Geophysical Research Abstracts
Vol. 15, EGU2013-10897, 2013
EGU General Assembly 2013

Evaluation of Existing Structure and Civil Protection Management Framework in Greek Local Authorities: A Questionnaire Survey Demonstrates Why Prevention Fails

Dimitrios Papanikolaou (1), Ioannis Papanikolaou (1,2,3), Michalis Diakakis (1), Georgios Deligiannakis (1,2)

(1) Laboratory of Natural Hazards, Faculty of Geology and Geoenvironment, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Panepistimioupolis, 15784, Athens, Greece (dpapan@geol.uoa.gr), (2) Mineralogy-Geology Laboratory, Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, Agricultural University of Athens, Iera Odos 75, 118-55, Athens, Greece (i.pap@aua.gr), (3) Department of Earth Sciences, Birkbeck College and University College London, WC 1E 6BT, London UK, Email: (i.papanikolaou@ucl.ac.uk)

In the face of a growing number of natural disasters and the increasing costs associated with them, Europe and Greece in particular, have devoted significant efforts and resources in natural hazards mitigation during the last decades. Despite the significant legislative efforts (e.g. 1998/22/EC, 2001/792/EC, 2007/60/EC Directives, 3013/2002 Act) and even though a number of steps has been taken towards improving civil protection, recent catastrophic events have illustrated the weaknesses of current approaches.

In particular, in Greece, events such as the 1999 Athens earthquake, the 2007 and 2009 wildfires have shown the inadequacy of prevention and mitigation practices. Given the enhanced civil protection responsibilities, given by the Greek national law (Acts 3013/2002, 3852/2010) to local authorities in Greece, this work analyses and evaluates the existing structure and current management framework under which local authorities function and examines their risk mitigation practices.

We conducted the largest questionnaire survey regarding Civil Protections issues, among the municipalities of Greece. To this aim, this work used a innovative online tool to assess current framework. Therefore, a network connecting civil protection departments of municipalities was developed, based on an Internet platform that acted also as a communication tool. Overall, we had feedback either online or offline from 125 municipalities across the country (representing more than one/third of the total municipalities of Greece). Through this network, municipal civil protection officials completed surveys designed to obtain and quantify information on several aspects of civil protection practices and infrastructure. In particular, the examined factors included: (i) personnel and equipment, (ii) inter-agency cooperation, (iii) training, (iv) compliance with existing regulations and (v) persistent problems encountered by civil protection departments, that prevent the effectiveness of current practices.

Responses showed that civil protection personnel lack adequate training and expertise, many are overstretched with several duties, while several prevention actions are carried out by seasonal or voluntary staff. Approximately half of the heads of civil protection offices do not hold a university degree, only 27% have a relevant scientific background (geoscientists or engineers) and more than half of them are elected members and not permanent staff, implying that no continuity is secured. Inter-agency cooperation is shown to be poor and organizational learning from international practices not adequate. Half of the municipalities report that the authorization processes are too slow so that prevention actions particularly regarding forest fires are severely delayed. Existing regulations are not followed by a significant portion of municipalities since 19% have not established a civil protection office and 23% have not compiled an action plan yet. Existing action plans lack important information, present no spatial data and are predominantly catalogues and tables of information regarding authorised personnel and equipment. Overall, underfunding, poor coordination of the different actors involved, lack of training and understaffing, lack of proper equipment and several other issues are held responsible by officials for preventing effectiveness of current practices. Finally, the EU emergency number 112 is widely unknown (87%).

This work was held under the LIFE+ project “Local Authorities Alliance for Forest Fire Prevention - LIFE08/ENV/GR/000553” which is implemented with the contribution of the LIFE financial instrument of the European Community.