

## **Rescue act, rescue services, civil emergency preparedness, disaster preparedness, disaster risk management, disaster legislation**

### **Developing Climate Smart Disaster Risk Management in Finland**

#### **A) objectives**

Climate change increases disaster risks and vulnerabilities in Finland and the surrounding area. Fires, floods or other disasters may easily affect larger regions and thus increase the need for effective cross-border cooperation. Foresight, climate smart risk assessment and national and regional preparedness planning play an important role in preparing for climate-related emergencies.

The Rescue Act (379/2011) is the most important national legal framework regulating rescue services and civil emergency preparedness in Finland. The Ministry of the Interior (MoI) manages, directs and supervises rescue services and civil emergency preparedness by preparing the relevant national legislation. The Ministry is also responsible for coordinating national risk assessments. In Finland, national risk assessments are prepared in line with EU legislation on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism<sup>1</sup>. The most recent national risk assessment was concluded in 2018.

Finland's national legislation governing rescue services and civil emergency preparedness will be reviewed in 2020-2023. During this revision process it would be important to assess whether the existing domestic legislation, policies, strategies and plans are climate smart so that they provide the necessary guidance to prepare for and address the evolving risk of climate-related hazards and risks and ensure climate-smart disaster risk management. It is further important to acknowledge, within rescue services, the special attention required by vulnerable groups such as the elderly or persons with disabilities, and the specific needs of people in vulnerable situations.

In 2018, the Finnish Red Cross (FRC), as auxiliaries to the public authorities<sup>2</sup>, and the MoI signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) related, among others, to national emergency preparedness and rescue services. The MoU further specifies that in order to provide and deliver effective assistance domestically as well as internationally, the MoI and FRC can work together via joint trainings and exercises, and by sharing expertise. In addition, the MoI develops cooperation mechanisms and capacities for emergencies including a mechanism for volunteer management, in which the FRC participates. This initiative includes establishing practical guidelines and tools.

In the implementation of the MoU, an enhanced preparedness for receiving and providing international assistance in the field of civil protection as well as making better use of the existing capacities domestically have been identified as concrete targets for further development. Utilizing these capacities comprehensively is an effective way to enhance preparedness for emergencies caused or amplified by climate change.

The Finnish Government pledges to:

1. take into account, where relevant, existing EU and international guidelines in the assessment of national guidelines for receiving international assistance (Host Nation Support) in the field of civil protection. Where deemed appropriate, take into account the "Checklist on law and disaster preparedness and response" during the upcoming review of the Rescue Act, guidelines on Host Nation Support and other relevant policies, taking especially into account

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<sup>1</sup> EU/1313/2013

<sup>2</sup> Act on the Finnish Red Cross (238/2000); Presidential Decree on the Finnish Red Cross (827/2017)

the impact of disasters and emergencies on specific groups in vulnerable situations, and their special needs;

2. develop and promote practical guidance for Host Nation support in Finland, including by making use of, where relevant, existing guidance, recommendations and tools.

The Finnish Red Cross pledges to:

1. provide expertise and advice, where appropriate, to the MoI during the review of the Rescue Act and related legislation, policies and guidelines, as well as the ongoing process of development of volunteer coordination and management
2. provide expertise and advice, where appropriate, the effects of climate change in the national emergency preparedness policies and guidance of the rescue services. In such policies and guidance, take especially into account the impact of disasters and emergencies on vulnerable people, and the special needs they have during and after rescue efforts.

**b) action plan**

1. FRC, in cooperation with the Finnish Government and especially MoI, will organize a joint thematic and participatory workshop and/or exercise in 2020-2022 focusing on i) implementation of HNSG and ii) usability of international assets domestically which will feed into review of the Rescue Act and other relevant legislation.
2. During the review of the Rescue Act, guidelines on Host Nation Support and the “Checklist on law and disaster preparedness and response” will be assessed and, where deemed appropriate, taken into account in the revised Act and/or other relevant policies and practical guidance.
3. FRC will continue to participate and provide expertise in the MoI lead working group to improve volunteer coordination in the field of rescue service.

**c) evaluation criteria**

1. Thematic and participatory workshop and/or exercise has been organized in 2020-2022 with identified recommendations.
2. Guidelines on Host Nation Support and Checklist has considered in preparation of Rescue Act / other relevant policies and practical guidance.