

## **Stakeholder risk perception associated with natural hazards in Iași County (Romania)**

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The strategies to reduce the risks associated with natural hazards are oriented recently to increasing the level of preparedness and prevention, and the quantification of different levels of impact that human society might face. An essential component of this approach lies in the increase of population awareness, the increasing of educational level, and facilitating communication between scientists and different risk managers. In several recent studies, it is emphasised the importance of risk perception, especially for the stakeholders in diminishing the risks associated with natural hazards since a high level of knowledge can substantially improve the response of society to the adverse effects of the disasters.

An important issue related to the risk perception is the assessment of those that, in an emergency situation, must decide and take the measures to protect the population. Stakeholders have an increased role in the case of small, isolated and undeveloped communities, where they have the power to direct or even to control the behaviour of lay people. This is the case of the predominantly agricultural rural communities of the north-eastern part of Romania. Here many studies highlighted a high degree of vulnerability (e.g. an ageing population because of a permanent migration of young peoples to large urban centres or abroad, the poor quality and connectivity of the road infrastructure, among others).

In this research, a large spectrum of issues related to stakeholders' risk perception from more than 30 rural administrative units from Iasi County (NE Romania) is analysed. More than 200 questionnaires were distributed to key stakeholders: mayors, local police chiefs, farmers, school directors, and priests. These categories are those that have an important role in small Romanian communities during and after the floods, droughts, spring and summer storms, snowstorms, earthquakes or landslides, the main natural hazards in the study area.

From the results obtained, we have found a significant level of awareness of stakeholders regarding the risks and their potential effects on exposed elements (people, buildings, roads, bridges) especially for floods, storms and earthquakes (rapid hazards). For floods, it was highlighted a strong spatial relation with recent events along the main rivers of the Iasi County: Siret and Prut Rivers. Following floods, droughts and snowstorms have been considered great source of danger according to their high occurrence in the past. Among all stakeholders, a remarkable correlation with the threats of natural hazards was observed for farmers and heads of schools. This study demonstrates the necessity of an improved education and way of communication, through a closer connection between scientists and local communities.