of Establishing the Joint Emergency Response Units in case of floods in SEE (JERU)"** is to develop operational capabilities in case of floods in the region of SEE. DPPI SEE member countries participating in the project with their operational capabilities are to institute regional cooperation and coordination of disaster preparedness and prevention, as well as information exchange in case of floods or threat of floods. Participating countries are to establish, equip and train Emergency Response Units in case of floods in the region of SEE. The overall goal of the Project is to establish the cross-border mechanisms for information exchange and joint co-ordination of Emergency Response Units and management in case of floods. The project initial design has been recently remodeled to match the ongoing interventions in the region (Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance - IPA / European Commission) in order to avoid potential duplications and ensure necessary synergies. In its new design, the project also envisages the procurement of personal protection equipment for the participating teams and this primarily for purpose of effective implementation of the project planned activities (JERU SWIFT practical trainings).

- **DPPI SEE Capacity Development & Disaster Risk Reduction Training Courses** - To promote disaster risk reduction in the context of the DPPI SEE Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP), in 2008 the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) were engaged in discussions to collaborate with DPPI SEE in order to make disaster risk reduction more crosscutting in the DMTP training curricula.

The project, which ran in two phases between 2009 and 2012, aimed to create sustainable capacities in DRR and to develop a multiplication effect by initiating a pool of trainers from the region that was able

to pursue the objectives and results of the project in the long run. The purpose of the project was to reduce the vulnerability of DPPI SEE member countries to natural hazards by developing the capacity of local authorities and actors to reduce risk, while carrying out preventive, response and recovery activities and promoting a coordinated approach in disaster risk reduction, in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action. By the end of 2012, the project product and output equaled the pool of 149 trainees and 32 regional trainers on DRR².

The overall success of the project, in addition to the continued interest/ engagement of the SEE countries in DRR at national and international level, has generated further involvement of the DPPI SEE in the field, i.e. through organization of a pilot DRR training course designed and supported exclusively by its member countries - regional trainers (Croatia& Slovenia, September 2013), with contribution from MSB. Next DRR training course is to be organized within the DPPI SEE Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP) for the year 2014.

- Regional Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) project **“Building Resilience to Disasters in Western Balkans and Turkey”** implemented by UNISDR Regional Office for Europe (UNISDR Europe) in cooperation with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and with the support of the European Commission (IPA) - In the **Task 2** of this intervention: *“Strengthening the regional capacity and cooperation towards data and knowledge sharing on risk”*, UNISDR Europe, in partnership with with the DPPI SEE, is managing activities aimed at developing/ designing/ publishing of a regional Knowledge Management System (KMS) database in the form of a web portal that is to be hosted by the DPPI SEE. The System is to be published online and fully functional in all its areas and multi-language interface by spring 2014 for presentation at the DPPI SEE Regional meeting.

- In addition to the above-mentioned, the DPPI SEE has also been recognized as a competent consultative party within the discussions on the implementation of the European Commission IPA programmes. The Initiative will in the future act as a member of a **Steering Group** set up to provide general directions on the implementation of the EU program **“Civil Protection Cooperation with the candidate countries and potential candidates – Phase II” (IPA CP Cooperation Programme II)**.

➤ **Conclusion**

The DPPI SEE has developed over the past years into a largely independent, effective, consultative, and co-ordinating mechanism. It fosters co-operation across borders in order to ensure the safety of citizens as well as of the environment. **The unique value of the DPPI SEE, no doubt, is the sole result of its member countries joint efforts to ensure the continuity in the fulfilment of the Initiative’s principle objectives through regional cooperation and consultation process in the field of preparedness and prevention in the SEE.**

Today many signs point towards a successful strategy of co-operative disaster management in SEE. The region has integrated disaster prevention and preparedness with sustainable development. It has established a healthy partnership in this field between its governments and the international community.

The most probable reason for the initiative’s dynamism is that DPPI SEE is driven by the countries of the region and the fuel comes from different sources, always aimed at enabling the engine to run.

² The End of Project Report (2012), along with other project-related documents, is available on www.dppi.info