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Hydro-meteorological risks perception and preparedness in a multi-hazard environment: The case of Greece

Katerina Papagiannaki¹, Michalis Diakakis², Vassiliki Kotroni¹, Kostas Lagouvardos¹, and Emmanuel Andreadakis²

¹Institute of Environmental Research and Sustainable Development, National Observatory of Athens, 11810, Athens, Greece

²Faculty of Geology and Geoenvironment, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 15784, Zografou, Greece

Laymen's awareness for the natural hazards and their perception of the associated risks at the local level have been acknowledged widely as key factor for the success of any risk mitigation initiative. It is therefore particularly beneficial to find out how people's risk perception is shaped in a multi-hazard environment, such as that of Eastern Mediterranean, and how it affects individual preparedness. To this end, we have conducted an online survey aimed at Greek citizens in order to better understand their risk perception among various hydro-meteorological hazards, including geophysical hazards for comparison, and to evaluate their coping capacity. The survey questionnaire received more than 2,300 responses from across Greece. The analysis of the questionnaire has been performed in the frame of the project "THESPIAN II – Development of synergistic and integrated methods and tools for monitoring, management and forecasting of Environmental parameters and pressures".

Statistical results show that people consider hydro-meteorological hazards less worrying and dangerous than earthquakes. However, in contrast to earthquakes, it was found that increase in hydro-meteorological risks perception enhances preparedness i.e. the adoption of adequate protective measures, except of the private insurance coverage which was found to be purely a matter of economic criteria. Experience was found to have a significant impact on both risk perception and preparedness for all types of natural hazards. However, with respect to hydro-meteorological hazards, its effect decreases with time. Results also highlight the important role of a focused and coordinated effort by authorities and scientists to inform citizens and build a trustful relationship in motivating individual preparedness, as well as other interesting statistically significant relationships with participants demographics and other factors.