

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

CENTRAL EUROPE: FLOODS

9 August, 2002

Information Bulletin N° 1, 2002

Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: None

This Bulletin is for information only, and is based on the reports received so far. Additional information is expected shortly. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Regional Delegation for Central Europe immediately contacted the affected Red Cross National Societies. Support was offered, as well as information regarding the availability of DREF funds, if they should prove necessary.

The Situation

Unusually heavy rains falling over a broad area of Central Europe have resulted in widespread flooding. In Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Romania the floods have been particularly severe. Three people were reported killed in Czech, while two people were killed in Romania. Meanwhile, thousands of others have been evacuated to safer areas.

The weather forecast for the next few days threatens even more rain. A rain dense and very slow moving front is lingering over the area, heading towards the Black Sea. At the time of writing, intermittent rain continues to fall. In Austria, elderly villagers reported that they had never experienced such water levels before. Artificial lakes, which normally have an outflow of 3000 to 4000 litres of water per second currently are experiencing flows of 500 000 litres per second. The result is that small villages and towns along the path of normally small outlet rivers are flooded in minutes.

In the Czech Republic, the Malse, Moldau, Luznice and Bianice rivers burst their banks. Citizens declared the floods to be the worst in the past fifty years, while in some areas the water levels were the highest in a hundred years. In some locations the water level was higher than the cars on the street, and the most vulnerable (particularly the elderly) were immediately evacuated. Children also had to be evacuated from summer camps, forcing an early and unfortunate end to their summer vacations. The regional capital of Ceske Budejovice was particularly affected. Roads were out of service, as were five rail lines. Experts declared that in three days, the area had received as much rain as in a normal three month period.

The deaths in Romania were of an elderly man and a child, while more than seventy homes have already been reported damaged.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Austrian Red Cross:

In Austria, the Red Cross has been working together with the fire brigade and the military to aid those affected by the floods. A 24 hour around the clock operation helped to ensure that those at risk were rescued. While efforts are continuing, it is believed that all of those who were in immediate danger have now been assisted. However, water levels remain dangerously high, with the risk of more rain at any moment.

Czech Red Cross:

The Czech Red Cross took immediate action to assist those affected by the floods. The Red Cross was asked to provide food and water for the evacuation centres, which they promptly did. As of Friday, August 9, the rivers had returned to their beds, and evacuees were able to return to their flooded homes. The work of pumping out the water has begun, with insurance companies estimating the damage to be likely in the area of hundreds of millions of crowns.



Rescue workers in Austria

Romanian Red Cross:

As of Friday, the Romanian Red Cross reports that the situation remains very serious. They have provided humanitarian assistance to those affected, and are closely monitoring the situation, which for the moment does not appear to be improving. Additional updates are expected shortly.

Bulgarian Red Cross:

Information regarding the current situation in Bulgaria is expected shortly.

The situation in all of the countries concerned is being monitored closely. Contacts with the Red Cross National Societies are ongoing. Additional information will be covered in subsequent info-bulletins.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

For further details please contact: Penny Elghady, Phone 41 22 730 4319; Fax 41 22 733 0395; email elghady@ifrc.org

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

John Horekens
Director
Division of External Relations

Lynette Lowndes
Head
Europe Department