

An Integrated Approach to Child Care Earthquake Preparedness through “Telemachus” Project

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Abstract : A lot of children under the age of five spend their daytime hours away from their home, in a kindergarten. Caring for children is a serious subject, and their safety in case of earthquake is the first priority. Being aware of earthquakes helps to prioritize the needs and take the appropriate actions to limit the effects. Earthquakes occurring anywhere at any time require emergency planning. Earthquake planning is a cooperative effort and childcare providers have unique roles and responsibilities. Greece has high seismicity and Ionian Islands Region has the highest seismic activity of the country. The last five years Earthquake Planning and Protection Organization (EPPO), which is a national organization, has analyzed the needs and requirements of kindergartens on earthquake protection issues. In this framework it has been noticed that although the State requires child care centers to hold drills, the standards for emergency preparedness in these centers are varied, and a lot of them had not written plans for emergencies. For these reasons, EPPO supports the development of emergency planning guidance and familiarizes the day care centers' staff being prepared for earthquakes. Furthermore, the Handbook on Day Care Earthquake Planning that has been developed by EPPO helps the providers to understand that emergency planning is essential to risk reduction. Preparedness and training should be ongoing processes, thus EPPO implements every year dozens of specific seminars on children's disaster related needs. This research presents the results of a survey that detects the level of earthquake preparedness of kindergartens in all over the country and Ionian Islands too. A closed-form questionnaire of 20 main questions was developed for the survey in order to detect the aspects of participants concerning the earthquake preparedness actions at individual, family and day care environment level. 2668 questionnaires were gathered from March 2014 to May 2019, and analyzed by EPPO's Department of Education. Moreover, this paper presents the EPPO's educational activities targeted to the Ionian Islands Region that implemented in the framework of “Telemachus” Project. To provide safe environment for children to learn, and staff to work is the foremost goal of any State, community and kindergarten. This project is funded under the Priority Axis "Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development" of Operational Plan "Ionian Islands 2014-2020". It is increasingly accepted that emergency preparedness should be thought of as an ongoing process rather than a one-time activity. Creating an earthquake safe daycare environment that facilitates learning is a challenging task. Training, drills, and update of emergency plan should take place throughout the year at kindergartens to identify any gaps and to ensure the emergency procedures. EPPO will continue to work closely with regional and local authorities to actively address the needs of children and kindergartens before, during and after earthquakes.

Keywords : child care centers, education on earthquake, emergency planning, kindergartens, Ionian Islands Region of Greece

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