

With the introduction of the National University of Public Service, all the three pillars of disaster management are present at the bachelor level of higher education in Hungary. The course on disaster management plans to equip its graduates with sound theoretical and practical knowledge. Becoming closely acquainted with the practice is an integral part of the course. Voluntary disaster management service contributes to this. In this article the authors attempt to describe the assistance provided by the service.

Keywords: disaster management, voluntary disaster management service, national unity, higher education

Introduction

Protection against natural and man-made disasters is one of the most current national tasks in Hungary. [1] Therefore, it is the right and duty of each citizen to participate in disaster management. [2] One form of social participation is based on volunteering. Voluntary rescue teams have been cooperating very closely with civil protection organisations since the first half of the 1990s. Cooperation has proved that civilian help is needed, as they can perform tasks to a high standard. Volunteering has been present in the tasks of civil protection ever since the Change of regime. Act No. CXXVIII of 2011 concerning disaster management and amending certain related acts created its unified form by allowing for the founding voluntary civil protection organisations. [3] They consist of rescue teams whose highly qualified and experienced members possess special skills and special technical equipment making interventions effective. Security is not purely a technical problem and it is not only a military related concept but a complex social issue. The protection of human life and means of subsistence needs to be supported more widely, which can also be achieved by involving higher education students.

Disaster management is a national matter

The Fundamental Law of Hungary sets out that contribution to the tasks of the community and the protection of the state is the statutory duty of every Hungarian citizen. Everybody is responsible for themselves and is obliged to participate in the tasks of the state and the community to the best of their ability and possibility. Active participation in the protection of the community belongs to these duties, which in this case is protection against disasters. Active involvement in the protection is also expressed in further cases in the Fundamental Law of Hungary. Article XXXI prescribes that citizens are subject to civil protection duties in order to carry out the tasks of disaster management. [4] These duties appear at the local as well as the state level. Act No. CXXVIII of 2011 concerning disaster management and amending certain related acts (hereinafter referred to as DM Act) clarifies and regulates the tasks and those involved in it. DM Act regulates responsibilities for the tasks of disaster management and involvement as follows:

“§ 1 (1) Disaster management is a national matter. The uniform direction of protection is a state responsibility.

(2) All citizens, that is, persons, shall be entitled to learn of any threats of disaster existing in their neighbourhood and the rules of conduct related to protection. It is their right as well as their obligation to participate in disaster management.

§ 2 (1) Protection and the elimination of consequences shall be provided, through the coordination of the operation of organs set up for this purpose and of different protection systems, by the participation, that is, involvement of citizens, civil protection organizations, economic organizations, the Hungarian National Home Defence Forces, law enforcement organizations, the National Tax and Customs Administration, the National Meteorological Service, the National Ambulance Service, the State Public Health and Medical Officers’ Service, voluntary social organizations, civil and public institutions established for this specific purpose and those causing or bringing about disaster of non-natural type and the state organs and the local governments (hereinafter: participants in disaster management).” [2]

The act declares that participation in the protection against disasters is a right and a duty of citizens and voluntary organisations comprising them. Organisations set up by citizens play a significant role in case of emergencies to guarantee the safety of the nation. In addition to state organisations, there is a great demand for social contribution as well in disaster response. The need for involving the public is formulated in the legal definition of disaster in point 5) of paragraph (3) of the DM Act.

“Disaster: a status or situation suitable for the declaration of a state of emergency, or a status not reaching the extent of the declaration of a classified situation, which threatens or damages human life, health, property, the basic supplies of the population, the natural environment or natural values in a way or to an extent that the prevention or elimination

of damages, or the liquidation of the consequences exceeds the protection possibilities of organizations designated to act in a defined cooperation procedure, and requires the introduction of special measures and a continuous and strictly coordinated cooperation of local governments and state agencies or the resort to international assistance.” [2]

The definition becomes complete and understandable if we take a look at paragraph (1) and (2) of the DM Act. Controlling certain steps of prevention and elimination of disasters and then recovery definitely require professionals with appropriate knowledge, expertise and last but not least, experience. Voluntary rescue teams fulfil these needs, but there is also a set of criteria laid down in paragraph 57 (1) of Government Decree 234/2011 (XI. 10.). Hungarian voluntary rescue teams can only take part in disaster and emergency response if they comply with the basic requirements on qualifications and preparedness set out in the National Certification System and they receive a certificate from the local authorities of the professional disaster management body. [5]

The training system in general

Those in charge of managing the involvement of higher education students must have the necessary experience and theoretical background. [6] 70% of the faculty of the Institute of Disaster Management, National University of Public Service hold a scientific degree, which combined with experience in command and control, disaster response and recovery results in a well-prepared staff of high quality. [7] It ensures the theoretical and practical preparedness for quick, effective and competent responses. Knowledge needed in control can be acquired in educational institutions of different levels. In the Hungarian education system, a uniform system of internal trainings, internships and trainings in higher education was established. These trainings contain knowledge of natural sciences and social sciences based on the findings of special and other fields of science.

Changes in the international and national training systems and legislation, the need for a unified system of public administration and last but not least the reorganisation of the system of disaster management, all contributed to the establishment of the National University of Public Service, including the Institute of Disaster Management, functioning independently from the other faculties. Act No. XXXVI of 2011 on the establishment of the National University of Public Service (hereinafter referred to as NUPS Act) created a framework for higher education, which includes a Disaster Management BSc. [8]

Act No. CXXXII of 2011 on the National University of Public Service and on the higher education of public administration, law enforcement and military regulates the specific elements of education.

Disaster Management BSc offers the three following specialisations:

- Disaster Management Operations
- Fire Protection and Rescue Management
- Industrial Safety [9] [10]

The fields of education of Disaster Management BSc are law enforcement, public administration and military. The purposes of the course are the following:

- to train disaster managers who, employed by professional, municipal or industrial fire brigades, are capable of carrying out tasks related to disaster management, fire protection (fire fighting) and industrial safety;
- are able to do their professional work independently and, after gaining the necessary experience, to carry out leadership tasks;
- have the necessary knowledge of legislation, standards, principles, procedures and tools applied in disaster management and the international agreements, legislation and organisations related to civil protection, fire protection and industrial safety. [11] [12]

The NUPS Act [Act No. CXXXII of 2011 § 30 (2)-(5)] stipulates other functions, tasks and obligations. Students attending a law enforcement BSc course are obliged to actively participate in the education process as well as the extracurricular law enforcement exercises organised by the law enforcement training unit. Furthermore, they are obliged to do an internship and pass a common module on disaster management, in which they get acquainted with the legislation and operations of disaster management together with the connections between disaster management and their own field of law enforcement. [8]

In this regulatory framework [Act No. CXXXII of 2011 § 25, § 30 (2) a, f)] the duties of students in a state of emergency are introduced. [9] In addition to the provisions of DM Act, this act also justifies that in order to make their education more practical, students in the higher education ought to set up voluntary disaster management organisations and be actively involved in their activities. The major advantages of involving students are that they are the most ready to embrace new knowledge and also that they receive advanced knowledge and (practical) trainings in disaster management even during their studies, so it is not an exaggeration to say that the system of defence administration benefits from the Service as it comprises ready, dedicated and deployable volunteers.

The benefits of youth volunteers from higher education

The deployment of youth volunteers during the academic terms concerns educational management, as they need to find a solution for the classes skipped. Deploying them during the breaks does not pose any problems. Members of the youth voluntary organisations participate in further trainings beside their studies at the university. It is obligatory for all

members of the voluntary organisation irrespective of their other qualifications. Students have to attend both theoretical and practical courses. Members of the voluntary organisation receive further practical training when they are deployed in addition to the exercises, which are subject requirements for them. It is a privilege of youth volunteers from higher education that they receive comprehensive, special training both at the university and in the voluntary rescue team (e.g. command and control, technical, IT, communication, medical, psychological, logistics, etc.), which the local, regional or national authorities of disaster management can take advantage of in the protection against disasters. As a result, after their graduation, students will find it easier to fit in professional organisations.

Act No. CCIV of 2011 on higher education contains provisions and regulations on the dual training system. The Act identifies certain fields of education which require practical training as well, which can be conducted at classified organizations. It is a well-established practice in Germany, where students go on internships to relevant organisations. The Act also stipulates that full-time training can be organised as dual training. [13] Higher education in the field of disaster management contains practical training as well since it needs to incorporate a special set of tasks. The subject is multidisciplinary, so it cannot be unambiguously linked to another specific training. Disaster management demands practical training in addition to the theoretical one. The tasks can be connected to several organisations. The professional authorities of disaster management control, coordinate disaster response. Among other organisations that cooperate, voluntary organisations appear as well. The students of Disaster Management BSc established the University's voluntary disaster management service in response to this opportunity. Activities carried out in the Service expand their practical knowledge.

An annual training plan is drafted for the voluntary organisation, which is connected to the trainings of professional organisations of disaster management. The training means practical training for the members of the voluntary organisations and it supplements the skills gained in higher education studies. Voluntary organisations have access to information about the professional organisations of disaster management, which otherwise would happen with a delay according to the curriculum.

Another professional benefit for the members of voluntary organisations is the possibility to attend various exercises. They get acquainted with the cooperation with rescue teams and their operations first-hand, which facilitates putting theory into practice and also, they have the opportunity to be involved in their work. Allowing students to take part in international certification exercises is of utmost importance in their practical training. Not only do students gain an insight into UN INSARAG (United Nations International Search and Rescue Advisory Group - INSARAG) guidelines but also in the control of rescue teams at different levels. In these exercises, the assigned members of professional regional organisations of disaster management provide a 24-hour training for the students in parallel with the training.

Voluntary organisations do not only take part in exercises but also their deployment may be ordered when a state of emergency is declared. For instance during the Danube flood of 2013 the voluntary Service was deployed, which benefited the practical training of the students. Their operations were supervised by the faculty of the university and controlled by the senior officers of professional organisations of disaster management. [14] They became familiar with certain elements of command, control, coordination and management in real conditions. In the exercises held in the National University of Public Service, the members of the voluntary organisation were found to be more self-confident and professionally competent. They have participated in four major exercises since the foundation of the Service, once played a major role in the National Disaster Management Youth Competition. Moreover, they were deployed in the Danube flood of 2013 in flood control. Not only did they learn about the practical skills of dam heightening but also gained an insight in the control and management operations of the Budapest Disaster Management Directorate.

The two INSARAG exercises held in Hajdúszoboszló allowed the students to become familiar with the tasks of search and rescue teams, the operations of the Local Emergency Management Authority (LEMA) and last but not least, active involvement in these operations developed a greater understanding of their theoretical knowledge. In these two exercises, the staff of the local authorities of disaster management imitated real-life situations as role-plays, which deepened their practical knowledge.



Figure 1: HUNOR's certification exercise in October 2013 and awarding the certification (source: Jóri András, MI NDGDM 2013)



Figure 2: HUNOR's certification exercise in October 2014 and awarding the certification (source: MI NDGDM 2014)

In November 2014 the Service took part in the winter preparedness exercise organised by Budapest Disaster Management Directorate. The purpose of the drill was theoretical and practical preparation to respond to and mitigate the domino effects of disasters caused by extreme winter weather conditions with the involvement of national voluntary rescue organisations. Once again, the practical training of students benefited from this exercise. The faculty and the teaching and executive staff are unanimous in their opinion that joining the voluntary organisations strengthens the students' vocation and contributes to expanding their knowledge and professional skills.

Conclusions

After graduating from university, when students join the staff of professional disaster management organisations or other public administration authorities, they already possess the management skills necessary for rescue, response and intervention operations. They are acquired through the activities, exercises of voluntary organisations. The members of the organisations can get directly acquainted with certain command and control tasks. It facilitates their integration into public administration and it is easier for them to identify with the organisation and its tasks than for non-members.

Professional trainings belong to the requirements of Disaster Management BSc of the Institute of Disaster Management, NUPS. The authors recommend that the completion of voluntary professional trainings of the Voluntary Disaster Management Service, National University of Public Service should be counted in the professional trainings.

As regards involvement in voluntary activities, the authors recommend that the students of the National University of Public Service should be deployed in the protection against disasters (when possible). Great emphasis should be laid on volunteers from higher education when organising quick response.

The students of higher education represent the future of civil protection and yet unexploited opportunities. The National University of Public Service set an example to follow with its voluntary disaster management Service founded on 4 March 2013. It has already proved its knowledge in command, control and civil protection. It would be pointless to waste the potential hidden in higher education students if Hungary's security is at stake. The goal is to increase the number of the population deployable in the protection against disasters so that Hungary's security is both quantitatively and qualitatively guaranteed.

To this end we would like to refer to two important professional citations concerning the theme of our article. Dr. habil Gábor Kovács police brigadier general the vice-rector for education of the National University of Public Service expressed his opinion with following words: *"...The key to success lies in expertise, organisation and social cooperation."* [15] Dr. György Bakondi firefighter lieutenant general the Director General of National

Directorate General for Disaster Management underlined that “Disaster management assigns a more and more significant role to voluntary organisations in civil protection.” [16]

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Az önkéntes katasztrófavédelmi szolgalat szerepe a Nemzeti Közszoigalati Egyetem oktatási rendszerében

TEKNŐS LÁSZLÓ – SCHWEICKHARDT GOTTHILF

A Nemzeti Közszoigalati Egyetem létrehozásával a hazai rendvédelmi felsőoktatási rendszerben a katasztrófavédelem mindhárom pillérében megjelent a felsőoktatási alapképzés. A katasztrófavédelem alapszak mély elméleti és gyakorlati ismeretekkel rendelkező végzettség kibocsátását tervezi. Ennek szerves része a képzés ideje alatt a gyakorlati tevékenység alapos, átfogó megismerése. Ehhez járul hozzá az egyetemen létrehozott önkéntes katasztrófavédelmi szolgalat. A cikkben a szerzők kísérletet tesznek arra, hogy bemutassák a szolgalat oktatást segítő szerepét.

Kulcsszavak: katasztrófavédelem, önkéntes katasztrófavédelmi szolgalat, nemzeti összefogás, felsőoktatás