

Journalistic Guide

Guidelines for issuing notices, news and warnings concerning civil protection and persons with disabilities

For all those who are affected in a disproportionate number and degree compared to the rest of the population when a natural disaster occurs



EARTHQUAKE



FIRE



FLOOD



EXTREME CONDITIONS

National Confederation of Disabled Persons (NCDP)

Headquarters: 236 El. Venizelou str., P.C. 163 41, Ilioupoli

Phone: +30 210 9949837, Fax: +30 210 5238967

E-mail: esaea@otenet.gr, Website: www.esamea.gr



The page of NCDP in Facebook: <https://el-gr.facebook.com/ESAMEAgr>



Follow NCDP on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ESAMEAgr>



Find the NCDP channel on YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/ESAMEAGr

Athens, 2021

This guide was prepared for the NCDP from the company EUROPRAXIS m.IKE. in the framework of the project “4PLUS: Public awareness, Preparedness, Participation and Coordination for Civil Protection for All”. The project is part of the “Interreg IPA II Cross-Border Cooperation Program Greece-Albania 2014-2020” (greece-albania.eu) and is co-financed by the European Union and by national funds of Greece and Albania. The views expressed in the guide do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union, the participating countries, and the Managing Authority.

Press editing:

EUROPRACTIS μ.IKE

4 Vergas str., P.C. 176 73 Kalithea

Phone: +30 210 9521313, Fax: +30 210 9521318

Email: info@euro-praxis.com, Website: www.euro-praxis.com



What is the issue?

Large-scale natural disasters, such as fires, extreme weather, floods and earthquakes, are highly unpredictable and endanger many aspects of people's lives – health, safety, housing, access to food, water and more staple items, to name just a few. Modern and asynchronous mass media (newspapers, television, radio, social media, electronic media, etc.) are not only important channels of information and entertainment, but also important carriers of information and information to the public in cases where increased preparedness is required for imminent severe natural phenomena as well as during the development of large-scale natural disasters where human lives and property are threatened.

According to the existing institutional framework, the Mass Media (hereafter Media) generally have the obligation to facilitate the access of people with disabilities and chronic diseases to the information they provide. But, especially in terms of information related to issues of civil protection and emergency management, the issue of accessibility and the adequacy of the information provided for people with disabilities and their families should be a priority. Various studies from all over the world have now shown that in the case of disasters of any type, people with disabilities are at the greatest risk and, compared to the rest of the population, they are affected in a disproportionate number. The same applies to many elderly people, to people with increased nursing needs and in general to all people with reduced autonomy, temporary or permanent.

The reasons are various:

- Because emergency preparedness and response systems are designed for the "average" person who can walk, run, drive, see, hear and respond quickly to instructions.
- Because to date, the needs for information and support of such groups are not recorded, studied and not adequately addressed by civil protection planning and crisis management centers.
- Because it has been documented that people from these groups have not participated in disaster management and risk reduction processes currently applied in their communities, and have been excluded from decision-making and planning of such processes.
- Because the competent authorities have not taken care to maintain information and data (registries) of citizens who need additional assistance and present increased needs in cases of crises, so that they know/plan accordingly in advance.
- Because the majority of these people have never been informed about the importance of their own preparedness and how important it is to have prepared in advance their personal disaster/crisis preparedness plan.
- Because emergency human resources have never been trained in such communication and management skills.
- Because in a crisis or disaster, the concept of rights seems to be lost under the pressure of the immediate needs of all survivors.

Journalistic Guide: Civil Protection and People with Disabilities

And these are some of the reasons. However, the inability observed so far on the part of the mass media to ensure that the information they provide (e.g., through information broadcasts or with warnings and instructions for the general public during the manifestation of a threat) on the one hand "reaches" the different people with disabilities/impeded people (**accessibility of the message**) and on the other hand includes specialized information about these people (**content of the message**), constitutes another critical factor.

This Guide is addressed to journalists, media managements as well as the representative organizations of their employees, aiming to build their capacity to ensure that the issuance of announcements, news and warnings concerning civil protection and persons with disabilities **include appropriate information** and provided **in formats accessible** to people with hearing loss or impairment, people who are blind or visually impaired, and people with other communication/perception limitations. The Guide also aims to inform the persons with disabilities and/or chronic diseases themselves and their families, as well as their representative bodies regarding their right to access the information provided/transmitted by the media. As the president of E.S.A.me.A., Yiannis Vardakastanis, as a member of Group III of the European Economic and Social Committee, pointed out at the public hearing that took place on 10.07.2019 in Brussels on the media and disability, "*Communication of the rights of people with disabilities must be seen as an important part of a larger issue of how we portray diversity in our society as a whole. This is an issue that is at the heart of our democratic values.*"

Stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination

It has been established that both the disabled people themselves and the issues that concern them are rarely shown by the news broadcasts aimed at the general public. They are usually included in special programmes, reports and articles relating to the health and welfare sectors. But even when disability is included in broadcasts, reports, articles, etc. addressed to the general public, people with disabilities are presented by the media in a stereotypical way either as "victims" of a tragedy or as "superheroes" who fight against their own nature/fate and the limitations it imposes, achieving unique achievements in sports, science, art etc. The image of the "victim" and the "superhero" are two sides of the same coin, as in both cases disability is given a negative sign.

The stereotypical forms¹ in which disabled people are also presented in the media are usually as people without gender and sexuality, as inactive citizens, as a burden. Think about it: How many times have you seen people with disabilities presented by the media as young people with dreams and worries, as spouses and parents with responsibilities, as professionals (doctors, lawyers, social scientists, etc.) with a demanding daily life, as employers with obligations, as citizens with social action, as activists fighting for their rights?

¹ Stereotypes (which can be negative or positive) are simplified or standardized beliefs that people often hold in common about a social group.

Prejudices² against people with disabilities are connected to the feelings of pity, sympathy, mercy that the media usually try to induce in the public for the sake of television viewing, audience, sales. The presentation of disability and chronic illness as part of human diversity and consequently of people with disability and chronic illness as everyday people and bearers of rights is absent from contemporary media. Discrimination against people with disabilities - which occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person in a similar situation - takes the form of barriers. Barriers architectural, ergonomic, technological, behavioural etc. make it difficult for both the public with disabilities and chronic conditions to access media services and products and for journalists/professionals with disabilities and chronic conditions to be employed in the media sector.

Myths vs. reality



Myth: *"The population of people with disabilities is small, so disability is not an issue for the general public but only for a small population group"*

Reality: According to the Observatory on Disability Issues of the ESA, people with disabilities make up 24.7% of the country's population aged 16 and over, i.e., 2,231,197 out of a total of 9,016,247 people³. The invisibility of people with disabilities and chronic conditions is not related to the size of their population, but to the fact that some disabilities and chronic conditions are not visible and to the barriers (architectural, ergonomic, behavioural, etc.) of which existence places limitations on their social participation. If to the previous percentage are added those directly related to people with disabilities and chronic conditions (parents/guardians and wider family context), the segment of the public that has a direct interest in disability/chronic conditions issues increases significantly.



Myth: *"Disability is first and foremost a medical issue and as such concerns journalists who deal with medical reporting and welfare issues"*

Reality: Disability is a horizontal issue that runs through all spheres of social, economic, political and cultural life. Treating people with disabilities and chronic conditions as "patients" who only need treatment and rehabilitation is a result of the long-standing prevalence of the medical model of disability. This model has had a catalytic effect on verbal and visual representations of disability. A central position in the medical model is occupied by "impairment", which is defined as the partial or total loss of a limb or the existence of a defective limb, organism or bodily mechanism. Consequences of the prevalence of the medical model are the underestimation of the abilities and skills of disabled people as well as the differences between them based on their individual

² Prejudices are not only stated opinions or beliefs, but attitudes and attitudes that include negative feelings about a social group.

³ More details are available at: <https://www.paratiritirioanapirias.gr>

Journalistic Guide: Civil Protection and People with Disabilities

characteristics, the treatment of disabled people as "patients" and the implementation of treatment/rehabilitation/welfare policies that lead to in segregation and marginalization (e.g., special schools, closed institutions, etc.). From this model comes the myth of personal tragedy that many mass media adopt in order to achieve high television viewing, audience, sales. In this context, disabled people are presented as victims of some tragic event who need compensation from the state and charity from the general population. A typical example is charity campaigns, fundraisers and shows such as telethons, in which the harm-focused image of disabled and chronically ill people is used as a badge of 'good quality' and an emblem of the myth of personal tragedy. An excessive focus on impairment turns disabled people into objects of pity. Especially in terms of civil protection and risk and emergency management issues, people with disabilities and vulnerable people in general should be identified as high-risk and priority groups. Not because they are superior or inferior to others, but because they are proven to be affected, killed or injured, in disproportionate numbers in disasters compared to the rest of the population (for example, see UNISDR 2013, 'Living with Disability and Disasters Research' presenting the results of the UN's first global survey of people living with disabilities on how to respond to disasters).



Myth: "Disabled people are only people with motor and sensory disabilities"

Reality: The population group of people with disabilities is characterized by great heterogeneity. According to article 60 of Law 4488/2017 (Government Gazette No. 137 A/13.09.2017) persons with disabilities "mean persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory difficulties". It is an umbrella term that includes people from different disability categories. A grouping of the main categories of disability is as follows: (a) persons with motor disabilities (e.g. quadriplegia, paraplegia, etc.), (b) persons with sensory disabilities (e.g. deaf/hard of hearing, blind/ visually impaired), (c) people with a mental disability (e.g. people with manic depression, schizophrenia), (d) people with an intellectual/cognitive/developmental disability (e.g. people with autism), (e) people with other disabilities (e.g. people with Down syndrome), (f) people with chronic conditions (e.g. people with thalassemia, nephropathy, diabetes mellitus) and (g) people with severe and multiple disabilities.

The issue of restoring the "image" of disability

The provision by the media of accessible and usable information to people with disabilities and chronic conditions about legislation, policies, measures, services and programs that directly or indirectly affect them can facilitate their access to the rights enjoyed by all citizens. This is particularly important as people with disabilities and chronic conditions face barriers to the exercise of basic rights such as the right to health, education, lifelong learning, employment, civil protection, etc., consistently with their families to belong to the poorest and most excluded population groups.

The way disability is verbally and figuratively portrayed and the frequency with which people with disabilities and chronic conditions appear in the media has an impact on how they are treated by society and policies. For example, if disability is portrayed

as a tragedy, people with disabilities will be treated as if they were the victims of some tragic event and this will follow them not only in their daily lives, but also translate into social policies that attempt to compensate them for the tragedy they suffered. Conversely, if disability is portrayed as unjustified social exclusion, disabled people will be seen as members of a society that ignores and neglects them, rather than as victims of a situation. In this case social policies will focus on alleviating the exclusion they experience, and consequently on removing the obstacles they face in their efforts to participate as equal citizens in society and enjoy life.

The institutional obligations of the media towards persons with disabilities

The Constitution of the country recognizes the inalienable right of every citizen to information (Article 5A, par.1), the right of persons with disabilities to enjoy measures that ensure their autonomy, professional integration and participation in the social, economic and political life of the country (article 21, par. 6) as well as the obligation of state radio and television to show respect for the value of the human being (article 15, par. 2). With the ratification of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁴ with Law 4074/2012 (Government Gazette No. 88 A' /11.4.2012), the country committed to implement the requirements included therein. Recognizing the important role played by public and private mass media in promoting the autonomy and social inclusion of persons with disabilities, the Convention with articles 8, 9, 21 and 30 mandates the implementation of measures aimed at: a) the unhindered access of persons with a disability in the information they provide/transmit, b) their portrayal in a positive way, contributing to the cultivation of a culture of acceptance of their rights, and c) the freedom of expression of opinion and transmission of information and ideas by the disabled themselves.

According to paragraphs 1 and 2 of article 67 of Law 4488/2017 (Government Gazette No. 137/13.09.2017), which established the guidelines for the implementation of the Convention, "1. *Public and private mass media, print and electronic, promote the consolidation and respect of the principle of non-discrimination. For this purpose, the National Radio and Television Council (NRC) in the Codes of Conduct for News Broadcasts, Advertisements and Entertainment Programs that it draws up, must include provisions aimed at realizing the principle of non-discrimination due to disability, at the development of a pluralistic dialogue on the issues of persons with disabilities and the promotion of substantive equality between persons with and without disabilities.* 2. *The providers of media and communication services, including the Internet, are obliged to make use of new technologies, such as talking websites, subtitling, audio description, sign interpretation, in order to ensure the access of people with disabilities to them...*".

⁴ Available at: <https://www.esamea.gr/about-us/welcome-note/86-legal-framework/symbasi/547-symbasi-oie-gia-ta-dikaiomata-ton-atomon-me-anapiria>

Journalistic Guide: Civil Protection and People with Disabilities

On the basis of the requirements of the aforementioned paragraph 2, the no. KYA 3586/2018 (Government Gazette No. 5491 B'/06.12.2018)⁵, according to which public and private mass media service providers must:

- a) broadcast news bulletins and breaking news in Greek sign language with simultaneous subtitles in Greek,
- b) ensure on and throughout the central news bulletins the flow of all national and international news in the form of scrolling titles at low speed and
- c) broadcast a television program with informational or non-informative content, such as, among others, informational programs, documentaries, educational programs, with simultaneous subtitles in the Greek language.

The national legal framework also includes a provision on hate speech against persons with disabilities. More specifically, in paragraph 1 of article 1 of Law 4285/2014 (Government Gazette No. 191 A'/10.09.2014) it is stated that hate speech constitutes a criminal offense that entails sanctions (a fine and a prison sentence) when the perpetrator intentionally, in public, orally or by press, through the Internet or in any other means or manner, incites, provokes, incites or incites acts or actions that may cause discrimination, hatred or violence against a person or group of persons, specified based on disability, in a way that endangers public order or poses a threat to the life, liberty or physical integrity of the above persons.

Disability & chronic illness in the code of journalistic ethics

In article 5 of the Regulation no.1/1991 of the National Radio and Television Council "on journalistic ethics in radio and television" (Code of Journalistic Ethics), it is pointed out that "It is not allowed to present persons in a way that can, under the specific circumstances, encourage humiliation, social isolation or adverse discrimination to the detriment of part of the public on the basis in particular of [...] illness or disability...".

Additionally, in subsection d) of article 2 of the "Code of Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility of journalists-members of E.S.H.E.A.", it is stated that the journalist must: "Respect the protection of the minors and persons with disabilities and serious health problems".

According to the above, journalists must adopt a legal perspective on disability/chronic illness issues, as enshrined in the UN Convention (see above).

⁵ For more information, please read the relevant MLA, which is available through the website of the Hellenic Federation of Deaf (OMKE). Link: <https://www.omke.gr/wp-content/uploads/FEK-5491-2018-Prosvasi-AmeA-sta-MME.pdf>

How can the media best contribute to improving the preparedness of people with disabilities and to designing a modern, inclusive civil protection?

According to the World Health Organization, for a population, the risk, i.e. the probability of harmful consequences (death, injury, loss/damage to property, etc.), from the occurrence of potential disasters, is proportional to the magnitude of the threat (i.e. the intensity of the phenomenon) to which the population is exposed and the vulnerabilities (e.g., the degree of vulnerability) of that population, but inversely proportional to its level of preparedness. Therefore, especially for populations with increased vulnerabilities (vulnerable populations such as people with disabilities and/or chronic conditions), improving emergency preparedness, i.e., the ability to respond, is a critical factor and requires advance awareness, information, planning and expertise. By taking some simple, but targeted, steps today, individuals themselves can better prepare themselves to deal with the various potential emergencies. This is where we all can help, but especially the media through targeted campaigns and information broadcasts, for example to encourage people to go ahead with individual/family preparedness planning and to convey key information tailored to the specific needs of people with disabilities and of their families and in forms accessible and understandable to all. For example:

- information about the most likely risks in each area and about the relevant emergency plans,
- properly adapted self-protection instructions for various types of risks,
- specific preparedness instructions and checklists for various disabilities,
- information about local emergency services and any municipal pre-registration programs for individuals/households who need additional provisions,
- information on specific local/regional/national warning systems,
- information on the development of individual evacuation plans, and
- instructions on where people can go in an emergency.

Since the community of people with disabilities is characterized by diversity, exclusion and poverty, for the above efforts to have a substantial effect, it is necessary as a general principle to design multiple approaches in parallel. Access to warnings, instructions, notices, offers of assistance and other public information to persons with disabilities requires an awareness of the different needs and familiarity with the capabilities and limitations of various communication technologies. Therefore, the content should be provided in various alternative formats for hearing, vision, communication and perception problems. Indicative:

- E-mails, websites and mobile applications should be designed according to international guidelines and accessibility standards (e.g., WCAG)
- Attached and transferable files should be provided in accessible formats (e.g., accessible Word, accessible PDF, etc.) but also in alternative formats suitable for special cases (e.g., audio format, video with meaningful and subtitles, Braille and LargePrint ready format for the amblyopic, Easy Read format, etc.)
- Messages and spots should be in plain language, with large fonts, with parallel performance in sign language, etc.

Journalistic Guide: Civil Protection and People with Disabilities

- Printed material should also be produced in alternative formats (e.g., Braille print, large print version, DVD with sign language video, Easy Read version, etc.)
- Live events and activities should be organized in accessible spaces (e.g., with ramps, accessible elevators, parking and WC for the disabled, with a sign language interpretation service, with qualified presenters, etc.)
- Announcements, warnings and instructions should be relayed multiple times across different media/channels and with tailored content accordingly

General recommendations for journalists

- Use language and terminology informed by the social model of disability or the rights approach.
- Highlight the barriers that make it difficult for people with disabilities to access their rights, and do not focus on their "impairment" and "special needs".
- Avoid portraying people with disabilities and chronic conditions as either helpless or unsung heroes of everyday life.
- Convey the idea that people with disabilities and chronic diseases may have various limitations (physical, sensory, etc.), but this does not automatically imply a lack of skills and abilities for their active participation in economic, social, political and cultural development.
- Show people with disabilities and chronic diseases as everyday people who have the same obligations as any other citizen and actively participate in everyday life and in shaping society and culture.
- Make the existence of people with disabilities visible by integrating issues concerning them into your media's content and by inviting them on your shows or interviewing them to present their issues and express their views and positions.
- Highlight personal stories and incidents of people with disabilities after natural disasters and focus on gaps (e.g., accessibility) and inadequacies in existing civil protection practices that can/should be remedied.
- Highlight the need to develop strategies and allocate more resources to create inclusive and accessible civil protection infrastructure and services.
- Show cases of exclusion of people with disabilities and examples of good practice.
- Provide free advertising time/space to local disability agencies.
- Remember and celebrate European, global and international days dedicated to the rights of people with disabilities and chronic conditions.
- Develop cooperation with the Press Office of E.S.A.meA. and its member agencies in order to offer you advice and informational material.



For more information

Visit our portal at <https://portal.4plus-project.eu> and learn more about the civil protection of disabled people and disabled people in general.



**NATIONAL CONFEDERATION
OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY**

NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF DISABLED PERSONS

Athens (Headquarters)

236, El. Venizelou Av., 16341, Ilioupolis

Phone: 210 9949837

Fax: 210 5238967

Email: esaea@otenet.gr

Ioannina (Branch Office)

11, Arch. Makariou str., 45221 Ioannina

Phone: 26510 62283

Fax: 26510 62283

Email: esamea1@otenet.gr

Website: www.esamea.gr Facebook: ESAMEAgr

Twitter: ESAMEAgr · Youtube: ESAMEAGr