

# CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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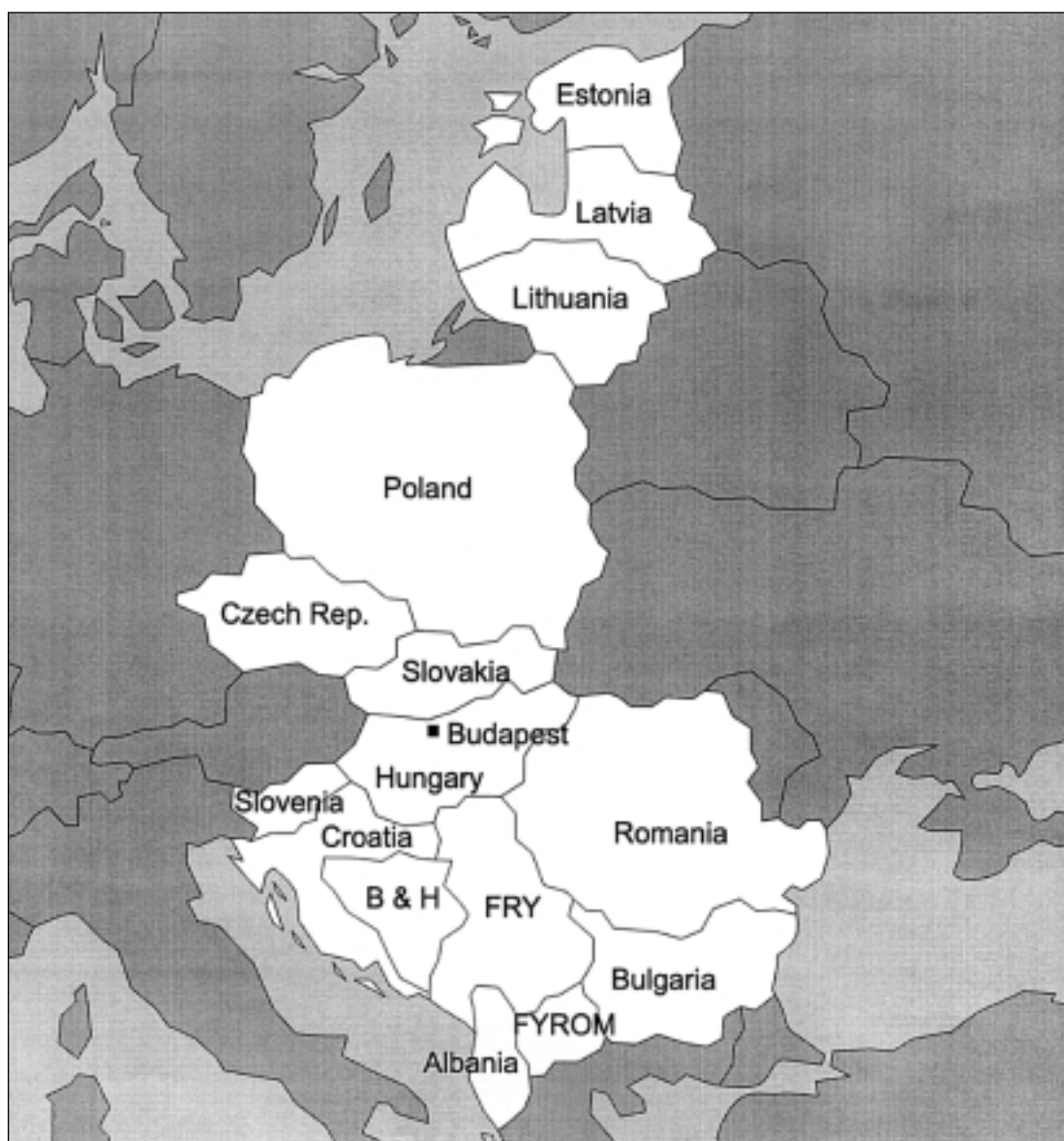
## *Regional Context*

The three subregions covered by the Federation's Regional Delegation in Budapest – Central Europe, the Balkans, and the Baltics – are experiencing dramatic socio-economic movements, depending on their historical, geographical, and contemporary situations. While the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) early in 1999 and, together with Slovenia and Estonia, are likely front-runners for joining the European Union (EU) in the near future, the full extent of the impact this will have on economic and social development is uncertain. Some countries in the region (especially in the Balkans) are continuing to struggle against increasing poverty, chaotic political and economic conditions, and heightened security concerns. All the countries in the region face, in various degrees and combinations, the challenges of environmental degradation, natural disasters, organised crime, inter-ethnic tension, and the social costs of structural adjustment programmes which governments have implemented in the transition from command to free market economies. Of the subregions' total population of approximately 130 million, an estimated 20-30% live below the poverty line. This number has risen in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and neighbouring countries because of the war in Kosovo.

Overall, impressive advances have been made toward a market economy, although often at a great human cost. Women, children, youth, the elderly, as well as the physically and mentally disabled, have been hit hard by economic reforms. Such reforms have left states much weaker than before and, therefore, no longer able or inclined to provide a social safety net for many of their vulnerable citizens. In the aftermath of the war in Kosovo, life has become even more desperate for larger numbers of people, especially the thousands of refugees. The social fabric of the countries affected is more fragile than before.

The pace of structural change in the three subregions appears to be slower than in the first half of the 1990s. This is mainly because reform efforts that were 'easier' to implement were undertaken in the early years of systemic transformation, leaving a core of difficult tasks yet to be tackled. As governments in Central Europe, the Balkans, and the Baltics continue to address transition and adjustment issues, the situation of the most vulnerable can be expected to get worse over the next four years. This background does, however, present the National Societies in the region with a unique opportunity to reinforce their role in civil society and in acting as a bridge to both the government and business communities. The National Societies of those countries expected to join the EU in the near future will have an increasingly important role to play as new networks of funding opportunities open up. This in turn should assist other National Societies involved in preparing for this role at a later date.

With the transition to a market economy, new categories of people have suddenly found themselves vulnerable to the sweeping changes. In some countries the process of transition has placed what were once basic necessities out of the reach of the average family income. Families with many children have been particularly affected, as have those people with a lower level of education. As a result, malnutrition levels have risen, as well as underweight births. Women have emerged as a particularly vulnerable group. The social consequences of



economic transition – such as unemployment, domestic violence, trafficking in women and limited access to education and health care – have limited opportunities for women to improve their situation.

The elderly in the transitional societies, many barely surviving on inadequate pensions, are often neglected by state medical and health services. Youth in the region have been especially hard hit by unemployment, often disproportionately so. Meanwhile, their health is increasingly at risk from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), HIV/AIDS, drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

Environmental degradation was pervasive under the old regimes, and the origin and scale of the environmental problems make this the major transition issue in the region. In many countries the health care system itself is on the critical list, and cholera, typhoid, and tuberculosis are emerging again as health threats because of poor hygiene and sanitation.

### ***Country Assistance Strategy***

The Regional Delegation not only has an important role to play in building the capacity of the National Societies in the subregions so that they can more effectively and efficiently meet the needs of their countries' vulnerable groups, but also in helping National Societies to strengthen civil society in their countries. This Regional

Assistance Strategy (RAS) was designed to be implemented within the framework of the Federation's *Strategy 2010*. At various levels and to various degrees, its contents have been shared and, whenever possible, discussed with National Societies both inside and outside the region. Its priorities reflect the goals of the Europe Strategy developed by the Secretariat and provide the scope to address issues raised in the Copenhagen Declaration of 1997. They also feed into and form the priorities of the country assistance strategies for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

There are a total of four country delegations (in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia and FR Yugoslavia) in the region covered by the Regional Delegation (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia).

The Regional Delegation shares with the National Societies an evolving working environment, influenced by socio-economic and political factors, which demand a regular process of review and adaptation to changes. Toward this end, the Delegation has initiated the first in a series of inhouse workshops aimed at improving the quality of its service to its various clients, especially the National Societies, fostering increased collaboration with the ICRC, as well as governments, businesses, and other non-governmental organisations in the subregions, and incorporating strategic thinking into the day-to-day activities. It is expected that these inhouse workshops will continue over the next two-to-four years. The process will encourage a more integrative approach to various regional programmes, requiring a greater emphasis on teambuilding within the Regional Delegation.

The priorities for Federation assistance are:

- strengthening the National Societies institutionally and professionally for them to maintain their leadership role among voluntary humanitarian organisations in their respective countries.
- providing training on organisational issues, as well as on communications, media, public relations and marketing techniques, with a particular emphasis on training the young, dynamic, visionary and potential future leaders of the Red Cross Movement.
- strengthening the disaster preparedness capacity of National Societies and their role in national disaster preparedness plans and contingency planning for socio-economic emergencies, so that they are better able to respond in the case of flooding, earthquakes or other natural disasters, and in case of population movements.
- health related contingency planning in the face of newly-emerging and re-emerging epidemics, such as diphtheria, TB, alcohol/drug abuse/HIV, through targeted youth activities.

## ***Programme objectives***

### ***Disaster Response***

The Regional Delegation will provide support to National Societies in response to disasters – natural, technological or man-made. The Regional Delegation will, when needed, be a focal point for the co-ordination of disaster response, involving the monitoring, information and mobilisation stages as well as the provision of human and financial resources in the case of disaster, mobilising existing resources (principally technical and human) in the region where possible, and utilising existing regional know-how and experience. The Regional Delegation will also provide additional support to mobilise funding for such an operation, through donor networking and the Federation's appeal process, if required. Priority countries include those prone to flooding in Central and Eastern Europe, and earthquakes particularly in the Balkan sub-region, and those with a fragile socio-economic basis. Attention will also be given to population movement developments with a focus on the Balkan region, as well as the Baltic region, where a further deterioration in the socio-economic situation in Russia could precipitate increasing numbers of economic migrants. As support in disaster response will focus mainly on a monitoring role, with planning and mobilisation on a case-by-case basis, disaster response does not constitute, as such, a regional programme and a project format has not been developed.

## ***Disaster Preparedness***

Disaster Preparedness (DP) has become an increasingly important issue in the region over recent years for three main reasons: population movement, floods and conflict. This is why the Regional Delegation is intensifying its focus on the DP programme, which aims to strengthen the National Societies' capacities to respond to local and national scale disasters. There is a considerable north/south gap in the region between countries that are economically fairly stable and countries which have to deal with less favourable economic, political and security situations. A DP strategy for the region needs to consider this gap and the different needs for assistance, as well as the potential for sub-regional and regional cooperation. Given the current situation in and around Kosovo, specific attention needs to be given to DP needs in Albania, FYR Macedonia, FR Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In all of these countries there is a need to strengthen and rebuild capacities to deal with the displacement of populations. Such contingency planning should include communications systems and equipment, the pre-positioning of relief supplies at strategic sites and short, well targeted skill building. This short term planning needs to be supplemented by the development of a longer term strategy to build sustainable DP capacities in all four National Societies. This element provides a natural link-up with the regional institutional and resource development programme. Close co-ordination and co-operation with all the players involved, including the components of the Movement, governments, UN agencies and other relevant NGOs, will be crucial to achieve a successful end result.

The ongoing DP programme with the Polish, Czech and Slovak Societies, which is a direct result of the 1997 floods in Central Europe, will continue. These three countries, as well as Slovenia, Hungary and Estonia, are not especially disaster prone and operate in fairly stable political and economic environments. In DP they will need well targeted support and advice on specific issues, such as integration with national DP plans, DP legislation, resource development and management, policy issues and guidelines, and the strengthening of high risk branches. The strategic goal of the DP programme is to collect experience and best practice from NS (in relations with governments, legislation, and resource mobilisation), and to share this with other NS that are still trying to cope with the consequences of transition or a post-conflict environment. Different forms of regional co-operation to foster this exchange and mutual learning process need to be explored.

## ***Health***

The Regional Delegation will support the National Societies in the region in health education and health services programmes. Assistance will be provided in programme design, planning, budgeting, implementing and evaluating programmes. National Societies may become involved in social mobilisation/vaccination campaigns linked to epidemic control and health education related to re-emerging diseases such as diphtheria and TB or related to substance abuse or HIV/AIDS. Similar assistance will also continue to be provided for social welfare programmes in the region. The Regional Delegation will also have an important role to play in coordinating technical support for blood services and programmes – especially blood donation and donor recruitment – from the Secretariat to the National Societies.

Support to the NS in this core area will mainly be provided through enhancing skills, covered under other regional programmes (ID/RD, youth and communications).

## ***Humanitarian Values***

The promotion of humanitarian values is an issue which cuts across all of the Regional Delegation and National Society programmes, the impact of which is closely tied to effective communication. Priority will be given to supporting National Societies in communications strategy building and development of information and public relations activities to more effectively disseminate the message of the Red Cross. Training opportunities will be provided at both national and branch level of National Societies to increase the active participation of more National Society staff and volunteers in promotional activities which will contribute to the promotion of humanitarian values in general. There will be close co-ordination with the ICRC in this work.

As a thread, running through all programmes, communications is very important to the resource development programme, especially in the areas of public relations, media relations, and social marketing. Secondly, in the areas of disaster preparedness and disaster prevention, the communications programme in co-operation with

the ICRC has a vital role to play in alerting the communities in the regions to potential inter-ethnic conflict situations before they erupt into violence, promoting diversity and tolerance and fostering conflict resolution. The programmes and services of Red Cross Youth sections are an important vehicle for the promotion of humanitarian values, and as such special attention will be paid to strengthening the communication skills of Youth members and volunteers.

The Regional Delegation will assist the National Societies in developing their internal, as well as external, communications strategies, and has an important role to play generally in facilitating better information networking in the region.

## ***Capacity Building***

A core area of the Regional Delegation's work will be institutional and resource development. With the socio-economic and environmental problems in the region becoming ever more complex and interrelated, the Regional Delegation is adopting a more integrated approach to its capacity building programmes. The ID and RD programmes, working closely together, will assist National Societies to identify non-traditional vulnerable groups, to identify the needs of these groups and to design, implement and evaluate gender and culture-sensitive programmes and/or projects. The strategy for 2000-2003 will build on the results of an initial two year programme begun in 1999.

The ID and RD programmes will facilitate the networking of National Societies in the three subregions, assisting them to share their experiences and learn from each other. In addition, the ID and RD programmes will assist the National Societies to improve their strategic planning capacities, taking into consideration the need to form strategic alliances with business, government on various levels and non-governmental organisations.

The close co-operation of the ID and RD programmes will initially focus on National Societies in five countries recommended by an independent consultant to take part in the Resource Development Programme during the first year. These five countries are: Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and Poland. The programme aims to assist National Societies to make more realistic assessments of their current resource development situation and to develop strategies for moving towards financial selfreliance. Human and financial resources within the region will be mobilised to strengthen the sustainability of the programme. Activities will also be co-ordinated with the delegation's global recruitment and training programme, which aims to increase regional exchange of qualified human resources between National Societies and to widen the pool of potential delegates, reflecting the international nature of the Federation.

The RD strategy for the five countries will be adapted by the National Societies into specific country action plans, with clear goals, outputs, activities, and objectively verifiable indicators. The RD programme will call for the involvement of all of the Regional Delegation's capacity building programmes, as well as the participation of key actors from the National Societies' governance and management and the leadership of a minimum of three branches from each National Society.

In addition, the institutional development programme will provide a phased and targeted response to the institutional development needs of eleven National Societies in the region. The first group of National Societies (Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) have highlighted a need to review strategies and programme orientation as well as to update management procedures and in some cases strengthen governance and communication channels between headquarters and branches. Here the programme will focus on carrying out a self assessment in each National Society and drawing up a two year action plan, with competent National Society facilitators/teams to implement the process.

The second group (Albania, Estonia, FR Yugoslavia, Lithuania) is where Federation support to National Societies has had more of a capacity building focus in recent years and the recommendations of recent National Society self assessments and existing programme evaluations will be implemented, as well as policies and strategies developed for the next Millennium. In the case of the third group (Croatia, FYR Macedonia and

Latvia), the programme will focus on promoting the value of carrying out an institutional analysis with the objective of drawing up plans to begin implementation of the process in the year 2000.

The ID/RD programme will be co-ordinated with the country delegations, particularly with capacity building activities following the Balkan Crisis relief operation. An agreement has been outlined that will see the Regional Delegation assisting the country delegation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in designing and carrying out an ID/RD assessment, as well as a VCA. In addition, the Regional Delegation will, together with the Nordic and Baltic Red Cross Societies, explore future collaborative efforts, especially in light of the Nordic-Baltic Work Plan.

An additional important component of the Regional delegation's capacity Building Plan is the Regional Youth Programme. Through their programmes and services, Red Cross Youth members and volunteers contribute to the four core programme areas identified by the Federation. As such it is essential that a separate programme responds to their particular needs and environment, while at the same time supporting the Youth Sections as an integral part of the National Society, involved in all aspects of the National Society's activities, planning and decision making processes.

The Regional Delegation will assist in the development of a strong, sustainable regional Red Cross Youth network, enabling the Youth sections to maximise their own capacities, drawing on human resources and experience from the region. Common needs will be met by regional capacity building activities, while individual country needs will be met by country-specific activities. The focus on capacity building will complement activities within the ID/RD programme, and will cover self-assessment, communication skills, public relations, fund-raising, and the development of short-term strategies. These activities will provide the basis for the development of concrete action plans and more effective targeting.

The International Federation re-established its presence in Turkey as a result of the earthquake of 17 August 1999, which killed more than 17,000 people in the north west of the country; this was followed by a second earthquake on 12 November 1999 in the same region, where at least 500 people died.

The main focus of Federation support to the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) has since been directed towards relief, health and water/sanitation activities, throughout the immediate and post emergency phases of both earthquakes.

From the start of 2000, it is expected that the emphasis will switch to longer term programmes, particularly disaster preparedness, psycho-social support, physiotherapy and reconstruction/rehabilitation.

Unfortunately, the spectre of further earthquakes and other natural disasters in Turkey cannot be discounted and it is essential that the TRCS is assisted in stepping up its readiness and response mechanisms in the future.

Specific projects envisaged include improved communications links between the various components of the TRCS Disaster Preparedness network, computerisation and restocking of warehouses, training of volunteers and staff and re-equipping the Society's branches in all at-risk zones.

In addition the Federation plans to work with the Turkish Red Crescent in a major reconstruction and rehabilitation effort, which will restore and return public buildings, primarily in the health, education and social welfare sectors, to their communities.

The Federation is planning to retain a Delegation in the country throughout the relief and rehabilitation period to work closely with the Turkish Red Crescent in developing joint programmes for the strengthening of Disaster Preparedness structures and the institutional capacity of the TRCS.