

Earthquakes: Guidelines for People with Intellectual Disabilities using the Easy-to-Read method and Makaton symbols

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Scope

- Greece's **Earthquake Planning and Protection Organization (EPPO)** and the **European Centre on Prevention and Forecasting of Earthquakes (ECPFE)** have various actions programmed for designing and implementing earthquake policies in Greece.
- One of these is designing and producing specialized earthquake protection measures for people with disabilities. This project involves the development of informative material concerning Earthquake Protection Measures for people with disabilities using the “**Easy to Read**” method and the augmentative alternative communication symbols of the “**Makaton**” **Language Program**.

Previous editions

EPPO's previous publications for People with Disabilities

(PWD) "Learning about Earthquakes and Protection Measures: Guidelines for People with Disabilities" were:

- 32-page booklets (Greek version, 2008 & English version, 2010)
- aimed at all types of disabilities
- high in information content , but too many words to be easily understood by PWD
- very useful tools for educators & parents to use in informing and training PWD
- mostly good photographs, but some were cluttered and therefore difficult for PWD to focus on the important aspects without being distracted by background

Searching on the internet...

- An abundance of information and guidelines for the general public (brochures, booklets, posters, games, worksheets) about protective measures before, during and after an earthquake.
- Looking deeper, you may find information written for carers about dealing with people with disabilities before, during and after an earthquake.
- BUT there is a lack of information designed and written in such a way as to be **easily accessed and understood by people with little or no reading skills.**

Working Group

Earthquake specialists from EPPO and ECPFE.

Disability specialists sub-group:

- 2 Easy to Read specialists, a Psychologist & a Social Worker from the adult intellectual disability field
- 2 Makaton specialists, both Speech Language Therapists from the child & adult autism and intellectual disability fields
- 1 young adult with intellectual disability

From the very first meeting, the necessity of having a person with intellectual disability in the Working Group was highlighted, as well as, the need for focus groups including

more PWD and for a pilot study of the material to be

What is the Easy-to-Read method?

- A method of writing or adapting texts which includes only the most important information of a topic.
- The texts are written in the most straightforward way so that they can be understood by the largest number of readers who have difficulties reading and understanding written texts.
- In 1998 the ILSMH European Association developed “Easy-to-Read Guidelines” and translated them into the, then, 8 official European Union languages. The publication, entitled “Make It Simple” was edited by the Commission of the European Communities, DGV-E-4, Integration of Disabled People.

Who can use Easy-to-Read?

- People with intellectual disabilities and other disabilities.
- People with limited education.
- People with social difficulties.
- Migrants whose mother tongue is different from the country's they are living in.

An example of text supported by a photograph:



I crawl under a strong table.
I hold onto the table's leg.

What is Makaton?

- A unique language program which may be used as a systematic multi-modal approach for the teaching of communication, language and literacy skills.
- A source of highly functional vocabulary for people with communication needs and their interactive partners.
- Makaton uses speech with signs (gestures) and symbols (pictures) with the written word to help people communicate. Comprehension is facilitated by the visualization of language with symbols.

An example of text supported by symbols:



Go



outside



slowly



and



calmly.

Who can use Makaton?

- Children and adults with a broad range of communication needs. It is useful for people with difficulties in both comprehension and expression of language, regardless of their diagnosis.
- Interactors of all kinds: parents, carers, professionals, friends. The dual code (signs & spoken language, symbols & written language) allows for interactors who haven't been trained in the use of Makaton to easily interact relying on the written word in order to understand the message.
- Education and Service Providers for the translation of information to increase user access.

Why two different booklets?

Similarities:

- Simple language without losing essential information.
- Short sentences with a lot of repetition.
- Visual support using photographs.

Differences:

- Each method addresses people with different abilities in receiving written information –minimal reading skills for Easy to Read & pre-reading skills for Makaton.
- Vocabulary selection criteria
 - Reading difficulties related to the phonemic structure of words (Easy to Read)
 - Visualization difficulties of an abstract concept with a representational symbol (Makaton)

Easy-to-Read examples



I talk to my parents, teachers, coworkers about earthquakes and get ready for an earthquake.

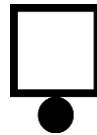


We agree on the place to meet when the earthquake stops and we leave the building.

Makaton examples



Go



under a strong table.

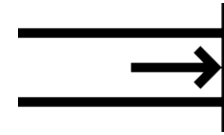


Hold the leg of the table tightly.

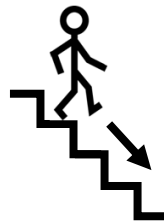
Makaton examples



The earthquake



stops.



Use the stairs to go



outside.

Target Groups

- **Initial focus** was to target people with intellectual disability, autism, dementia, other disabilities as well other vulnerable social groups such as migrants and refugees.
- **Difficulties:** time factor, varying needs and level of language comprehension
- **Final focus:** intellectual disability and autism.
- Intended use of the booklets by teenagers & adults who attend special schools, training centers or workshops, who live with their parents or in independent living homes, who have co morbidity with autism or not.
- Essentially, the booklets address a wide range of skills, needs and functionality profiles.

Target Groups

- The **Easy to Read** booklet addresses people with mild to moderate intellectual disability.
- The **Makaton** booklet addresses people with moderate to severe intellectual disability with or without autism.
- Although the pilot studies were performed on these 3 target groups, the flexibility of both the Easy to Read method and the Makaton symbols makes it possible for both the booklets to be used by anyone who has **minimum reading comprehension skills** in the case of Easy to Read or **pre-reading skills** in the case of Makaton.

Goals

Primary goals for the target groups:

- to strengthen the ability to act spontaneously so as to protect oneself in case of an earthquake
- to increase the ability to identify environment risks and to ask for their removal so that they are safer

Secondary goals for parents, carers and disability service providers:

- to empower with specific guidelines and useful, accessible material to use when informing and training their children or service users.
- to increase awareness in environmental risk removal
- to support understanding of instructions during practical exercises

Design Process

- Earthquake specialists outline the technical details essential to be included.
- Working group narrow down the information content considered essential to be included, keeping in mind the ease of conveying the message.
- Information processed in groups including PWD (various groups consisting of 10-15 teenagers or adults with varying degrees of intellectual disability).
- Information content was analyzed and separated into before, during & after an earthquake sections.
- Creation of the 1st draft of the text followed by trials.
- Difficulties were encountered with the structure of the text, with the significance of some points and with some of the symbols.

Design Process

- Changes incorporated into the text. All information which caused comprehension difficulties was expressed with simpler words and less abstract words & symbols.
- Finalization of working draft which corresponds to reading and comprehension skills of target group.
- Trials with the target groups, check for understanding.
- Results and feedback from trials incorporated into 2nd working draft.
- Careful planning of new photographs to be taken (based on feedback from target groups to use photographs not sketches & also based on difficulties experienced with the previous edition's photos).
- The Easy-to-Read target groups specified which points needed to be supported by photos or sketches as well as the content of the photos.
- Be trials with the new photos

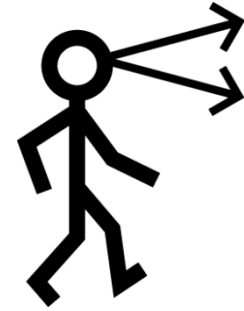
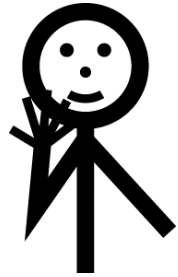
Criteria for sentence selection based on Easy-to-Read & Makaton guidelines

- Grammatically simple, short sentences (subject-verb-object, avoidance of clauses)
- Only one main idea per sentence
- Use of the most representational symbols
- Avoidance of abstract concepts & symbols
- Repetition of nouns instead of using pronouns (e.g. **Earthquakes** start suddenly NOT **It** starts suddenly)
- Use of positive sentences and active verbs (e.g. **Walk slowly** NOT **Don't run**)
- Sentences in 1st person singular in order to motivate and promote spontaneity of actions

Pilot studies

2 special vocational training centers:

- Estia – day center for adults with intellectual disability
- Theotokos Foundation – day center for children and young adults with intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder or other developmental disabilities
- Individual and group trials
- Young adults aged 18 – 35 with intellectual disability with or without autism



Thank you for your attention

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