

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,

I am happy to be here today, with you, giving me the opportunity to briefly present to you the challenges that Vrancea county is facing in terms of civil protection and resilience in front of emergency situations caused by natural calamities.

Being localised in the South-Eastern part of Romania, Vrancea County has an administrative structure that includes 2 municipalities, 3 towns, 68 communes and 331 villages. The geographical positioning of the county is at the curvature of the Eastern Carpathians, being located at the intersection of the three great historical regions of Romania, namely Muntenia, Moldova and Transylvania. A characteristic is the arrangement of the relief in steps, from the West to the East, starting with Vrancea Mountains and continuing with the depressions, then continuing with a series of peaks and hilly massifs on which there are famous wine vineyards - Vrancea being one of the most important wine regions in Romania and the only county in the world with four mausoleums dedicated to the memory of the heroes from World War I.

I would like to use this opportunity to make you aware of the risks encountered in Vrancea County in terms of natural disasters, and among the most important aspects that must be taken into account, when we talk about natural phenomena with the potential to cause disasters, I would mention the following:

- ***seismicity*** – Vrancea is the most active seismic area in Romania. The energy released from here spreads over relatively large surfaces, due to magnitudes that vary between 5 and 7 degrees on the Richter scale. The last time Moscow was shaken to its foundations was on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1802, when an earthquake with the epicentre in Vrancea and a magnitude of 7.9 on the Richter scale has been felt in the far east and in the southern Balkans. I would mention also the one on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1940, with a magnitude of 7.4 on the Richter scale - the first great earthquake in contemporary Romania, but also the one on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1977, whose magnitude of 7.2 on the Richter scale produced significant material and human damages.
- On the list of the phenomena that lead to natural disasters are also ***the landslides*** – Vrancea County's localities that are positioned in the Curvature Subcarpathian are subject to a high risk due to the geomorphological processes in this area. In 2017, Vrancea County Council has succeeded to draw up risk maps for 18 Administrative Territorial Units from the hill and mountain area. The interpretation of risk maps for landslides allows the adoption of certain categories of measures to prevent the producing of landslides and the attenuation of their effects, as well as the estimation of material and human losses that would be recorded in the event of their triggering.
- Other ***dangerous natural phenomena*** at Vrancea County level are represented by torrential rains, heavy snowfalls, storms and blizzards, ice deposits, sleet, hail, early or late frosts, heat wave, hail and drought. The torrential rains generated catastrophic floodings in 2014 and 2021, the farmers facing losses year after year.

These are the extreme phenomena that we are facing and, as you can see, they are not few. In order to action in a rapid and efficient way in case of emergency at county level in what concerns the natural calamities, Vrancea County Council has signed a Framework Agreement with an economic agent in order to perform interventions of maintenance works on the county roads and bridges affected by the natural disasters, and in order to streamline traffic during wintertime, in the event of heavy snow, the institution I lead has concluded an annual contract for snow removal on 729 km of county roads.

At the level of Vrancea County operates a structure with specialized personnel trained for interventions in case of emergency situations, namely the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations "Anghel Saligny" of Vrancea County, whose mission is to prevent, monitor and manage emergency situations that may arise on the territory of the county. Its main purpose is to defend life, the goods and the environment against all types of risk that may occur at the county level.

Ladies and gentlemen, after a disaster the community should be able, besides absorbing the shock and the process of recovery, to develop practices to improve in the future the capacity of preparation and response. Most of the time we observe that the same communities, regions, societies experience emergency situations, be they natural or man-made disasters. From one event to another, the response mechanisms do not seem to improve, nor do the losses diminish. If the recovery stops at bringing the community back in the state before the disaster, it will be in the same measure exposed to risks, because it has not developed its capacity to be aware of and to incorporate the event. For an effective strategy to increase resilience, collaboration is needed at every level of the society, collaboration that must be based on assuming the roles and the responsibilities, in such a way that each actor (institutional, at community level and individual) should give all their measure to contribute to the creation of a system, where the general interest is above the personal one. Increasing resilience must become an imperative that requires the collective will of the states and of the communities.

In conclusion, I am convinced that strengthening resilience could lead to the creation of communities capable to support themselves in the event of most of the disturbances, because the first ones to be affected are the individuals and the communities caught in the first wave of the shock. Many of the communities organize themselves in the face of frequent emergencies at the local level, as it is also the case in Vrancea, but more can be done if it would be improved the degree of involvement, through voluntary actions and if the myths and barriers that stand in the way of the participation would be demolished. We need everyone's experience, the knowledge accumulated by each of us, and an outstretched hand is not only a request for help but also an invitation to a solid, long-term partnership.

Thank you!