

International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction

The International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction was established in 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly and is held every 13 October. It acknowledges that human beings cannot subdue the power of nature. It is, however, possible for them to reduce natural disasters. On this day, numerous activities are organized globally which aim at promoting a global culture of risk awareness and disaster reduction.

A natural disaster is the result of a natural hazard (e.g.: a volcanic eruption, an earthquake, a fire, a landslide) and affects human activities especially in the form of financial, structural and human lives losses.

Poor and developing countries suffer the most severe losses in human lives and serious damage as well, due to lack of infrastructure and expertise in handling natural disasters.

In order to reduce these consequences, we need planning and an appropriate system of dealing with emergencies. Each country designates local authorities and competent institutions as responsible for coordinating and organizing activities for disaster risk reduction and for addressing emergencies and unpredictable natural phenomena. In Cyprus, the Civil Defence is in charge of these tasks.

The main mission of the Civil Defence is to take measures for dealing with natural or man-made disasters which can endanger people's lives and their well-being or cause extensive damage to the environment and the natural resources of a country. These measures include a series of actions for preventing, preparing for, responding to, planning, educating in and limiting the impact of disasters.

In Europe, the European Mechanism for civil protection provides a framework for cooperation and assistance in case of an emergency, which can be activated both within and outside the Union. It promotes the cooperation among the countries members of the EU in the field of civil protection and supports their efforts on a national, regional and local level by providing countries with effective "tools" to prevent, prepare for and deal with natural or man-made disasters. Any country affected by serious disasters can seek help from the European Mechanism for Civil Protection.

Having the knowledge on how to deal with natural disasters is imperative and the process should start from the early school years.

Our school participates in the Erasmus+ Program titled "Risk Impact Zones Environments" (RIZE).

The RIZE Project is a cooperation of six European schools, aiming to educate their students on issues related to natural disasters and to exchange information on good practices which can help us prevent, respond to and deal with natural disasters (e.g.: floods, landslides, avalanches, forest fires, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions).