

Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities through EPPO's Educational Awareness Initiative

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Abstract : Worldwide there is a growing recognition that education is a critical component of any disaster impacts reduction effort and a great challenge too. Given this challenge, a broad range of awareness raising projects at all levels are implemented and are continuously evaluated by Earthquake Planning and Protection Organization (EPPO). This paper presents an overview of EPPO educational initiative (seminars, lectures, workshops, campaigns and educational material) and its evaluation results. The abovementioned initiative is focused to aware the public, train teachers and civil protection staff, inform students and educate people with disabilities on subjects related to earthquake reduction issues. The better understating of how human activity can link to disaster and what can be done at the individual, family or workplace level to contribute to seismic reduction are the main issues of EPPO projects. Survey results revealed that a high percentage of teachers (included the ones of special schools) from all over the country have taken the appropriate preparedness measures at schools. On the other hand, the implementation of earthquake preparedness measures at various workplaces (kindergartens, banks, utilities etc.) has still significant room for improvement. Results show that the employees in banks and public utilities have substantially higher rates in preventive and preparedness actions in their workplaces than workers in kindergartens and other workplaces. One of the EPPO educational priorities is to enhance earthquake preparedness of people with disabilities. Booklets, posters and applications have been created with the financial support of the Council of Europe, addressed to people who have mobility impairments, learning difficulties or cognitive disability (ή intellectual disabilities). Part of the educational material was developed using the «easy-to-read» method and Makaton language program with the collaboration of experts on special needs education and teams of people with cognitive disability. Furthermore, earthquake safety seminars and earthquake drills have been implemented in order to develop children's, parents' and teachers abilities and skills on earthquake impacts reduction. To enhance the abovementioned efforts, EPPO is a partner at prevention and preparedness projects supported by EU Civil Protection Financial Instrument. One of them is E-PreS' project (Monitoring and Evaluation of Natural Hazard Preparedness at School Environment). The main objectives of E-PreS project are: 1) to create smart tools which define, simulate and evaluate drills procedure at schools, centers of vocational training of people with disabilities or other workplaces, and 2) to involve students or adults with disabilities in the E-PreS system evacuation procedure in case of earthquake, flood, or volcanic occurrence. Two other EU projects (RACCE educational kit and EVANDE educational platform) are also with the aim of contributing to raising awareness among people with disabilities, students, teachers, volunteers etc. It is worth mentioning that even though in Greece many efforts have been done till now to build awareness towards earthquakes and establish preparedness status for prospective earthquakes, there are still actions to be taken.

Keywords : earthquake, emergency plans, E-PreS project, people with disabilities, special needs education

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