

Making disaster preparedness inclusive

World Bank Romania

TAFF

Technical Assistance Financing Facility
for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness



TAFF Workshop

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<https://www.gfdrr.org/en/taff>



Funded by
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GFDRR
Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery



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Country Context

- Romania is highly exposed to floods, earthquakes, droughts, landslides, wildfires, and extreme weather.
- In 1977, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake caused more than 1,500 fatalities and left 11,321 injured, and more than 15,000 residential apartments collapsed or were severely damaged.
- Over the past decades, disasters caused by natural hazards led to significant physical, social, and financial damage, with climate-related events alone resulting in €12 billion in losses since 1980.
- The country is also home to people with a range of vulnerabilities, including 900,000 persons with disabilities, people living in isolated communities or at risk of social exclusion, an aging population, and others.



Country Context



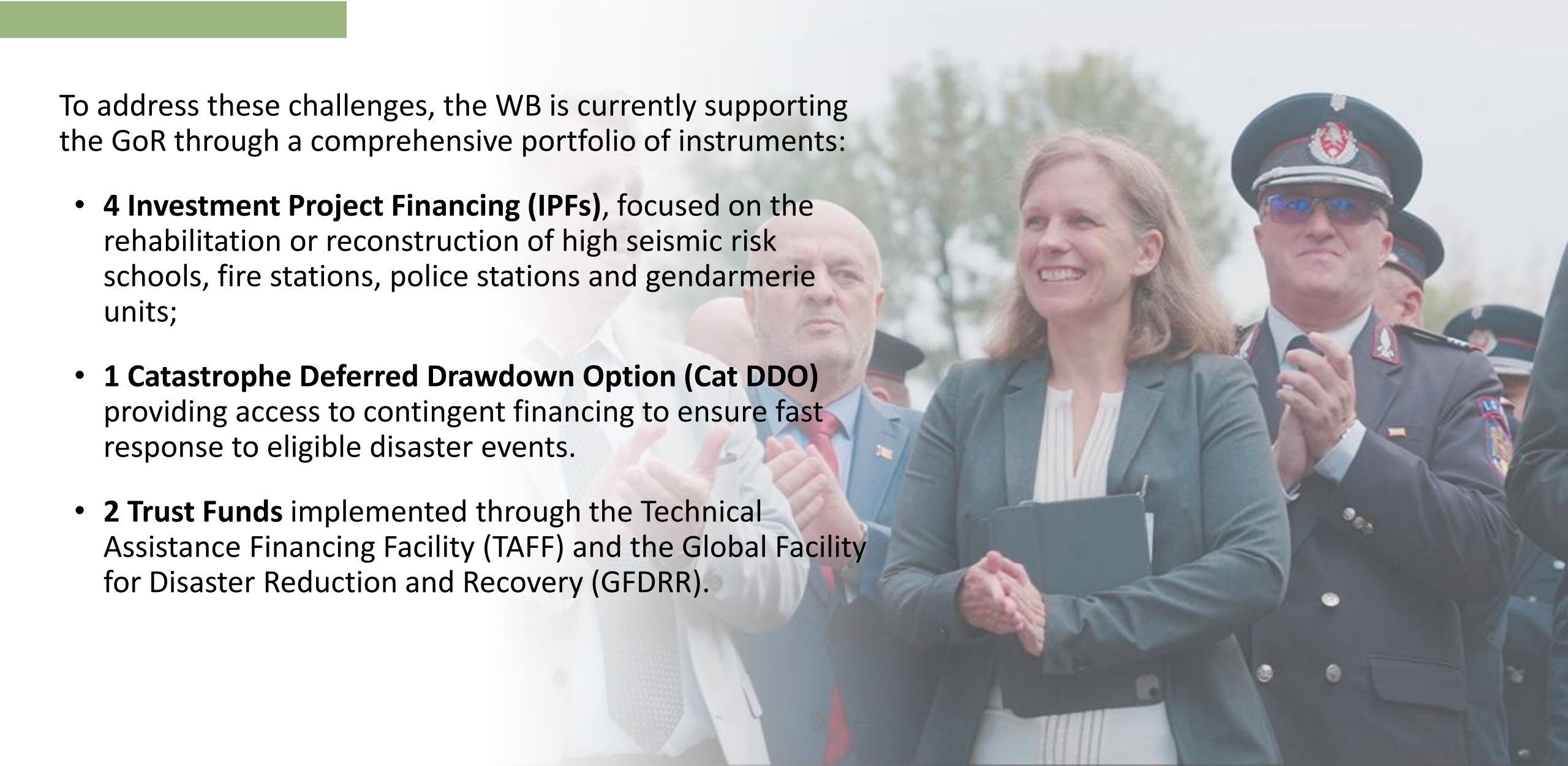
Key challenges:

- **Much of Romania's built environment was constructed prior to modern codes.** Many of these buildings were damaged in the 1977 earthquake and not repaired since.
- **The country has low financial resilience,** having no public asset insurance, low insurance penetration (especially at building level) and limited reserve funds.
- **The preparedness and response system does not yet fully integrate inclusive and all-of-society approaches,** which limits the ability of vulnerable groups to improve their self-preparedness.
- **Romania is well-prepared to cover low to moderate level disaster events,** however a major earthquake in Bucharest or a Danube-level flood would completely overwhelm the system.

Country Context

To address these challenges, the WB is currently supporting the GoR through a comprehensive portfolio of instruments:

- **4 Investment Project Financing (IPFs)**, focused on the rehabilitation or reconstruction of high seismic risk schools, fire stations, police stations and gendarmerie units;
- **1 Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Option (Cat DDO)** providing access to contingent financing to ensure fast response to eligible disaster events.
- **2 Trust Funds** implemented through the Technical Assistance Financing Facility (TAFF) and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR).



Project Overview: Inclusive Disaster Resilience

	Supporting Trust Funds	
Grant Name	Romanian Assistance for Post - Disaster Improvement and Development (RAPID)	Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction, Preparedness, and Climate Adaptation and Mitigation in Romania
Size:	EUR 500,000	~EUR 420,000
Financing source:	EU TAFF	GFDRR (Government of Japan)
Duration:	24 months (July 2024 – June 2026)	36 months (June 2024 – June 2027)
Implementation:	World Bank	World Bank
Main beneficiaries:	Department of Emergency Situations (DSU) and General Inspectorate of Emergency Situations (IGSU) under the Ministry of Internal Affairs	
Objective	Strengthening Romania’s capacity for disaster recovery and inclusive disaster response	Strengthening Romania’s disaster and climate resilience through improved disaster preparedness and response
Focus of inclusion activities:	Inclusive emergency response (capacity building for firefighters on how to interact with people with disabilities)	Inclusive emergency preparedness (capacity building for firefighters to help advance disaster preparedness of people with disabilities)

Project Overview: Inclusive Disaster Resilience

Since 2023, WB has been supporting Romania's DSU and IGSU in advancing the inclusive DRM agenda, through:

I. Inclusive emergency response

- **Mapping stakeholders and holding consultations** with Organizations for Persons with Disabilities (ODPs) and other relevant stakeholders, to identify existing needs and gaps;
- **Developing training syllabuses for firefighters** on how to interact with people with psycho-intellectual, visual and hearing disabilities, as well as additional learning materials (e.g. pocket guides).
- **Conducting two types of trainings:**
 - 1-day trainings for firefighters (pilot)
 - 4-day Training-of-Trainers for firefighters on how to delivery the 1-day training to their peers.
- **Providing shadowing / mentorship support**

II. Inclusive emergency preparedness

- **Developing training syllabuses** for persons with psycho-intellectual, locomotor, visual and hearing disabilities;
- **Conducting 5-day Training-of-Trainers** for firefighters on disaster preparedness of people with disabilities;
- **Providing shadowing / mentorship support.**



Key Results

Inclusive emergency response

- ✓ Over **900 first responders** trained on how to interact with people with disabilities in an adapted way during emergencies;
- ✓ More than **30 trainings** (including 1 ToT) were organized between 2023-2025, as well as 10 shadowing/mentorship sessions.
- ✓ **The first inclusive firefighter course was developed** and integrated into the national training curriculum.
- ✓ **A pocket guide for firefighters was developed** to guide and ensure a standardized inclusive intervention, also integrated into the firefighters' formal procedures.

Inclusive emergency preparedness

- ✓ Over **600 persons with disabilities** received disaster preparedness training, using Romania's first nationally standardized syllabuses (covering psycho-intellectual, locomotor, visual, and auditory disabilities).
- ✓ **3 ToTs for firefighters** on disaster preparedness of people with disabilities were organized in 2025, preparing over **60 trainers** nationwide.
- ✓ **Over 20 disaster preparedness guides** available on the "Be Prepared" platform (*fiipregatit.ro*), including a dedicated Guide for Persons with Disabilities, were updated, standardized, made accessible and aligned with international best practices.

Knowledge & Innovation

- The trainings for firefighters were delivered by persons with disabilities from local communities.
- The trainers showcased examples of materials, games and gadgets adapted for people with disabilities, enhancing the learning experience.
- The training syllabus was institutionalized, which helped ensure legitimacy and sustainability.
- The two types of Training-of-Trainers implemented (i.e. on inclusive emergency response and inclusive emergency preparedness) complemented each other.
- The shadowing sessions further enhanced the learning process, enabling trainers to apply what they learned while improving their skills through expert feedback and guidance.



Key Findings

- **Engaging persons with disabilities at every stage of planning and implementation is essential.** Their leadership in needs identification, content development and workshop delivery is key to ensuring the trainings' relevance and applicability.
- **Starting with pilot activities before scaling up helps ensure sustainability,** as it allows the testing of materials, syllabuses, and delivery methods. National capacity can then be built through Training-of-Trainers across regions.
- **The trainings represent an opportunity for feedback and growth in themselves,** as firefighters interact directly with persons with disabilities, gaining insights into the specific needs, limitations, and contexts of these communities.
- **Engagement between first responders and persons with disabilities during normal/non-crisis times** can contribute to fostering trust and strengthening community ties.





Stakeholder engagement

- **Mobilization of ODPs.** Collaboration with civil society in advancing the inclusion agenda is essential. In addition to the federative Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) with local branches across the country, the project is exploring engaging also residential centers, special schools and other CSOs.
- **Formalized partnerships.** Four collaboration protocols between the Department of Emergency Situations and ODPs strengthened the state – civil society partnership.
- **Engaging multiple first responder groups.** In addition to firefighters, also police, mountain rescue teams, social assistants, and trauma doctors helped successfully pilot the first set of trainings and raise awareness of these training activities across multiple institutions.

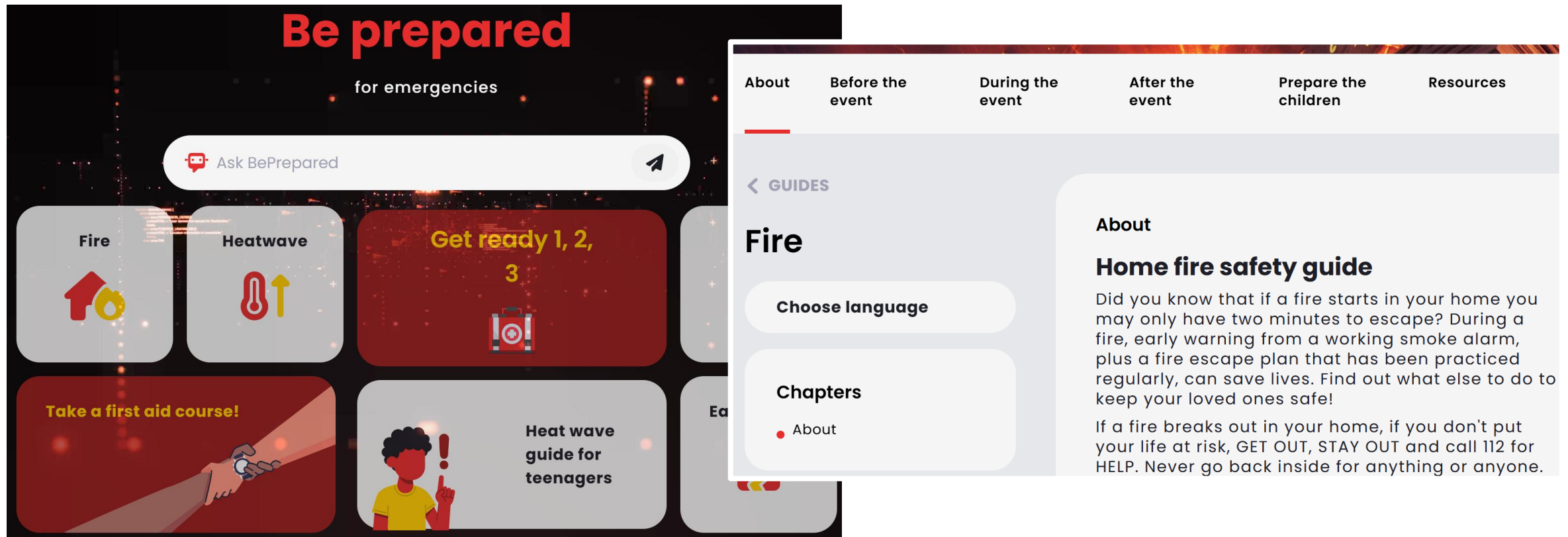
Lessons Learned (I)

- **Having strong institutional champions is key.** The success and sustainability of such a program relies on having committed leadership at all levels, taking ownership of planning and implementation processes.
- **Stakeholder mapping and consultations are critical.** Robust consultations with ODPs and key institutional stakeholders help identify needs and ensure the relevance and legitimacy of learning materials. Collaboration protocols help clarify roles and responsibilities and strengthen partnerships.
- **Organization of Training-of-Trainers programs** is a time- and cost- effective way of scaling up capacity building activities at national level.
- **When possible, in-person trainings are most effective.** Digital tools offer complementary learning and dissemination support.
- **Participants learn faster when theory is complemented by practical exercises and expert feedback.**



Lessons Learned (II)

- **Digital and multimedia solutions**, such as online platforms with national coverage, audio and video guides, and AI-assisted tools, when kept updated and made accessible, can help expand project reach, improve learning outcomes, reach broader populations, and support long-term sustainability.



Limitations & constraints

- **Older persons with disabilities or with multiple impairments often have limited digital access**, and face challenges engaging with online content, making in-person delivery of preparedness activities essential.
- **Reaching isolated persons with disabilities** outside institutional or OPD frameworks is often challenging.
- **Some established firefighter trainers may initially be hesitant to adopting different teaching approaches.** However, based on the positive feedback received, their stance is gradually changing, becoming increasingly open to adopting new teaching methods.
- **Local branches of ODPs may often have limited resources and/or capacity** to mobilize members or accommodate activities on their premises.



Strategic and operational relevance

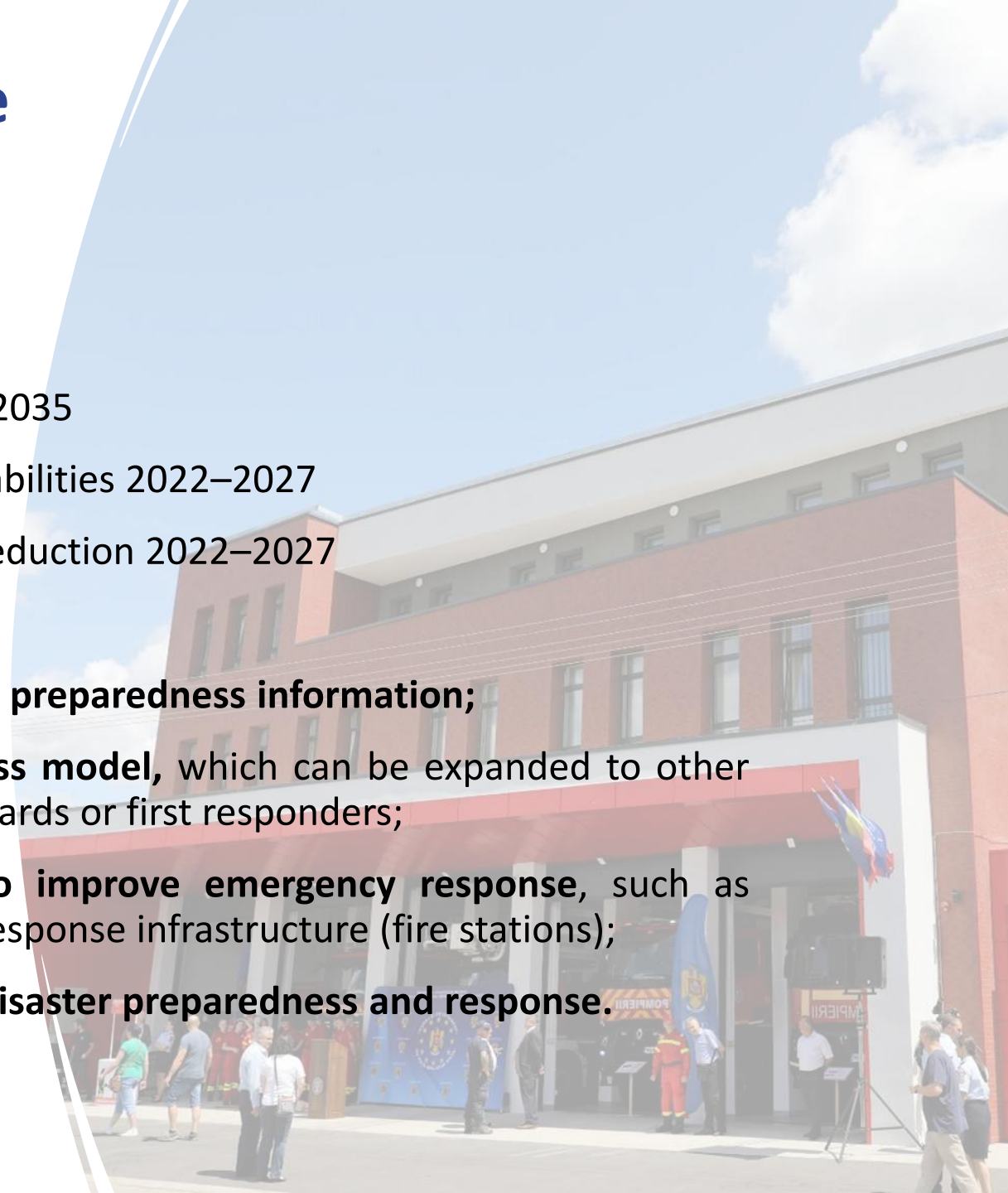
These activities are relevant to:

(I) National strategic documents:

- National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2024-2035
- National Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2022–2027
- National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2022–2027

II) Operational priorities:

- **Standardization and digital accessibility of disaster preparedness information;**
- **Replicability of the inclusive disaster preparedness model**, which can be expanded to other vulnerable groups, or adapted to other types of hazards or first responders;
- **Complementarity with other ongoing efforts to improve emergency response**, such as strengthening the resilience of critical emergency response infrastructure (fire stations);
- **Contribution to a ‘whole-of-society’ approach to disaster preparedness and response.**



Showcasing of results



Is that the real disability is not caring about the others.

Thank You!

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Action 33. **Develop guidelines** on how to act in emergencies, adapted to all types of **disability** and **training of first responders**

Two components:

1. Guidelines on how to act in emergencies, adapted to all types of **disability**



2. Training of first responders to recognise the type of disability and determine appropriate courses of action



Building on:

- **preparEU pilot project's** recommendation and **LL from other DG ECHO funded projects** that promote inclusion and disability awareness
- experience in ensuring accessibility in response capacities in the **European Civil Protection Pool and rescEU**
- **exercises and training** programs that address the needs of vulnerable groups.



Engagement with national authorities, IOs, and civil society partners, e.g. European Disability Forum

Group Discussion





1. What are the **main gaps or challenges faced by your countries when it comes to ensuring the **inclusiveness** of disaster preparedness and response?**



**2. What are some of the actions
being taken by your Governments
to improve the inclusiveness of
disaster preparedness and
response?**



3. Are there any capacity building activities or guidelines being implemented in your countries to improve the inclusiveness of disaster risk management?

If so, what would be the main differences from Romania's approach?



**4. Can you think of potential
institutional champions who could
help take **the inclusion agenda**
forward in your countries?**

What about civil society organizations?



5. Going forward, what **resources or support would your countries need to **improve the inclusiveness** of disaster preparedness and response?**