

Earthquake Preparedness of School Community and E-PreS Project

Authors : A. Kourou, A. Ioakeimidou, S. Hadjiefthymiades, V. Abramea

Abstract : During the last decades, the task of engaging governments, communities and citizens to reduce risk and vulnerability of the populations has made variable progress. Experience has demonstrated that lack of awareness, education and preparedness may result in significant material and other losses both on the onset of the disaster. Schools play a vital role in the community and are important elements of values and culture of the society. A proper school education not only teaches children, but also is a key factor in the promotion of a safety culture into the wider community. In Greece School Earthquake Safety Initiative has been undertaken by Earthquake Planning and Protection Organization with specific actions (seminars, lectures, guidelines, educational material, campaigns, national or EU projects, drills etc.). The objective of this initiative is to develop disaster-resilient school communities through awareness, self-help, cooperation and education. School preparedness requires the participation of Principals, teachers, students, parents, and competent authorities. Preparation and earthquake readiness involves: a) learning what should be done before, during, and after earthquake; b) doing or preparing to do these things now, before the next earthquake; and c) developing teachers' and students' skills to cope efficiently in case of an earthquake. In the above given framework this paper presents the results of a survey aimed to identify the level of education and preparedness of school community in Greece. More specifically, the survey questionnaire investigates issues regarding earthquake protection actions, appropriate attitudes and behaviors during an earthquake and existence of contingency plans at elementary and secondary schools. The questionnaires were administered to Principals and teachers from different regions of the country that attend the EPPO national training project 'Earthquake Safety at Schools'. A closed-form questionnaire was developed for the survey, which contained questions regarding the following: a) knowledge of self protective actions b) existence of emergency planning at home and c) existence of emergency planning at school (hazard mitigation actions, evacuation plan, and performance of drills). Survey results revealed that a high percentage of teachers have taken the appropriate preparedness measures concerning non-structural hazards at schools, emergency school plan and simulation drills every year. In order to improve the action-planning for ongoing school disaster risk reduction, the implementation of earthquake drills, the involvement of students with disabilities and the evaluation of school emergency plans, EPPO participates in E-PreS project. The main objective of this project is to create smart tools which define, simulate and evaluate all hazards emergency steps customized to the unique district and school. The project comes up with a holistic methodology using real-time evaluation involving different categories of actors, districts, steps and metrics. The project is supported by EU Civil Protection Financial Instrument with a duration of two years. Coordinator is the Kapodistrian University of Athens and partners are from four countries; Greece, Italy, Romania and Bulgaria.

Keywords : drills, earthquake, emergency plans, E-PreS project

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