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Modern natural hazard management can best be explained by means of the principle of the **risk cycle**, which begins with the event (disaster) and comprises disaster intervention, repair, reconstruction, prevention, and measures of disaster preparedness. The objective is to improve and enhance society's preparedness for future natural disasters. Provision of these security services requires the cooperation of experts of numerous technical disciplines and many public and private organisations. A task of natural hazard management is also to harmonise all relevant technical plans to serve the goal of protecting against natural hazards.

The protection against natural hazards has thus become a comprehensive task which cannot be managed by the state with its agencies and authorities alone. Also stakeholders – communities, carriers and utilities, the economy and, in particular, the individual citizen – must participate intensively in the precautionary measures and make an appropriate contribution thereto.

The management of disaster events (like the flood of the year 2002) requires the coordinated action of all players. Right after the event local or regional crisis management committees guide the intervention of the disaster relief team and the execution of the necessary immediate measures such as the closing of roads, the evacuation of areas subject to acute risk or the leading back of rivers and torrents which overflowed their banks to their beds. The crisis management committees bring together the experts and decision-makers needed from the different fields of competence. However, in order to reach the protection targets all plans and measures must also in the subsequent phases of reconstruction and development of precautionary measures (preventive protection) be coordinated between territorial authorities, public and private bodies.

Communicating the risk associated with the natural hazards of alpine areas is an essential contribution towards improved hazard awareness of the population. The goal pursued is first to create social acceptance of the impending hazards and the necessary preventive measures and, in a second step, to make citizens participants in the process of preparing for cases of natural hazards.

Key tasks with respect to the communication on natural hazards are to provide information and to impart knowledge on the subject. In the age of electronic media the continuous provision of information material (brochures, films), targeted public relations work (television, newspapers), but increasingly also “events” (presentations at fairs, exhibitions) are playing a vital role.

However, communication about the protection against natural hazards goes far beyond the simple provision of information. Modern hazard control plans require space (land) on the one hand and infringe upon individual rights on the other hand; for this reason they conflict with competing land-use interests (agriculture, protection of nature, residential settlement, infrastructure, tourism). As a result, there are necessarily two essential level of communication for the planning of active and passive measures of protection:

1. Communication with the persons affected by the plans (beneficiaries, adjoining owners, holders of rights, citizens' initiatives).
2. Communication in the framework of various technical plans of relevance to specific areas.

Managing such communication processes requires tools which ensure the participation of all those affected by the planning. The following examples for successful natural hazard communication in Austria can be mentioned:

- Intensive hazard mapping and implementation of web-based public hazard information systems (eg. HORA)
- Public information for citizens and education even for children on the topic natural hazards (generation blue, Biber Berti, hazard mapping at school)
- Intensified citizen participation (Kamp river)
- Tran competent expert platforms (annual meeting of flood and torrent controllers in Austria)

- Strategic steering platforms (strategic business field “natural hazard protection” established since 2001 in the federal ministry for agriculture, forestry, environment and water management)

The impact of global warming on natural hazards was a major topic in media and press recently in Austria according to an apparent increase in the number and intensity of disastrous events. Although within the last years enormous damage due to floods and avalanches has occurred, no distinct development towards more natural catastrophes in large river basins could be proved by scientific means. Hydrologic data for precipitation or run-off do not show a significant trend in this direction. On the other hand there is evidence that the catastrophic flood events in small catchment areas due to intensive rain showers increases significantly. This phenomenon; as well as others – e.g. the impact of the rise of the snow-line or the retreat of glaciers on the hydrology of alpine catchment areas – has to be subject to intensive research in the near future.

Experiences that can be gained from coping with natural disasters constitute an important basis for a better preparation of the society for future events. The following **future objectives and tasks** could be derived from the analysis of the flood 2002 in Austria (study “FLOOD RISK, 2004”):

- Demonstrating the limits of protection and the responsibility of those involved
- Promoting hazards knowledge and hazards awareness.
- Ensuring a site-adapted land-use planning
- Incentive systems for prevention at one’s own initiative
- Harmonisation of all planning activities in the public sector
- Control measures, where necessary, permanent maintenance
- Emergency planning and disaster control measures
- Financial provisions, insurances and claim settlement