Italy is a country at risk of impending earthquakes in the near future. Very probably, there won’t be enough time to solve all the problems connected to seismic risk: first of all the corruption related to politics concerning buildings; the lack of the money necessary to strengthen the already existing ones, historical centres, monuments and the masterpieces of Art; the difficult relations of the Institutions with the traditional media (newspapers, radio and TV) and, at the same time, the new media (web); the difficulties for scientists to reach important results in the immediate future due to the lack of funding and, last but not least, to the conflicting relationships inside the scientific community itself. In this scenario, communication and education play a crucial role in minimizing the risk of the population.

PROMOTING CITIZENS’ GEO-AWARENESS

From the Umbria Marche Earthquake a number of educational tools have been developed by all the Institutions involved. The main target is the school. An excellent example is the project EDURISK where the INGV plays an important role. We believe that the more the citizens become aware of the places where they live and the more they become less vulnerable to natural hazard. Citizens should be educated to learn about the geological site where their houses are built and to get all the info necessary to understand it has been done according to the laws. Very often it is difficult to obtain such info because commnue administrators are corrupted; but this must not discourage both educators and the citizenship, since a cultural change can occur when citizens become aware of their rights and do their best to have them satisfied. Besides, they should be informed about emergency strategy plans including evacuation zones, while Civil protection relief drills should be intensified.

AN ECOLOGICAL EXPERIMENT

A format experimented by us to educate citizens is the Ecomuseum. We have done an experiment with students of a Liceum in Velletri (in the Castelli Romani – Lazio) to create a public event were students showed by scenic actions the territory where they live. In that occasion we realized how poor was the communication strategy of the Institutions involved in an occasion we realized how poor was the education and communication strategy of the Institutions involved in an emergency. The experience of the 1997 Umbria-Marche earthquake in Italy.

A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN EMERGENCY NEEDED

On the contrary, communication to the public during an emergency has not improved much, as L’Aquila earthquake has shown. In our country there is still a great confusion of how addressing important messages to the population during a crisis. At the time of the Umbria Marche earthquake we underlined how it was dangerous having several Institutions talking to the population during an emergency. During the L’Aquila earthquake this problem has been amplified by the fact that the web has become more and more ineficient in the last thirteen years. Social networks are a democratic exchange of information, but in general the web can become a source of further problems in absence of a common communication strategy of the Institutions involved in an emergency.

CONCLUSION

In a country where corruption, old buildings, lack of funding are a usual reality, it is important to educate citizens to become aware of the geological site where they live. Geocitizen can play a crucial role in this context. It is also important to encourage people to pretend information about their territory, together with the Institutions involved. If at the same time establish a common strategy of communication to people during an earthquake crisis in order to avoid the fatal errors of the past.

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From Colfiorito to L’Aquila earthquake: learning from the past to communicating the risk of the present

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