



Stakeholders' preparedness level in the face of natural hazards in the rural communities of north-eastern Romania

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The level of preparedness of local communities in the face of natural hazards constitutes a significant concern to modern society. In this study we evaluate these levels at a regional scale in order to identify the factors that could improve the resilience of rural communities.

For this reason, a set of 92 face to face interviews have been carried out to local stakeholders in Iasi Municipality in north-eastern Romania from a total of 32 rural administrative units. Due to their geographical position, geomorphologic features and climatic settings, these communities are yearly confronted with various levels of hydro-meteorological hazards like droughts, floods, rainstorms, snowstorms, and landslides, and at highest temporal intervals (30 to 50 years) with geophysical hazards, like earthquakes. Mayors, local police chiefs, farmers, school directors and priests have been evidenced to be the reference people in case of an emergency being at the upfront, in these situations being able to drive the community. In this line, some questions were designed to: (i) assess of level of the preparedness of local communities in the face of natural hazards, (ii) address people's trust in the actual disaster protection measures and risk planners and (iii) evidenciate the expected measures that might help them in increasing their resilience. Results showed that the lower level of preparedness of local communities was attributed to soil erosion and landslides whereas the highest level was assigned to snowstorms and floods due to the economic damages the latter brought in the recent past. In this regard, the personal experience and the media influence are predictors of a higher concern that translate into readiness. Respondents underlined, however, a low level of trust on risk manager initiatives and the actual protection measures. Although, respondents consider that a prompt intervention capacity in case of a natural hazard can really improve the level of the resilience, but underestimates the importance of their personal preparedness. Assessing the level of preparedness of local stakeholders can identify community weaknesses in the face of natural hazards reaction and prioritize decision makers and local investments able to increase structural and functional communities resilience plans.