

CHAPTER

16

**TRAINING STUDENTS TO RESPOND TO
EMERGENCIES IN ARMENIA**

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Abstract: This paper presents the work of the European Interregional Centre for Training Rescuers, which provides training to schools, staff and local communities in Armenia. It describes the types of educational materials prepared by the centre, the recommendations developed to ensure the safety of students inside and outside the school, and training courses run by the centre.

The European Interregional Centre for Training Rescuers

The European Interregional Centre for Training Rescuers (ECTR) was established in 1995 by the Council of Europe Committee of Permanent Correspondents for the Open Partial Agreement on the Prevention of, Protection against, and Organisation of Relief in Major Natural and Technological Disasters and the government of the Republic of Armenia.

The ECTR develops, implements and updates training courses and methodological materials for students, teaching staff, administrative executives and parents on recognising and responding to emergencies. In so doing, the centre aims to reduce the number of emergency-related casualties and accidents, in addition to increasing the self-confidence of trainees and fostering an atmosphere of mutual understanding and awareness in schools and communities.

The centre has organised school training courses on recognising and responding to over 30 types of risks, including explosions in the streets and in confined spaces; behaviour in crowded places and during street protest marches and meetings; kidnapping children and hostage-taking; sky-jacking and jacking of other vehicles; and survival in zones of armed conflict. It has also conducted training programmes in secondary schools on The Science of Risks as part of the Safety and Survival Programme, in co-operation with the Armenian Anania Shirakatsi National College and other educational institutions, including schools in rural cross-border areas.

In 1988, the Spitak earthquake destroyed more than 1 000 school buildings and killed more than 25 000 people, many of whom were schoolchildren. In response to this tragedy, the ECTR initiated a project on safe school furniture design.

Collaboration with other agencies

The ECTR is involved in a number of joint research projects with the Council of Europe EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement and European Union training centres in Nicosia, Cyprus; Ravello, Italy; Sophia, Bulgaria; and others. A number of municipal and rural schools in Armenia also receive risk prevention training as part of their involvement in the Euro-Mediterranean network.

This collaborative research has focused on the following areas:

- Preparing *educational materials* for students, teaching staff, school administration and parents on recognising and responding to a terrorist attack or similar event.
- Preparing *recommendations* on safety for students in their own homes; safety of school buildings; provision of school medical services; storage of food and water in case of

a biological or chemical attack; design of school furniture with protective features; safety of school vehicles; and fire safety.

- Developing *training courses* for students and teachers. These courses address:
 - Student responses to being watched or followed by strangers, to kidnapping and hostage situations, and to hostage release operations.
 - Safety precautions for students in crowds, during street protest marches and in other potentially dangerous situations outside the school.
 - Procedures for dealing with explosive objects found by students in the street, in the school and or on school grounds.
 - Procedures to be used by teachers to deal with an emergency situation inside or outside the school.
 - First-aid training for school bus drivers, who also receive training on responding to the hijacking of a school vehicle.