



# Verona Charter

8 - 9 november 2007

verona charter on the rescue of persons with disabilities in case of disasters

## Consensus Conference Minutes

### Day one (8 November 2007)

#### PART 1 – Plenary Sessions Presentations

START TIME: 9.30	END TIME: 13.30
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##### **Claudio Detogni**

Director of Office for International Relations - ULSS 20 Verona

Welcome and opening:

CD thanks all participants at the conference and the institutions supporting the event. He communicates to the audience that the President of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano has granted the Consensus Conference his "Alto Patronato."

##### **Pierluigi Saletti**

Comune di Verona - Civil Protection

PS brings the regards of the Municipality of Verona.

He underlines that the Civil Protection of the municipality in Verona strongly supports the Consensus Conference and that the first aim of the Civil Protection is the enhancement of protection and security among citizens.

##### **Gianantonio Bresciani**

GB expresses his pleasure in taking part in the organisation of the conference. He also introduces Telethon (one of the supporting organisations) to the audience. Telethon is a non-profit organisation founded in 1966 in US by the actor Jerry Lewis. The organisation's main statutory aim is financing scientific-medical research on genetic diseases through fundraising activities. Telethon works towards increasing the awareness of public opinion and raises funds for financing outstanding research projects.

##### **Alfonso Mattera**

On behalf of Franco Frattini

EC DG Freedom, Security and Justice

Fundamental Rights and the Value of the European Project:

AM talks about the fundamental values and rights that are the basis of European culture and society. The European Union is not just an economic model. The idea of a European Union is

based on shared values and human rights, whose origins lie in ancient Greece. These values are the basis of modern European society. The modern concept of human rights is based on 25 centuries of history. The Verona Charter on the Rescue of Persons with Disabilities represents a realisation of these values and human rights.

Alfonso Mattera then gives a deep and articulated lecture on the philosophical and historical backgrounds on which the modern concept of human rights was developed.

### **Agostino Miozzo**

Italian Department of Civil Protection

Italian Civil Protection Mechanism:

AM introduces the specific topic of disability and disaster. Disability issues in general seem to be some of the last important priorities of our society and the issue related to the safety of persons with disabilities in case of disaster has only recently been brought to the public's attention. In Italy, in particular, a discussion regarding the safety of persons with disabilities has just started. The Italian civil protection mechanism is considered, from many points of view, a model in the European context, but no real action has been taken regarding the protection of persons with disabilities. In 2001, the Italian Fire Brigades Department produced a document with guidelines on how to rescue persons with disabilities in emergency situations. Many simulation exercises are being organised at local, national and international levels by civil protection authorities, but rarely is there reference to disabilities issues and the needs of persons with disabilities. We cannot wait until a disaster occurs in order to test the capacity of civil protections in dealing with the needs of vulnerable groups (reference to Katrina and the Tsunami).

In addition, early warning systems do not take into account the special needs of persons with disabilities. For example, the tsunami alert system is a very sophisticated technological device based on satellite information and warns the population in case of risk of tsunami through a sound alarm. It is obvious that persons with a hearing impairment would be disadvantaged in a tsunami alert situation. In addition, persons with sight impairments or a mobility limitations could be left behind because no beach evacuation systems for persons with disabilities have been created in tsunami risk-affected areas.

A team of persons with disabilities works in the communication and information unit of the Italian Civil Protection Department in Rome. Their main task is to provide fast communication in case of emergency.

In the summer of 2000, some persons with disabilities lost their lives in a camp site in Italy. The camp site was located on a river bed. The area became flooded due to heavy raining and some tourists with disabilities did not have chance to escape and as a result, some of them lost their lives. This tragic event brought awareness to the issue of the safety of persons with disabilities at a European level. Article 19 of the 4 of September 2007 European Parliament Resolution is very important in this regard.

The Verona Charter on the Rescue of Persons with Disabilities in case of Disaster is praiseworthy as well. Agostino Miozzo thanks Claudio Detogni for his tenacity and persistence in carrying out this initiative and states that he will be happy to sign the Verona Charter.

He concludes his speech by saying that a change in the paradigm is needed when it comes to addressing the needs of persons with disabilities. They have to be addressed in the right way and not only in emergency situations, but in everyday life within the framework of basic human rights.

His last comment is that it appears that European national civil protections do not see this issue as a priority. A confirmation of this is the fact that there are no delegates of the National Civil Protection among the participants at the conference despite formal invitations sent to all EU MS national civil protections by the European Commission and the Italian Department of Civil Protection.

## **Mascia Toussaint**

EC-DG Environment

European Civil Protection Instruments:

MT begins her speech asserting that RDD is a project full of ambition. Society is not ready yet to provide the adequate protection to persons with disabilities in case of disaster and there is a need for procedures that do not discriminate.

Mascia Toussaint presents the main fields of action of the civil protection mechanism:

1. Operation centre: the monitoring and information centre (MIC) is the operational heart of the mechanism and the contact point for MS. It is operated by DG Environment of the European Commission and accessible 24 hours a day. It gives countries access to a platform: a one-stop-shop of civil protection means available to all the participating states. Any country, inside or outside the Union, affected by a major disaster can make an appeal for assistance through this system. It is crucial in response to major disasters. It plays a coordinating role by matching offers of assistance put forth by participating states to the needs of the disaster-stricken country. Last summer, the operation centre registered 12 calls for assistance.
2. Preparedness: training programmes are set up in order to improve the coordination of civil protection assistance interventions by ensuring compatibility and complementarity between the intervention teams from the participating states. It also enhances the skills of experts involved in civil protection assistance operations through the sharing of best practices. This programme involves training courses, the organisation of joint exercises and a system of exchange of experts from the participating states.

The civil protection financial instrument covers the financial aspects of preparedness and response actions covered by the community mechanism for civil protection. The main aim of the mechanism is to enhance complementary action at the European level. Improvement is constantly needed. There is a need to strengthen the system and this is addressed in the ACTION PLAN 2007-2013.

One of the future steps is the call for the creation of a taskforce for a European Fire Brigades Unit. Regarding the specific topic of the rescue of persons with disabilities, it is necessary to provide equal requirements for persons with disabilities. The European Parliament regards this in the "4 of September 2007 Resolution on this summer's natural disasters".

## **Claudio Detogni**

ULSS 20 Verona

Rescuing Injured Disabled Persons in case of Disaster: Civil Protection's Challenge in the Challenge (RDD):

CD presents the RDD project and the project final results. A characteristic of the RDD project is its interdisciplinarity. Civil protection and disability issues are treated together. The relation between disability and disaster has only recently been analysed, especially after Katrina in the US and the Tsunami in the South East Asia. Therefore it is not surprising that the majority of studies regarding this relationship have been provided by institutions and organisations in the US or by organisations working in emergency/disaster relief programmes in developing countries.

Claudio Detogni gives a brief description of the main international bibliography on the issue and lists a series of recommendations and guidelines that should be followed in order to enhance the protection of persons with disabilities in case of emergency. First, persons with disabilities should be at the forefront of any activities in this regard. CD also highlights the need for stable stakeholder platforms at local and international levels.

At the end of his speech, CD introduces the methodology for the elaboration of the Verona Charter and the afternoon working group sessions

## **Giampiero Griffo**

Disabled Peoples' International

GG introduces Disabled Peoples' International. DPI is an international organisation working for the rights of persons with disabilities and active in all major international settings and debates concerning the disability issue.

A milestone for the rights of persons with disabilities is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (13 December 2006). In the last 35 years, the UN model on disability issues has changed with the result that disability has finally become a human rights issue. Article 3 of the UN Convention underlines the human rights approach.

Even though all the major international human rights declarations were comprehensive of the rights of persons with disabilities, no real effort was made by society in order to respect the dignity of persons with disabilities. (The image of a woman on a wheelchair lifted down stairs is shown)  
The majority of persons with disabilities live in developing countries where services are not provided and there is no structural support.

Article 5 of the UN Convention declares the principle of equality and non discrimination. Poverty is a cause and effect of disability. Poverty is an economical factor and also related to the impoverishment of human rights. In this sense, it is related to the society that is not able to cope with the requests and needs of its citizens. The person with a disability is stigmatized and seen as an unable individual. Persons with disabilities are therefore victims of prejudice. They are not unable by nature, but made so by the society that does not view them as active citizens. The change in approach from a medical to a social model regarding the disability issue has highlighted this and the social implications of viewing persons with disabilities as "unable." Persons with disabilities are active citizens with their own characteristics.

The International Classification ICF underlines that participation in society by persons with disabilities is limited and therefore, they are not included in many sectors of the social life. Disability is therefore related to the social environment. It is a social construct and a human rights issue. In a lifetime we will all experience some form of disability.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is going to be ratified by 20 Countries next year and will then become executive.

The Verona Charter is based on international fundamental rights and declarations (enunciated in its preamble).

Giampiero Griffo underlines the need for a change in the approach: from a medical model to a social model and from a humanitarian approach to an approach that gives an active role to persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities have to be at the forefront for any campaign for change and in any policy, practice and programme related to the disability issue ("Nothing about us without us"). Also, article 4 of the Verona Charter states that persons with disabilities and their organisations should be actively involved in any action undertaken in order to assure their safety.

In Bosnia during the war, persons with disabilities had to live in camps where facilities were not accessible. The Red Cross approach was: "we will look after them, we will lift them."

Human rights and opportunities have to be guaranteed. Human rights, dignity and equality in treatment have to be assured in order to bring the empowerment of persons with disabilities. A community-based approach is also needed and particular attention has to be given to avoiding multi-discrimination processes.

The Verona Charter on the Rights of Person with Disabilities aims at a systematisation of international and European civil protections procedures and interventions.

A cultural change is the base for an inclusive society. Non-discrimination means direct participation of persons with disabilities in all sectors of society. Human diversity should be seen as a value and a resource in society and should therefore be safeguarded. In ancient Greece, the concept of beauty was fixed and the perfect human being was seen as the athletic-bodied Greek warrior. Nowadays, the visual arts are looking for a new concept of beauty. The statue of a body with no arms in Trafalgar Square in London is a sign of this change.

### **Olivier Paul-Morandini**

#### **Gianni Petiti**

European Emergency Number Association (EENA)

OPM introduces EENA. The European Emergency Number Association (EENA) is a non-profit association established in Belgium. Its main objective is to promote the knowledge and efficient use of the 112, the single European Emergency Call Number, all over Europe. It was established in 1999 due to an EC directive that opened networks free of charge for callers. After 16 years the 112 is still non-harmonized due to the following:

- 112 is a top down decision vs 911, which is a bottom up decision
- 2 components (Télécom & Civil Protection), 2 different competences (European and national)
- No proactive policy on this issue from the Commission side
- No horizontal approach dealing with “emergency telecommunications”

Gianni Petiti takes the floor making a reference to art. 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Accessibility), which mentions information, communication and electronic services. These services and means have to be accessible to persons with disabilities in case of emergency.

Olivier Paul Morandini: The main aim of 112 is to harmonize the quality of emergency communication. A campaign of information is needed in order to increase awareness of the need for a 112 European shared number. The 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2008 will be the 112 day. EENA will be the lead organisation for the realisation of this event.

### **Pia Rockhold**

World Bank

Pia Rockhold introduces the World Bank’s politic on disability and development and its main tasks, including:

- Inclusive development
- Supporting the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the World Bank acted as observer to the UN convention drafting)

The disability structure at the WB is based on:

- Human Development Network (HDN) (The Italian Government is a partner)
- Social Protection & Labor Sector (HDNSP)
- Disability & Development (D&D) Team

The main analyses produced by the WB on disability and disasters are:

- Disability in Emergency Response: An Analysis of Early Tsunami Relief Efforts (26 October 2005)
- Disability in conflict-affected countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (final draft)
- A Function-Based Framework for Emergency Management and Planning (23 January 2007)
- Fact-finding event on post disaster situations: Opportunities for an Accessible Built Environment (5 December 2005)

The World Bank provides an increasing amount of emergency support to countries affected by disasters and conflicts. The policies and procedures for emergency response have been adapted to ensure flexibility, timeliness, speed, effectiveness and a strategic approach to disaster risk reduction and crisis prevention in high risk countries.

The World Bank actions in post disaster situations address issues related to human, social and institutional aspects, such as the reinstatement of essential support and services to affected people.

*Disability is a transversal criterion.* Inclusion of disability can only be achieved through a holistic “vulnerability” analysis of the entire society. The aim is to build an inclusive equitable society in which all people are included in mainstream development and none are targeted as vulnerable.

The World Bank disability plan is also active in data collection and the promotion of the ICF classification. The World bank is active in many countries affected by disasters. Principal actions include: restoring lives and livelihoods; restoring the economy; rebuilding the infrastructures; restoring local government.

Mental and psychological issues are also related to disaster. Psychological support should be provided to victims. Rehabilitation programs are often not included in supporting post disaster plans. Community-based rehabilitation is essential.

A disaster is also an opportunity for addressing inequality and ensuring more inclusiveness in the reconstruction process through thoughtful planning that is premised on transforming society and removing barriers (Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo).

The involvement of persons with disabilities is essential in all phases of a disaster. WB was involved in mainstreaming disability in disaster response in Turkey, Iran, India and Pakistan. The Turkey earthquake reconstruction phase represents a good example of the involvement of person with disabilities, while the Iran earthquake is a bad example, in the sense that few people with disabilities were involved in the reconstruction phases.

### **Juri Pittalunga**

Europe Consulting

Juri Pittalunga gives a brief description of the project previously mentioned by Agostino Mozzo (Italian Department of Civil Protection) regarding the team of persons with disabilities working for the Italian Civil Protection Department in Rome. Their main task is the monitoring of the press agencies and therefore, they play an important role in alerting the system in case an emergency occurs. This concept was actually the basis of the book “Abili a proteggere.” The book’s main message is that persons with disabilities have to play an active role in the execution of the emergency mechanisms.

### **Stefano Zanut**

Italian Department of Fire Brigades

SZ introduces the guidelines produced by the Italian Department of Fire Brigades on how to rescue persons with disabilities in emergency situations. The aim of the guidelines is guaranteeing the safety of persons with disabilities in case of fire. This issue became a priority in 2001 and gained more awareness after September 11<sup>th</sup>. A study on the victims of the Twin Towers attack has revealed that a large number of persons with disabilities were in the building during the attack.

Children or elderly can also be considered persons with disabilities in case of emergency. For instance, a child or an old person may not be able to open the evacuation door (ideated for an adult). Fire safety rules are normally tailored to people classified as “normal”. Persons who are normally not classified as “disabled” under normal environmental conditions, once involved in a disaster or emergency situation may not be able to cope with it and respond in a way that may be categorized as “temporarily disabled.”

In Pordenone in November 2002, 5,000 families were isolated due to flooding.

SZ listed the main national legislation on the issue of safety of persons with disabilities.

Communication n.402 2003: Guidelines to assess fire safety in workplaces where disabled workers are employed. The concept of security and safety has to be universal and accessible for all. These guidelines are based on the following general criteria:

- Providing for the involvement of disabled people in the different planning stages (for example, where workers with disabilities are already employed);
- Considering the specific difficulties of people not belonging to the staff;
- Implementing adequate safety standards for all kinds of people, without discrimination among the workers;
- Including safety measures for disabled workers in an integrated scheme to increase the safety levels for all workers.

This communication is followed by a check list of actions that should be undertaken in order to ensure the security of workplaces where there are persons with disabilities. In this regard, the National Fire Brigades Department produced a manual in collaboration with a group of organisations for persons with disabilities: Rescuing persons with disabilities: emergency management guidelines. The manual explains the main procedures to be followed in order to rescue persons with disabilities in emergency situations.

A very important point in this regard is planning and training. Rescuers have to be trained for the rescue of persons with disabilities. They have to be aware of the different needs related to the different kind of disabilities. They have to be able to listen to the persons they are helping, know how to communicate and give positive and reassuring messages. They also have to be professional and able to give prompt evaluations and assessments of situations, risks, personal needs, etc.

It is essential to identify each disabled person's capabilities and all possibilities for cooperation. Rescuers must be able to place his/her hands on the right parts of the body to ensure the safe transfer of the disabled, adopt a correct position to protect his/her back and avoid techniques which may risk the victim's health.

It is vital to know the right evacuation procedures, such as how to help persons in a wheelchair to go down the stairs. In this case, the evacuation chair would be very useful. Rescue teams should also be trained on how to communicate with persons with hearing disabilities. Persons with visual impairment also need to be accompanied in the right way. In addition, persons with learning difficulties should be reassured with positive messages.

Anybody in an emergency situation can become disabled, even the rescuers. It is essential that emergency plans are set up and that the concept of safety and self-help techniques are provided to the population because safety is a community goal and everybody must contribute in its achievement.

## **PART 2 – Working Group Sessions**

<b>START TIME: 14.30</b>	<b>END TIME: 17.30</b>
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In the afternoon session participants were divided amongst 5 working groups according to their specific interest and areas of experience. Each group represented a specific topic. The titles of the working groups were as follows:

- Definitions and principles
- Stakeholders and approach
- Protection measures and instruments
- Information to the public, communication and capacity building
- Policy and regulation

The working group sessions were subdivided in three main parts:

1. Working group presentations: two speakers (appointed previously by the conference organiser) gave a slide presentation on a subject pertinent to the topics of the working groups
2. Discussion on RDD recommendations: a discussion on selected topics based on background documents produced in the context of the RDD project was carried out in order to produce final recommendations on the specific topics
3. Discussion on selected articles from the Verona Charter: selected articles of the final draft of the Verona Charter were reviewed in order to be presented to the plenary session the day after

Each working group was facilitated by a chairperson previously appointed. Chairpersons according to groups were as follow:

- Group 1: Toussaint Mascia (EC-DG ENVIRONMENT)
- Group 2: Griffo Giampiero (DISABLED PEOPLES' INTERNATIONAL)
- Group 3: Ruth Davis (ULSS20 VERONA)
- Group 4: Bresciani Giannantonio
- Group 5 : Pia Rockhold (WORLD BANK)

The working group sessions were carried out in a constructive and participative way.

At the end of the afternoon sessions representatives of each group met in order to prepare the final Charter, based on the final products of each working group, to be discussed and reviewed during the plenary session the following day (the Charter articles were put together in a single document).

## **Day two (9 November 2007)**

### **Plenary Session**

<b>START TIME: 9.30</b>	<b>END TIME: 14.30</b>
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Giampiero Griffo (Disabled Peoples' International) presents the final draft of the Verona Charter. The final draft is projected and its content discussed for final approval by the participants.

The main topics for discussion and major changes are outlined below:

- Introduction and Preamble: Demetrios Pyrros (National Centre for Emergency Care-GR) suggests a separation between the concept of disasters and armed conflicts. The plenary group agrees to add a new separate article on armed conflict and foreign occupation (art. 19). The last draft of the preamble of the Verona Charter provides only European data on persons with disabilities. It is decided to use the UN 2006 data stating that 650 million people in the world have some form of disability.
- Art. 2: the draft listed all the fundamental principles on which the present document is based. It is decided to delete the list and instead include a reference to the principles included in the UN convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities. Pia Rockhold (World Bank) suggests that it is important to maintain a reference to gender somewhere.
- Art. 4: the plenary agrees to put the organisations of persons with disabilities at the top of the list of stakeholders.
- Art. 5: Kathy Sinnott (MEP) underlines the importance of mentioning that it is the responsibility of the governments to educate citizens on the value of human life. Stefano Zanut (Italian Department of Fire Brigades) suggests changing "high level" with "appropriate level of protection" since the higher level is not always the most appropriate.
- Art. 8: it is suggested to avoid mentioning "Member States" as the Charter is an international document. Pia Rockhold (World Bank) and Mariateresa Fenoglio (Choros) underline that references to research-based practices and evidenced-based practices are needed in order to bring the adoption of shared good practices. Claudio Detogni suggests using the term "evidence-based approach".



- Art. 12: Olivier Paul-Morandini (European Emergency Number Association) suggests including a reference to emergency numbers (112 for Europe, 911 in North America). It is mentioned that the inclusion of this reference takes away from the international character of the Charter. Donata Gottardi (MEP) suggests adding a reference to a generic “common emergency number.” Irene Zucconi (Italian Department of Civil Protection) proposes maintaining some form of reference to 112.

The discussion became very animated when the debate turned to the effectiveness of information that should be monitored through standardised measurable indicators. The main debate concerned indicators and whether they can be standardised or not.

- Art 13: it is suggested to add a reference to practical exercise.

- Art.18: it is suggested that intervention should be based on standardised and measurable indicators.

A final article related to the importance of guaranteeing sufficient funding was added as a final article in the Charter.

After discussion and approval of the final Charter, follows the closing of the Conference with the official signature of the Charter.

One month is given to the participants as the deadline to discuss the Charter with their institutions and organizations and sign the document (first signatories).