



Communication and perception of hydrometeorological risks in Catalonia

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One of the main objectives of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 of United Nations is to increase public awareness to understand risk, vulnerability and disaster reduction globally. However, there are not so many studies that systematically assess the effectiveness of different public awareness generation strategies in actually reducing risk. This contribution presents the strategy conducted in Catalonia (NE of Spain) to improve risk awareness, the communication processes involved in the alert chain, and the risk perception of the population. With this aim we have analyzed the results obtained from the surveys about natural risk perception conducted by the General Direction of Civil Protection in Catalonia, for the period 2008-2010, with a sample composed by one thousand people approximately. According to this study, only 15% of surveyed people consider that their region can be affected by risks associated with natural phenomena like floods, windstorms, snowfalls or forest fires (in this order), although some scientific studies and reports shows that more than the major part of the population in Catalonia lives in regions than can be frequently affected by heavy rains, floods or other hydrometeorological risks (Vilaplana and Payàs, 2008; Llasat, 2010). The study also shows that people living in small towns have a lower risk perception level, while there are sectors of the population with low risk awareness, particularly between young people and people with low educational level or immigrants. To analyze these results, the main features of the present Civil Protection plans on hydrometeorological risks are showed, with a special consideration to those aspects related with the communication to population as well as their role in the prevention, mitigation and resilience aspects. The study is completed with the analysis of the press influence in basis to the newspaper articles on natural hazards published by a Spanish journal for this period and its comparison with a longest one started in 1982 (Llasat et al, 2009b).