

Communities unprepared in the face of natural disasters

Instead of the Editorial

Natural disasters are complex events, and the prevention and mitigation of their impacts likewise has many aspects, one of the most important of which is, without question, the amount of information available and awareness of people.

How much do the public really know about civil emergency situations and the early warning systems?

In frame of PRO NEWS Programme, the Regional Environmental Center (REC) Albania carried out a survey with main theme “Risk: It is a Chance or Choice?”. The nationwide public opinion poll provided a fascinating picture of what people do and do not know about disaster risk.

More than 85 % of respondents claimed to know the dangers that threaten their community, although they were unaware of any emergency plans in there are. Around 86 % don't know what the early warning system is, or which are the communication means within this system at national and local level.

Regarding the main cause of the disasters affecting them and their community, the majority referred to alterations and interventions carried out by humans, while only 6.5 % of respondents mentioned natural cyclical events.



Programme for Improving National Early Warning System and Flood Prevention in Albania

According to 66.5 % of respondents, the primary source of information about hazards and early warning systems was the media, while 55 % of respondents ranked school education as the best way to learn about civil emergencies.

A specific question in the survey – If the risk is a matter of chance or a choice? – aimed to better understanding the civil emergency situations in Albania. According to 40.6 % of respondents risk is a matter of luck, while 59.4 % consider it as a matter of choice.

In our daily lives we are faced with a constant need to make choices considering up the relative risks and benefits is far from easy. We can only rely on the knowledge we have. Have you ever wondered how you would react in an emergency? None of us like to think too much, but as citizens we need to have basic information about the risks and the appropriate measures that we need to take, not only to prevent disasters but also to cope with them if they occur.

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Fourth Steering Committee Meeting of PRO NEWS Programme

The EU-funded Programme for Improving National Early Warning System and Flood Prevention in Albania (PRO NEWS) convened its fourth Steering Committee meeting, on 11 April 2018.

The meeting, organized under the auspices of the Albanian Ministry of Defense through the General Directorate for Civil Emergencies (GDCE), discussed the programme progress and the work-plan for the remaining time-frame of implementation.

The meeting was welcomed by Mr. Shemsi Prençi, General Director of GDCE, Ms. Olga Luisa Anghelakis, Head of Economic Governance Section in the EU Delegation to Albania, Mr. Hubert Grandjean, Programme Officer in the EU Delegation to Albania and Mr. Giovanni de Siervo, PRO NEWS Programme Director, Italian Civil Protection Department.

In his opening speech, Mr. Shemsi Prençi, General Director of GDCE, brought to attention the remarks of last Steering Committee meeting, pointing out that the membership of Albania in the Civil Protection Mechanism of EU is now a priority for Albanian Government, requiring as precondition the successful implementation of PRO NEWS programme.

“All parties at this moment must join forces to overcome challenges and participate actively and intensively in effective programme implementation. We don't have time to lose as we don't have time to accept or cause the failure of this kind of programmes with great importance for the well-being and the security of its citizens”, stressed Mr. Prençi.

Ms. Olga Anghelakis, head of Economic Governance Section in the EU Delegation to Albania, emphasized that “PRO NEWS Programme is essential for preparation of Albania in accessing in the Civil Protection Mechanism of the European Union”. “The success of programme implementation depends on the full involvement of all beneficiaries, therefore, all parts are invited to ensure all necessary support to the activities”, stressed Ms. Anghelakis in her speech, succeeding by other recommendations for programme partners to ensure in time implementation of all components.

Mr. Hubert Grandjean, EU Delegation in Albania, called for an enhanced collaboration and coordination between all Albanian key beneficiary institutions and Consortium partners in order to achieve the programme objectives and thus reinforce the Albanian overall Civil Protection System.

Mr. Giovanni De Siervo, Programme Director at Italian Civil Protection Department, on behalf of the implementing Consortium, appreciated the Albanian institutions and especially the GDCE for coordination ensured among all national stakeholders and confirmed the commitment by all consortium partners towards successful programme implementation. Mr. De Siervo emphasized the importance of all beneficiaries to be more collaborative achieving together the programme objectives. “The consortium is very committed to this project and all its components”, closed his speech Mr. De Siervo.

The PRO NEWS Consortium partners presented the progress of each technical component so far. The discussions were focused on envisaged approach to the achievement of expected results, planned activities, areas in need of attention and recommendations for the way forward.





In the European Day PRO NEWS becomes part of celebrations



On Europe Day (9 May), the EU Delegation and Member States organized a series of festive activities, among which the EU Village, located in the center of Tirana, on the “Skanderbeg” Square.



All EU-funded projects in Albania participated in this activity. Distributed in different tents of the “village”, the projects presented the work done in accordance to relevant topics dedicated to environment, culture and education, economic development and agriculture, European citizenship, human rights and public services, etc.



Part of this fair was also the PRO NEWS program “Improving National Early Warning System and Flood Prevention in Albania”, through a variety of materials and activities dedicated to early warning and undertaking appropriate measures to deal with danger in case of natural disasters, such as flooding. The slogan used in this day, the same time the slogan of the program’s awareness campaign, is “Risk is not a chance, it’s a choice!”.



A special interest for the visitors aroused the meteorological station set up in the square to demonstrate continuous measurements of altitude and precipitation intensity, finding out real-time weather data. The children and 9-year-old pupils involved in the event became part of the board game, created as a learning tool on the various stages of flood risk management.

There were many people who completed the questionnaire on natural disasters and civil emergencies, which aims to assess risk awareness and understand how people perceive danger in case of a disaster. The attention of citizens who visited the EU village was drawn by the photos exhibition and historical reviews of the latest flood events in Albania designed with the aim of showing and remembering how often a natural disaster can occur in Albania and the consequences it can cause.

The participating organizations had the opportunity to discuss and share their project experiences in the corner of the EU speakers. The PRO NEWS program was introduced by Mr. Shemsi Prençi, General Director of Civil Emergencies, who emphasized the need to inform and raise awareness of the community regarding a natural disaster risk and prompt reaction.

National Workshop on New Guidelines and Emergency Planning 28 June 2018, Durres, Albania

Representatives of Albanian Prefectures, the General Directorate for Civil Emergencies and other national stakeholders on Emergency Planning in Albania, together with Consortium Partners (DPC, CIMA, REC) were gathered on June 28, 2018 in a national workshop on the new Guidelines and the Emergency Planning.

The workshop was planned to present the final version of the Guidelines for Prefectural Emergency Planning, prepared so far by the Programme Team Experts (from CIMA and REC) in close collaboration with the representatives of Albanian Prefectures, responsible for civic emergencies.

Through the presentations and interactive sessions, the participants had possible to revise the plans verifying full cohesion of their structure with the PRONEWS guidelines; to follow up on the development of a coordinated model for the activation of operative phases and identification of possible triggers – in both forecasting and monitoring phases – available to the Civil Protection system of Albania.

In September there will be organized several regional meetings to finalize tailoring of the Emergency Plans.



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