

**RISK MANAGEMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A DEVELOPING COUNTRY:
THE CASE OF UNGHENI, MOLDOVA**

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ABSTRACT

Multi-hazard risk assessment and its inclusion in spatial planning are challenging for many local governments within the EU, for sure. However, local governments in developing countries have to face this challenge in more difficult circumstances, with limited local resources and in many cases limited national assistance. The District Council of Ungheni is the very first local government in Moldova to participate in an EU project to strengthen Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and brings a whole new experience to the EU partners of the CRISMAS (Community for Risk Management and Assessment) project.

The region of Ungheni faces significant risk levels, from both intensive risks (low likelihood-high impact) and the cumulation of extensive risks (high likelihood-low impact). The risks include major natural hazards, like floods, hail storms, drought, earthquakes and landslides, as well as man-made risks of transport of hazardous substances and unexploded WWII ammunitions. The city of Ungheni (regional capital) already has gained experience on DRM in a cooperation project with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), but there is a need to broaden this experience to the whole region, including its (vulnerable) rural areas.

The lack of resources sheds another light on the challenges that local governments are facing anyway. Ungheni is coping with these limitations by very intensive stakeholder cooperation. The involvement and commitment of entities to exchange their information and knowledge is stronger than in many cases across the EU. The cornerstone of this commitment is a strong political leadership, that embraces the importance of Disaster Risk Management as a fundamental value for the local society. Another specific need is the close involvement of the population itself. As the government and emergency services has limited capacities for quick response on a large scale, there is a bigger need for self-reliance and community resilience. This requires a large effort in risk education. To this end, there is a high involvement of the civil society and NGO's. Furthermore, there is a specific need to closely tie local DRM strategies to Sustainable Development Goals, as disaster losses can seriously impede sustainable development. This means that strategic DRM goals have to relate to the protection of development or even the active stimulation of it, rather than protecting the existing societal assets, as is mostly the practice in EU Member States. To find win-win between safety and development, a whole different mindset is needed.

Keywords: Risk management, multi-hazard risk assessment, prevention, sustainable development.