

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

13 August, 2002

Information Bulletin N° 2, 2002

Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) Allocated: 0

This Bulletin is for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time. The Regional Delegation for Central Europe is in contact with all of the National Societies concerned. Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

The Situation

Large sections of Europe have been affected by unusually heavy rains during the second week of August. From Spain to Italy, Austria to the Black Sea, the weather proved to be both unpredictable and dangerous. Flooding has been widespread, resulting in a range of casualties and damage. In addition to the floods, there were also incidents of hail and heavy winds.

In Central Europe, the damage was minimal in some areas but quite dramatic in others. At the time of compiling this report, the rains are continuing with flood waters cresting, while in other areas flood waters have already receded. Gathering accurate information on the flood situation remains difficult, although more details are now becoming clear. It will take some time to fully assess the damage, however preliminary indications are that in some areas



Flooded street in Austria

this years' crops have been completely destroyed while in other areas there are major concerns over health conditions and disinfection campaigns are underway. In other regions many houses have been destroyed or badly damaged. The rain continues to fall, and water levels are dangerously high, with an increasing number of rivers once again threatening to burst their banks. Citizens in the affected countries have been placing sandbags, evacuating particularly at risk areas, and generally preparing for any eventuality.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Action

The Red Cross has been involved in various ways across the region. This has ranged from rescue work to food and water provision, to disinfection services and the distribution of relief packages. With the rains continuing, it seems likely that Red Cross involvement will increase over the next few days.

Austrian Red Cross:

The Austrian Red Cross responded quickly to the floods. Austria has seen the highest level of rainfall in a two-day period since records began more than 100 years ago. In co-operation with the fire brigade and the

military, a non-stop rescue operation evacuated those at risk. The Red Cross also organised mobile kitchens, providing hot food and drinks to those affected.

For more information, as well as for photos of the flooding, please visit the Austrian Red Cross web site: <http://www.rotekreuz.at>

Bulgarian Red Cross:

Heavy rains and floods severely affected the regions of Gabrovo, Pleven, Lovech, Razgrad, Shumen and Veliko Turnovo in the north, as well as Yambol and Pasardjik in the south. In some areas, the entire crop is either destroyed or threatened. The heavy rains were accompanied by large hailstones which quickly destroyed crops. The Red Cross assisted through distributing family packages and clothing, as well as by conducting assessment visits. Initial damage estimates are in the area of 4.5 million CHF.

Czech Red Cross:

Rapidly rising flood waters caused rivers to burst their banks. This resulted in large-scale evacuations. The Czech Red Cross responded to a request by the authorities to provide clean drinking water and food for the evacuees. The work of cleaning, rebuilding and disinfecting damaged property has now begun. While damage estimates are still being calculated, the amount is expected to be in the hundreds of millions of crowns (in the area of CHF 11 million). No technical or financial assistance has been requested so far, but at the moment authorities in Prague are bracing themselves for what are predicted to be the highest river levels in the past one hundred years. Roads, power lines, telephone lines and so on were reported severed, restored, and now at risk of being severed again.

Hungarian Red Cross:

The Hungarian Red Cross has been distributing hygiene parcels to some 100 to 150 affected citizens of Halmaj, in Borsod county. They were forced to evacuate their homes when a small stream surged and burst its banks. The Red Cross has been co-operating with state disaster preparedness teams, and are currently conducting an assessment in the area. Heavy rains are continuing across Hungary, with no respite predicted for the next three to four days. The level of the Danube continues to rise, and in Budapest is very close to breaching its banks.

Romanian Red Cross:

While in other areas the flooding has receded, the situation in Romania seems to have intensified over the weekend. The slow moving weather front is still concentrated over the country, while it is predicted that eventually it will move out over the Black Sea. Several deaths have been reported, as well as widespread damage. At the time of writing, a more detailed report is pending from the Romanian Red Cross. Preliminary information indicates that the Romanian Red Cross is actively involved in providing aid and assistance to those affected by the floods.

Slovakia Red Cross:

The flooding in Slovakia is estimated to have caused damage in the range of 100 million SK (CHF 3.3 million). The Slovak Red Cross has been active in cleaning and disinfecting damaged properties. At the moment they have requested some CHF 5000 in order to purchase additional cleaning and disinfecting supplies.

Apart from a small amount of money needed for purchasing disinfectant supplies, none of the affected National Societies have requested assistance at this time. However, the forecast for the next few days is for more heavy rain across the region. The citizens of towns and cities along the routes of rivers are bracing themselves for the worst, as river levels once again begin to rise. The Regional Delegation for Central Europe is monitoring the situation very closely.

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

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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.

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