PATHWAYS TO PREPAREDNESS

Services for Disability-Inclusive Preparedness: Good Practices and Recommendations for Service Providers and Policymakers

December 2025

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About the Publication

This publication is the result of the work of the EPR Task Force on Pathways to Preparedness set up in 2025. The aim of the Task Force was to prompt a meaningful exchange between EPR members and policy makers regarding the topic of preparedness and how persons with disabilities and service providers should be included and be enablers of preparedness policy. The Task Force met twice during the year: the first meeting was joined by representatives from the Red Cross EU Office and the European Disability Forum, and the second was joined by a representative from the European Commission's Directorate General on European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). Both meetings included sections for EPR members' exchange.

This publication is aimed at national and EU decision-makers as well as service providers for persons with disabilities. It provides insights and recommendations on the involvement of persons with disabilities and service providers in the development and implementation of preparedness policy, such as the EU Preparedness Union Strategy[1], published on 26 March 2025, and its chapter on population preparedness. In view of the EU's unprecedented threats – such as geopolitical tensions and conflicts, cybersecurity and information manipulation risks, climate change and increasing natural hazards risks – the Strategy aims to enhance the EU civilian and military preparedness and readiness for future crisis.

This document also seeks to provide input to one of the actions within the chapter of population preparedness: the Guidelines on what to do in emergencies, adapted to all types of disability, and training of first responders to recognise the type of disability and how to act accordingly. To achieve this, it presents the analysis and findings of the task force meetings, by exploring the challenges and recommendations shared by EPR members.

EPR members are service providers to people with disabilities focusing on high-quality service delivery. This publication strives to support EPR members in building their capacity on the topic of preparedness, by including best practices and recommendations for service providers.

The EPR secretariat aims to discuss the publication and main reflections and conclusions with key stakeholders.

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[1] European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Preparedness Union Strategy*, 2025, available here.

Policy Context

In the past years, Europe has faced crises that have re-shaped the EU's priorities on various occasions, from the Covid-19 pandemic since 2020, to the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine since 2022, increased worldwide geopolitical tensions, cybersecurity threats, and extreme weather events such as heatwaves, wildfires, and floods.

According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)[2], at the global level, **persons with disabilities are tragically killed by disasters at a rate that is two to four times higher than the general population**. On this note the European Disability Forum (EDF)[3] underlines that, in any situation of crisis or conflict, **persons with disabilities face disproportionate risk of abandonment, violence, death, and a lack of access to safety, relief, and recovery support.** Moreover, the data from a 2023 UNDRR survey[4] to evaluate progress on government policies at the global level on disaster protection of persons with disabilities underlined the significant work that needs to be done to improve disaster risk preparedness of persons with disabilities. **For instance, 84% of respondents reported not having a personal preparedness plan in case of a disaster**, such as knowing the evacuation routes, available shelters and having emergency supplies. **If given sufficient early warning, only 39% of respondents reported they would have no difficulty evacuating**, which worsens in case of no warning, with only 26% of respondents having no difficulty in evacuating. **Only 11% of respondents reported being aware of a disaster management plan in their local area**, and 44% were unaware of the availability of disaster risk information in accessible formats.

In this context, it is important to understand the existing and upcoming EU-level policies and international conventions on the topic of preparedness, how they address the preparedness of persons with disabilities and the role of service providers for persons with disabilities.

Geneva Conventions and Protocols

As explained by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)[5], **the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols[6] are international treaties that contain rules limiting the barbarity of war.** The Geneva Conventions and their additional Protocols are at the **core of international humanitarian law**, the body of international law that regulates the conduct of armed conflict and seeks to limit its effects. The Geneva Conventions and Protocols specifically protect people who are not taking part in the hostilities, including civilians, health workers and aid workers, and those who are no longer participating, such as wounded, sick and shipwrecked soldiers and prisoners of war.

The ICRC has produced Commentaries on each of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols to promote better understanding of and respect for these vital treaties. The commentaries are currently being updated to incorporate developments in the application and interpretation of these treaties since their negotiation.

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[2] United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), News *Article 'World must act on unacceptable failures to protect persons with disabilities from disasters'*, 2023, available here.

[3] European Disability Forum (EDF), Disability-inclusive humanitarian action, n.d., available here.

[4] United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), *Global Survey Report on Persons with Disabilities and Disasters, 2023*, available here.

[5] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Geneva Conventions and their Commentaries*, 1949 (as updated), available here.

[6] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva Conventions of 1949, *Additional Protocols and their Commentaries*, 1949 (and subsequent protocols), available here.

With regards to **persons with disabilities**, international humanitarian law protects people with disabilities who are civilians or no longer taking part in hostilities. Moreover, the Geneva conventions recognised that people with disabilities needed specific protection during armed conflict[7]. Additionally, International Humanitarian Law recognises **that persons with disabilities may benefit from specific health-care services, including mental health care or rehabilitation, and that such services may even be required**[8].

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 11

In 2010, the EU ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[9] (UN CRPD), which was also signed and ratified by all EU Member States. **Article 11** of the UN CRPD, on Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, binds its state parties to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters. In other words, **the EU and its Member States are bound to ensure the protection of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies.**

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

In 2015, all UN Member States, which includes all EU Member States, adopted the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**[10]. Although the European Commission is not a signatory to the Sendai Framework, it played a leading role in international negotiations and supports EU Member States in implementing the agreement, working to ensure EU action is coherent with this global agenda[11].

Among its **guiding principles**, the Sendai Framework includes an **all-of-society approach** to disaster risk reduction, with a gender, age, disability and cultural perspective in all policies and practices; it also calls for the use of disaggregated data by sex, age and disability to improve decision-making.

The framework has **four priorities** of action: (i) understanding disaster risk, (ii) strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, (iii) investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, and **(iv) enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction**. The last priority underlines the importance of **empowering women and persons with disabilities** to publicly lead and promote gender equitable and universally accessible response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction approaches.

Furthermore, this document underlines how persons with disabilities and their organisations are critical in the assessment of disaster risk and in designing and implementing plans, taking specific requirements, such as universal design, into account.

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[7] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *International humanitarian law: the rules of war (FAQ)*, n.d., available here.

[8] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *How international humanitarian law protects persons with disabilities in armed conflict*, n.d., available here.

[9] United Nations, *European Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)*, 2006, available here.

[10] United Nations, *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*, 2015, available here.

[11] More information available here. EU mid-term report on implementation of Sendai Framework available here.

Report: Safer Together – Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness

In July 2024, the European Parliament elections brought a new distribution of seats[12], with a prevalence of Members of the European Parliament and Political Groups calling for stronger EU-level defence and security policy. Therefore, European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen tasked former Finnish President **Sauli Niinistö** with a report: *"Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness"*[13], published on 30 October 2024. The report aims to propose ways to address the diverse challenges the EU might face in the future, ranging from conflict preparedness to preparedness to extreme weather events, cyberattacks or pandemics.

A key message from this report is that **citizens are the backbone of societal resilience, making their preparedness essential**. In particular, the report highlights the need to empower all citizens, including persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, to ensure that preparedness truly covers the whole population and not just a part of it. Moreover, **the report calls for the active involvement of representatives of vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, to participate in the design of preparedness approaches.**

EU Preparedness Union Strategy

In September 2024, the European Commission published a Eurobarometer survey on disaster risk awareness and preparedness of the EU population[14], which aimed to assess the awareness of EU citizens about potential disaster risks that could affect them, and their preparedness to face certain disaster risks scenarios. The survey had striking findings: around **65% of Europeans feel insufficiently informed to be able to prepare for disasters or emergencies, 58% do not feel well prepared for disasters or emergencies in the area where they live, and almost half do not know what to do if a disaster occurs**. The results of this survey underlined the need to strengthen citizen empowerment and preparedness.

Considering the insights and recommendations of the Niinistö report, the European Commission published on 26 March 2025 the **Preparedness Union Strategy**, which aims **to enhance the EU's civilian and military preparedness and readiness for future crises**. The Strategy consisting of 2 parts: a Communication[15], providing a strategic vision for preparedness in Europe, and an annex[16], including 63 key actions between 2025 and 2027 (aligned with the current EU Multiannual Financial Framework period, the long-term EU Budget, ending in 2027).

Moreover, the Preparedness Union Strategy has **3 guiding principles**:

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[12] European Parliament, *European elections results*, 2024., available here.

[13] European Commission, *Safer Together – Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness (Niinistö Report)*, 2024, available here.

[14] European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer: Disaster risk awareness and preparedness of the EU population*, 2024, available here.

[15] European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Preparedness Union Strategy*, 2025, available here.

[16] European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Annex to the Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Preparedness Union Strategy*, 2025, available here.

- A **whole-of-hazards** approach: covering all potential natural and human-induced risks instead of addressing them separately, bringing together all available tools.
- A **whole-of-society** approach: fostering an inclusive culture of preparedness and resilience, involving citizens, local communities and civil society, businesses, social partners and the scientific and academic communities.
- A **whole-of-government** approach: bringing together all relevant actors across all levels of government (local, regional, national and EU), promoting collaboration, policy coherence and sharing of resources.

Moreover, the Preparedness Union Strategy proposes actions around **seven areas**:

1. **Foresight and anticipation**: including work related to the early identification of risks and threats.
2. **Resilience of vital societal functions:** ensuring the safety of the EU's population, the continuity of governments and democratic processes, social cohesion, economic stability, and internal and external security, and protection from natural disasters.
3. **Population Preparedness:** The awareness of risks and threats is essential to ensure EU citizens are active participants in crisis preparedness and response. This section proposes actions to foster a culture of inclusive preparedness and intergenerational societal resilience (with the mainstreaming of equality considerations in preparedness), to empower more resilient citizens, to enhance public warning and crisis communication, and making available key skills to ensure labour mobility during crises.
4. **Public-private cooperation:** to use the resources, expertise and innovation from all sectors effectively and efficiently, for instance from the farming and fishing, industry and business sectors.
5. **Civil-military cooperation:** to ensure civilian support to the armed forces to ensure the continuous operation of the state and society in case of armed aggression.
6. **Crisis response coordination among the EU Member States** to overcome emergencies.
7. **Resilience through external partnerships**, in particular with EU candidate countries and other neighbouring countries.

As depicted in the annex[17] of the Preparedness Union Strategy, **several actions in the area of Population Preparedness will address the preparedness of persons with disabilities either directly** (actions 27, 28 and 33) **or indirectly** (actions 29 and 30).

Number	Action	Indicative timeline	Description
27.	Increase awareness about risks and threats.	2026	Organisation of an annual EU Preparedness day, communication actions such as guidelines on how to communicate risks and awareness-raising programmes (citizen panels, online campaigns, toolkits).
28.	Develop guidelines to reach a population self-sufficiency of minimum 72 hours.	2026	Guidelines for Member States to reach population self-sufficiency of at least 72 hours, a new EU online platform with information for citizens on risks and practical steps.
29.	Include Preparedness in school education curricula and training of educational staff.	2025	Guidelines, in line with Union of Skills, for curriculum development on basic preparedness skills. Resources for teachers

			will be available on the European School Education Platform[18].
30.	Promote preparedness in youth programmes.	2026	Youth programmes like the European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus + will include a new preparedness priority.
33.	Develop guidelines on how to act in emergencies, adapted to all types of disability and training of first responders.	2026	More information available in the section below.

Accessible guidelines on how to act in emergencies and first responders training

Action 33, the **Guidelines on how to act in emergencies adapted to all types of disability, and training of first responders**, it is a joint effort between DG ECHO, the World Bank, and the European Disability Forum. This action aims to target two key groups:

1. **Persons with disabilities**, to ensure they know how to be prepared and act in case of an emergency through a set of **accessible guidelines**.
2. **First responders**, to guide them on how to assist persons with disabilities, through an on-line training. The training will focus on how first responders can recognise the kind of disability someone has, and how to act accordingly.

While the guidelines and training are expected by the end of 2026, their drafting is still in early stages of work.

- By the **end of 2025**, the European Disability Forum and DG ECHO will finalise the collection of information for the first step of drafting: a **Diagnostic and Stakeholder Mapping**.
- Moreover, in the **1st half of 2026**, a first draft of the Guidelines and **two rounds of consultations** (one of them being a public consultation) can be expected. **EPR will strive to collect members' feedback and share it in the public consultation.**
- By the **2nd half of 2026** the World Bank and DG ECHO foresee the publication of the **Guidelines on how to act in emergencies**, adapted to all types of disability and the Framework for e-training of first responders to recognise the type of disability.
- Finally, the guidelines and training will be presented at the **9th European Civil Protection Forum in November 2026.**

Service Providers' Preparedness Challenges

In the past years, service providers for persons with disabilities have experienced a wide range of **preparedness-related threats**, from fires, earthquakes, power outages, viruses, including the Covid-19 pandemic, dangers related to AI, extreme weather events, floods and heatwaves and cybersecurity threats. It is possible to categorise these threats as **external**.

These external threats can be further **exacerbated by internal/ organisational issues**.

- An important problem that service providers experience is **limited staff capacity**. On the one hand, there may not be enough staff with concrete knowledge on what to do in an emergency and, on the

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[18] European Commission, *School Education Platform*, n.d., available here.

other hand, if an emergency comes up, there may not be enough staff present on site to support all service users in an evacuation.

- Service providers also experience **gaps in staff training**, both in the sense of staff receiving training from first responders on how to act in an emergency, but also on how to assist service users during an emergency, especially when they might feel scared and stressed, leading to difficult behaviours.
- A **lack of updated preparedness protocols**, and a lack of **practice of necessary skills to ensure service continuity, such as digital skills,** in case of a crisis may also impact the effectiveness of service providers. For example, while some service providers may have used on-line tools to provide trainings during the Covid-19 lockdowns, staff have not maintained the skills to do so up to date due to a lack of practice.
- A **lack of awareness from clients and service users on what to do in an emergency**, how to do it, when, and the sequence of steps to take is another important element exacerbating services' preparedness threats.
- **Communication gaps** among staff in a crisis can also lead to increased preparedness risks.
- Service providers experience **limitations when it comes to their funding**, further aggravated by funding cuts, which **leaves limited resources to improve their preparedness**.

Services and Preparedness: Building Resilience for Persons with Disabilities

Considering the context described above, it is key to note the importance of building the resilience of services for persons with disabilities, as well as the potential that service providers for persons with disabilities have to support the preparedness of persons with disabilities, and disseminate any materials with this objective, considering that these organisations have direct contact with the target group. In addition, it is worth to explore the partnership of service providers with key preparedness stakeholders, such as first responders, for a mutual exchange of knowledge and expertise. This section underlines EPR Members' good practices in these areas and reflects on them to provide recommendations to service providers and to policymakers put forward by EPR Members.

Examples of Good Practices

Training for 1st Responders – ONCE Foundation, Spain
https://www.fundaciononce.es/es

Since 2019, Fundación ONCE has been providing trainings for first responders on how to provide assistance to people with disabilities. Fundación ONCE's work on preparedness started through project CILIFO[19], with the aim to promote the training, sensibilisation, investigation, cooperation and fight against wildfires, which is an important problem in Spain. This experience led to the realisation that there was a need to train first responders and emergency managers on how to provide assistance to people with disabilities in emergencies.

Fundación ONCE observed there is a **gap in knowledge and understanding** among first responders about the needs of people with disabilities, which hinders effective emergency response and creates unnecessary delays and increasing communication barriers during an evacuation. Moreover, people who do not receive proper emergency assistance **have a higher risk of being seriously harmed and of mortality**. However, first responders sometimes make decisions about people based on stereotypes (e.g.

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[19] Interreg V-A Spain–Portugal – POCTEP, *Centro Ibérico para la Investigación y Lucha contra Incendios Forestales (CILIFO)*, 2019–2021, available here.

that someone with a hearing disability doesn't hear anything at all, and use sign language to communicate, which is not the case for all). Therefore, it is important to raise awareness among first responders on the fact that persons with disabilities are not a homogeneous group, and people with the same disability may behave differently. Additionally, some emergency professionals are not aware of the assistance of hidden disabilities, which may be ignored or misunderstood.

This is why Fundación ONCE created an immersive training for first responders designed, implemented, and taught by experts with different disabilities. The training creates a highly engaging realistic learning experience and consists of two parts:

- The first part is theoretical where first responders learn about the different needs of people with disabilities by type of disability. Fundación ONCE also provides guidelines to make communication accessible.

- The second part consists of a workshop where participants learn how to communicate in an emergency taking in consideration the needs of persons with disabilities, guide a blind person, support persons with hidden disabilities, and evacuate a person with sensory disabilities. For example, they experience first-hand how it is to move around without sight through a low-vision simulation, where they move around an area with a white cane. They also go through a simulation with noise-cancelling headphones to better understand situations deaf and hard of hearing people go through in an emergency. Additionally, participants experience how it is to use a wheelchair and learn how to properly get a person on and off a wheelchair.

The training takes place everywhere in Spain, with more than 3000 first responders trained between onsite and online trainings. Fundación ONCE is developing a section with more information on the trainings for first responders, which will soon be available [here](#).

Fundación ONCE's trainings to first responders demonstrates the benefits that a potential collaboration between service providers and first responders in improving the accessibility and inclusion in emergency preparedness. Additionally, these courses being taught by experts with disabilities underlines the important contributions persons with disabilities can make to improve preparedness efforts thanks to their lived experience.

Co-creation of Accessible Earthquake Preparedness Materials – Theotokos Foundation, Greece

https://theotokos.gr/

Between May 2014 and January 2015, **Theotokos Foundation participated in a project to create accessible booklets and posters on what to do in case of an earthquake.** The project was titled "Development of informative material concerning Earthquake Protection Measures, for People with Disabilities with the implementation of the "Easy-to-Read" method and the augmentative alternative communication symbols of the "MAKATON" Language Program". This project was organised together with the Greek Earthquake Planning and Protection Organisation (EPPO), as well as "Estia" Social Care Centre for People with Intellectual Disability and Makaton Greece.

The project aimed to strengthen the ability to act spontaneously so as to protect oneself in case of earthquake, and to empower disability service providers and caregivers with specific guidelines and useful, accessible material to use when informing and training people with disabilities.

The project's working group was formed by EPPO earthquake experts, four accessibility experts and one person with intellectual disability. The project went through the following steps:

1. The working group first defined the target groups: **people with intellectual disability and autistic people of all ages, with minimum to no reading comprehension skills**, and their carers. The

project had extended applications for people with dementia and other disabilities as well other vulnerable social groups such as migrants and refugees.

2. Then, **the working group drafted the sections of the documents on what to do before, during and after an earthquake**, guided by the earthquake experts, with a focus on essential technical information to be included.

3. The **text was then piloted at Theotokos and Estia**. Initially, existing resources on what to do in case of an earthquake were not easy to understand. This is why the participating organisations, including Theotokos Foundation, **held meetings with their service users and co-designed posters and booklets in simple language with clear visuals and Makaton symbols explaining what to do before, during, and after an earthquake.** The sentences were revised, with careful selection of words, symbols and sentence structure. Visual supports (sketches and photographs) were also tested and it was decided to use photos. New photos were created to align exactly with the text. All participants (service users, staff and caregivers) gave verbal feedback about the ease of use and understanding of the booklets and posters. Service users also responded to a written questionnaire which checked understanding of the materials. This feedback was then incorporated into the materials' final versions, before printing the booklets and posters.

These materials were printed, distributed to homes and classrooms, and were made available online, with English translations. Moreover, the materials were presented at the 2015 European Civil Protection Forum. The approach emphasised inclusivity and practical guidance for persons with disabilities.

This practice is a clear example of mutually beneficial partnerships that can be established between national civil protection organisations and services for persons with disabilities to make preparedness more accessible and inclusive. It also underlines the opportunities of co-creating preparedness materials with persons with disabilities: on the one hand, service users improved their knowledge on earthquake preparedness, and on the other hand, co-creating the materials with persons with disabilities ensured their accessibility, and that the language and images used were easy to understand.

All updates and materials produced in the project are hosted in EPPO's website[20], and materials are available in Greek, English and some in French.

The English translation of the booklet with Makaton signs is available here, and the poster with Makaton signs is available here.

The English translation of the easy to read version of the booklet is available here, and the easy to read poster is available here.

Astangu's Preparedness Strategy – Astangu, Estonia
https://www.astangu.ee/en

Since 2019, Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (Astangu) has been working on and developing a preparedness strategy at the organisational level. For Astangu, preparedness is a combination of how to manage potential crises while ensuring the continuity of their services or employing the shortest time to restore services.

Astangu followed 5 steps to create their preparedness plan, which can be found below:

1. **Establish a crisis team**: It is key to create a list of the people included within the crisis team, considering their area of expertise, describe their assigned area of responsibility within the crisis team, and include their contact information. The crisis team information must be updated on a regular basis together with the rest of the preparedness plan. It is important to assign a substitute member to each team member in case someone from the team is missing on the day of a crisis.

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[20] Greek Earthquake Planning and Protection Organisation (EPPO) website available here.

2. **Map and describe relevant/ potential crisis scenarios**: Astangu colleagues held a brainstorming session where they examined their experiences and situations they had previously faced, which either were potentially dangerous or where staff members felt they needed more support (e.g. aggressive behaviour of a student, student threatening with a knife during a cooking class). In the preparedness plan, theoretical situations that may occur are also described with a set of actions to take in case of occurrence, the "action plan" (e.g. fire, water and/or electricity outage, bomb threat etc.). In Astangu's plan, these crisis scenarios are organised from the most likely to occur to the least likely to occur. Additionally, these scenarios are also based on the number of affected people, from most to individual crises (e.g. fire would affect the entire centre, but Astangu also has contingency plans in case a student's family member dies). Since the plan is updated regularly based on lived experience, new crisis scenarios are regularly added (e.g. spread of a highly contagious disease on the lived experience with COVID).

3. **Create a clear action plan for every crisis and assigned responsibility**: This implies noting the steps that need to be taken for each of the potential crisis scenarios, assigning clear responsibilities to the crisis team. It is also important to add communication specific actions, e.g. how a specific information is delivered to students' parents, so that there is only one communication channel and messaging. In the action plan for every crisis, it is key to include what actions need to be done once the situation has resolved (e.g. postmortem with the crisis team to consider "lessons learned" and amending the crisis plan, talking to the media, etc.). It is essential for the plan to be aligned with national and local-level plans and/or instructions.

4. **Put the preparedness plan into practice:** It is important to test the preparedness plan for different situations (e.g. fire drills, testing equipment). Astangu tests the preparedness plans in place as much as it can (testing all crisis plans would be too resource draining, so most likely scenarios are prioritized) and receives external feedback in order to improve its protocols.

5. **Regularly evaluate your level of preparedness:** Astangu evaluates annually its preparedness level, which is classified into four colours (green, the optimal situation, yellow, orange, and red, the worst-case scenario, each with their own technical specificities). In this exercise, they evaluate how to move closer to green. It is also important to review measures that need to be in place for each crisis plan. For example, if the crisis plan foresees having dry food, water bottles, or flashlights at hand, it is then key to make sure that the organisation has them, and that their location is known.

Astangu's preparedness Strategy offers a step-by-step approach to ensure comprehensive organisational preparedness of services for persons with disabilities. It brings to light the importance of establishing protocols and assigning responsibilities and regularly stress-testing and evaluating them to improve existing preparedness.

Recommendations for Service Providers

Considering the Policy Context, and in particular the accessible guidelines on what to do in an emergency that are being developed at the EU level, as well as the above-mentioned good practices, this section includes recommendations for service providers proposed by EPR Members.

Enhancing the organisational preparedness of service providers:

- **Take into account the following 5 steps when preparing or updating a preparedness plan**: set up a crisis team, map and describe potential crisis scenarios, create a plan for each scenario with assigned responsibility, test the preparedness plan, and evaluate it periodically.
- **When setting up a crisis team**, consider having a **dedicated person in each floor** to lead in case of an evacuation, and nominating one **key contact point in the organisation** in charge of coordinating in case of an emergency.

- **When creating a preparedness action plan,** also consider the staff capacity and the challenges they may experience, and allocate tasks accordingly.
- **Evaluate and update preparedness protocols regularly** in order to address any potential new risks. Such evaluations can take place through internal quality audits to assess the effectiveness of existing protocols and areas of improvement.
- **Organise preparedness-related trainings for staff,** including trainings to gain and maintain key skills that may be necessary in case of a crisis or to prevent one, including digital skills.
- **Organise and create accessible preparedness trainings and materials for service users**. Increasing their preparedness knowledge and skills will not only benefit them to be more resilient but will also contribute to organisational resilience by supporting them to be active participants.

Disseminating and implementing the EU accessible guidelines on what to do in an emergency:

- **Train staff and service users/ clients on the EU's guidelines on what to do in an emergency** and consider integrating such guidelines in existing safety training for staff and service users/clients. Moreover, the person or department responsible for safety and emergency trainings could play a key role in disseminating the guidelines.
- **Disseminate the EU Guidelines among all types of care settings to reach a maximum of service users/ clients,** including hospitals, nursing homes, day centres, and home care environments.
- **Consider the age of service users/ clients** when disseminating the preparedness guidelines. Different age groups, such as children and older adults, may require tailored activities or approaches.
- **Consider what materials are more suitable for your organisation and service users/ clients.** For instance, for long-term service users (e.g. in VET), it is possible to involve them in the creation of materials and to test their effectiveness with them. For short-term service users (e.g. social rehabilitation), different approaches will need to be used to inform them on preparedness.
- **Share preparedness materials among caregivers, family members and informal carers**, as they play a key role in supporting individuals outside formal care settings.

Contributing to inclusive and accessible preparedness for persons with disabilities:

- **Ensure the accessibility of any preparedness materials or trainings for service users/clients:** for instance, service users may need materials to have a simple language, and short easy-to-read formats and pictograms, in braille, sign language, or captioning. Taking into account the Universal design of Learning[21] framework when training service users on preparedness or producing materials can also contribute to increase accessibility.
- When feasible, **involve service-users and clients when developing and testing preparedness materials in-house** to take into account their lived experience in the process.

Recommendations for Policymakers

EU-level recommendations

- **Make the EU accessible guidelines on what to do in an emergency and related content accessible for persons with any kind of disability.** This includes publishing different versions of the content of the guidelines, including shorter, easy-to-read formats, using pictograms, in braille, and sign language and with captioning (in case of audio or audio-visual content).
- **Consider the element of age when developing the guidelines.** Different age groups, such as children and older adults may require tailored approaches.

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[21] CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology), Universal Design for Learning, n.d., available here.

- **Foresee enough time for the public consultation on the accessible guidelines** in order to enable persons with disabilities, service providers, parents and carers to test them and provide feedback.
- **Seek the perspective of first responders** when developing the guidelines and the training for first responders, to gather the knowledge gaps and challenges they experience when supporting persons with disabilities, and good practices they may already be implementing.
- **Explore collaborations with service providers for persons with disabilities in the dissemination of the guidelines**. They are optimal partners as they are in direct contact with persons with disabilities. Moreover, to maximise the uptake of the guidelines, it would be essential that the guidelines reach all types of care settings (including hospitals, nursing homes, day centres and home care environments), for which the involvement of service providers is key.
- **Explore dissemination actions of the guidelines targeting caregivers, family members and informal carers**, who play a key role in supporting individuals outside formal care settings.
- **Ensure the effective involvement of DPOs in the development and dissemination of the guidelines.**
- **Consider expanding the e-training of first responders to an in-persons training**, exploring potential partnerships with service providers for persons with disabilities.
- **Foresee funding in the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034** to enhance the **preparedness of services for persons with disabilities** (including to cover staff preparedness trainings, and the development and updating of preparedness protocols) and to **support services in developing accessible preparedness trainings for persons with disabilities**.
- Ensure the **accessibility of key EU-level materials and websites on the topic of preparedness**.

Recommendations for national/ regional/ local-level policymakers

- **Foresee funding for service providers for persons with disabilities** to cover staff preparedness trainings, and for the development and updating of preparedness protocols and programmes.
- **Support and secure funding for the development of accessible preparedness trainings for persons with disabilities** with minimum quality standards, which could be harmonised at the national or regional level.
- **Support trainings for first responders on how to support persons with disabilities**, considering potential partnerships with service providers for persons with disabilities.
- **Facilitate the cooperation of civil protection services with service providers** for persons with disabilities to co-design tools.
- **Ensure the accessibility of public materials and websites** on the topic of preparedness.

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