



A SWOT Analysis of Natural Hazards Risk Management in European Countries

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The SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool intended to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats involved in a project or a business venture, or in any other situation requiring a decision. Although SWOT was developed for and is well-known in the business community, its usefulness is not limited to for-profit organizations. As part of the EU-funded IRASMOS (Integral Risk Management of Extremely Rapid Mass Movements) project a SWOT analysis was performed to enhance understanding of the risk management of natural hazards in selected countries (Austria, France, Italy, Norway and Switzerland). S, W, O and T were collected in workshops with risk managers in all noted countries. Before the workshops took place, a document including general information on the workshops and the SWOT method was sent to the participants so that they could prepare.

The results can be summarised as follows: the strengths of the risk management process in the assessed countries are similar. To a greater or lesser extent all the countries have national organizations, use some standards and tools such as hazard maps, are adequately skilled and show a high motivation to solve their problems. These are favourable conditions for the generation of common strategies and methods and the further enhancement of the work processes for all countries. The weaknesses are often influenced by a rather subjective and emotional perception of the current situation and possible enhancements as they reflect a desired improvement and thus they may be rather country-specific. Nonetheless some of the key concepts were mentioned in a similar way in different countries, for example the segregation of duties and responsibilities among different administrative entities. The opportunities and the threats are similar for each country and the general conditions for the management of risks associated with natural hazards are generally favourable and benefit from high political and public awareness. Despite this, people lack detailed knowledge of the issue, and political opinions and needs are prone to change quite quickly. It seems necessary for all the countries to improve information distribution and communication among stakeholders and with the public. In this way existing awareness can be deepened and likely made more sustainable.