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ENHANCING EMERGENCY OPERATIONS COORDINATION

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Republic of Serbia

Investing in disaster preparedness is worth it – both in terms of human lives saved and economic returns. This story aims to share the experience of six National Societies in South-Eastern Europe that have increased their interoperability and emergency management capacity, to provide a better response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

Why do we need an Emergency Operations Centre?

Six National Societies in South-Eastern Europe – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Republic of Serbia – joined efforts to increase their capacity to prepare and respond to emergencies through the development and implementation of **Emergency Operations Centres (EOC)**.



The purpose of each Emergency Operations Centre is to support the National Society headquarters, local branches and disaster response teams with **real-time disaster and crisis information for efficient decision-making** and communication with internal and external stakeholders. The EOC is linked to early-warning systems and enables real time communication through a common online platform.

The Emergency Operations Centres utilize new technology that allows emergency responders to share various details about any incident, including the GPS location and images via mobile devices. This maximizes real-time situational awareness and helps ensure a well coordinated and appropriate response to emergencies. When the COVID-19 pandemic was severely affecting Europe, the EOCs of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Republic of Serbia were activated to provide a more effective response.

Bosnia and Herzegovina Red Cross: Snapshot of an EOC in action

The Red Cross, with support from the USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), took over the management of the vaccination process in Brcko District by the delegation of the local government. Through their EOC, volunteers and staff attended to calls from the population, managed their registration and vaccination schedules, and sent the information to the public health institute daily. The Red Cross also managed the QR codes of the vaccination certificates and a scorecard to monitor the parameters of the epidemic, which is hosted on the official government website and serves for decision making.

PREPAREDNESS AREA & COMPONENT RELATED

OPERATIONAL CAPACITY



Emergency Operations Centre

KEY STATS



To date, near **30,000 appointments** have been successfully completed in **Brcko District, Bosnia and Herzegovina**. EOC staff and volunteers have received tens of thousands of calls to provide information about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Weblinks to the **dashboards** managed by Brcko Red Cross for the Government:

- Statistics of people registered for vaccination process. [Link](#)
- Statistics of people tested, hospitalized. [Link](#)
- Statistics of transportation services provided by Red Cross. [Link](#)

Keys to success



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- **The EOC is a critically important tool for effective coordination** during response to disasters and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Emergency Operations Centres help positioning National Societies in the crisis management system in line with their **auxiliary role**.
- Interoperability with Governmental EOCs helps in **sharing data and up to date overviews** of existing capacities available at the Red Cross central and branch level.
- During disasters the EOCs accommodate different technical teams that work together either in EOC space or remotely to **increase coordination**.
- Building communication and coordination capacities for effective preparedness and response in Southern-Eastern Europe has been an opportunity to kick start **digital transformation approach** in National Societies.
- Channelling all the prevention and preparedness activities through Emergency Operations Centres proved to be a **winning formula**: it connects structures instead of people, creates fast and recognized communication lines, and allows decisions to be taken where emergencies are happening.



“Branch preparedness helped us to respond to this global challenge. Before this emergency started, we did a multi-hazard approach planning because we live in an area prone to disasters. In our preparedness activities, we invested in an Emergency Operations Center, radio communication, ambulances, PPE and, most importantly, in human resources. All of that investment enabled us to support effectively the vulnerable population of our district”.

Nemanja Zekic, Deputy Secretary, Brcko District branch, Bosnia and Herzegovina Red Cross

For more information:

- Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina: <https://rcsbh.org/rcsbh-izbor-jezika.html>
- National Society Preparedness: www.ifrc.org/disaster-preparedness

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