

Know your school: be safe! - the participatory risk communication action of the KnowRISK project

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All actions to mitigate seismic risk are less effective without a culture of prevention and preparedness. This can be achieved also through education, starting from the youngest citizens through a permanent process on environmental education to safety.

The population needs to be acquainted with the foundations on seismic hazard: Knowledge, Awareness, How to intervene, Self-protection, Prevention.

“Know your school: be safe!” is the participatory risk communication action of the KnowRISK project (Know your city, Reduce seISMic risK through non-structural elements), financed by the European Commission (AGREEMENT NUMBER - ECHO/SUB/2015/718655/PREV28) to reduce non-structural damage in urban areas. The action aims at raising awareness of school communities (e.g. students, teachers and school managers) in the pilot-areas within the three European participating countries, namely Portugal, Iceland and Italy, and started from La Spezia (Italy) as pilot area for a new experience on educational concepts and activities developed for students at schools.

Our challenge is to actively involve schools in a policy on seismic risk reduction focused on non-structural elements that may strongly affect lives while being highly underestimated by formal education. We promote a natural hazard active learning in a «Smart School» helping teachers to educate students to find solutions for a future, more resilient society.

By learning know what, know how, know why in the innovative approach Search-Show-Share, schools will be directly involved in a participatory process based on Understanding, Observation and Reflection to foster the culture of securing the non-structural elements to save as many lives as possible during an earthquake.

The method is based on active learning strategies favoring knowledge, skills and attitudes. The flipped-up approach from Rivoltella’s EAS (Episodi di Apprendimento Situato) concept is reviewed in issue of educational seismology. We excite students to research on a seismic matter and act on problem solving abilities, we encourage a classroom discussion engaging students in solving problems in a learning-by-doing framework, we debate with students at the end of the EAS experience. The action “Know your school: be safe!” is a particular EAS experiment which starts and ends with two different focus groups where students and teachers meet researchers and fire brigades to rework and restructure the main concepts for the correct behavior change.

Students are asked to make brief video-reports, collect interviews and carry on other activities as they please to promote education and prevention (songs, poems, short stories, comics and cartoons, scientific games, ...) with the aim to reduce non-structural vulnerability both in school and home environments.

Test age-targeted activities encourage the school community to share the benefits of the project with other citizens in order to reach ambitious results such as (1) the engagement of students in the discovery of their own school, its vulnerability and resilience; (2) the dissemination of knowledge on non-structural seismic protection measures.

Eventually, the best videos (that will be available in KnowRISK website) will give insights on how young people take into account seismic prevention.