



Perception of volcanic hazards and volcanic risk in the Canary Islands population through the educational program: “Canary Islands, a volcanic window in the Atlantic Ocean”

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The Canary Islands is the only volcanically active territory of Spain. Proofs of this are the 16 historical eruptions that have occurred throughout this territory, the most recent one being the submarine eruption offshore El Hierro Island which took place on October 12, 2011. Over all these years, from 2008 until now, ITER as well as INVOLCAN have been performing an educational program focused on teaching the different volcanic hazards, how to reduce volcanic risk and the management of that risk in the Canary Islands as well as the benefits of living in a volcanic territory. There are three main reasons that lead us to carry out this educative program: (1) The volcanic risk in the Canary Islands is increasing due to a boom of the socio-economic development since the 1950s, (2) Moreover the Canarian society as a whole has a rather low perception of volcanic risk and (3) The Basic Directive of Civil Protection Planning for the reduction of volcanic risk in Spain requested the establishment of an educational program to raise awareness and increase the resilience of the Canarian population. The outreach program aims to visit the 88 municipalities of the Canaries each year and it is given over 3 consecutive days covering the next topics: the first two days themes of volcanic hazards and volcanic risk supported by the IAVCEI/UNESCO videos “Understanding Volcanic Hazards” and “Reducing Volcanic Risk” and the third day gives an overview of Canary Islands volcanism and volcanic risk management. During each presentation a questionnaire under the form of a volcanic Trivial is handed out. The audience has to answer the questions twice: before and after the presentation. This data makes it possible to perform a statistical analysis and to estimate the impact of the program. Since this project started in 2008 the total number of attendees amounts to 21,485 people. The main audience is clearly that related to the population aged 35 and above, which demonstrates the importance of this program for adult audiences, non-school age. Regarding the analysis of the questionnaires, it has been observed in all cases that after the educational program is taught, the percentage of correct answers increases considerably. The analysis of the data for all the Canary Islands shows that the participants have a similar knowledge about the general concepts of volcanic hazards and volcanic risk and that, in addition, they are able to distinguish them well. However, they are not clear about which of these volcanic phenomena exist or have taken place in the Canary Islands or how the risk relative to these hazards is managed. The final aim of the program is a net improvement in the community’s knowledge with regards to volcanic risk in the Canaries.