



EADRCC Consequence Management Command Post and Field Exercise “NORTH MACEDONIA 2020”

Lead-in scenario

On 18th of September 2020 at 11:03h local time, a powerful 8.2 Richter scale (5 km deep) earthquake struck the wider area of the city of Ohrid in the municipality of Ohrid, Republic of North Macedonia. The epicentre is located in Ohrid Lake (41°02'14"N 20°43'08"E). The effects were felt in the neighbouring municipalities, as well as the capital city of Skopje.

Initial reports indicate that a large number of older residential buildings are heavily damaged or completely collapsed. Many were injured and the number of casualties is still unknown. The population in the affected area refuses to return to their homes in fear of aftershocks.

As a consequence of the earthquake, a dike on Ohrid Lake started to leak. At least one settlement is flooded, and the lake is full of debris. Therefore, there is a risk of contamination. Ohrid Lake is the city's main water supply; rumours of possible contamination are spreading, and thus water quality control activities are necessary.

Electricity and water infrastructures were severely damaged, but road and telecommunication infrastructures suffered only minor damage from the landslides.

Banks had to close their business and Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) are out of order due to power outages in Ohrid and Struga. Some (social) media published fake news of cyber-attacks against the banks and also spread rumours that the entire banking system in the Republic of North Macedonia has collapsed. Large groups of citizens gathered at several locations in Ohrid in front of the banks. ATMs were looted and destroyed.

Heavy damage is reported in the wider area of the city of Struga, located 12 km north of the epicentre. Unofficial reports indicate that the industrial zone in Struga suffered the most severe damage, possibly with a high number of casualties.

News media indicate that the earthquake generated a series of accidents in a large factory located between the two affected cities. As the disaster occurred during working hours, an unknown number of workers are missing or unaccounted for. Furthermore, there are reports of chemical leakages and fires with strange smells spreading in the vicinity of the factory.

Additionally, official representatives of a hydropower plant, at one of the accumulation lakes in the vicinity of the affected municipalities, reported structural damage of a bridge and possible casualties in a fisherman's settlement.

An aircraft on a scouting assignment lost control and crashed in the mountains in the vicinity of Ohrid.

Part of an international smuggling group from the Republic of North Macedonia have abused the situation in the region to establish a new Balkan route for the illegal transit of migrants, through Ohrid and Struga, having EU-countries as their final destination.

Domestic assets are mainly focused on the rescue activities in the Ohrid residential area.

Due to the severity of the consequences and the situation in the field, Authorities of the Republic of North Macedonia will most likely issue a request for international assistance through the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC)