



Elevated Indoor Radon Concentrations: Risks and safety measures as presented by mass media in Slovenia

Metka Kralj and Irena Daris, ARAO, Slovenia / Nadja Železnik, REC, Country office Ljubljana, Slovenia / Claire Mays, Institute SYMLOG de France, France / Tanja Perko, SCK-CEN, Research Centre Mol, Belgium

Frequently used words associated with reporting about elevated radon concentrations in schools and kindergartens in Slovenia

... deadly gas radon is menacing children ...
... danger from poisonous gas radon ...
... consequences can be fatal ...
... radon is causing cancer ...
... inhaling radon is like smoking ...
... radon is threatening our children ...
... big risk for radiation exposure ...
... children are victims of a crime ...
... teachers and parents are shocked ...
... extremely high radon concentrations ...

Reported mitigation measures usually do not match these grave words, e. g.

... the problem will be solved by regular ventilation of classrooms ...
... cracks in the basement will be sealed ...

Observations and proposals regarding reporting about indoor radon made by the National Dialogue Group of project EAGLE

Representatives of mass media

- not enough infographics available,
- reaction time of professionals is too long,
- journalists prefer to communicate directly with professionals and not with PR staff,
- professionals/primary information sources should have some communication training to better understand the needs of media,
- clear conclusions about effective sanitation measures are usually lacking.

Representatives of governmental administration bodies

- radiation issues (e.g. concentration limits) are not discussed by professionals but by members of general public, the concepts are not clarified,
- radiation reference levels proposed by different international bodies, standards and recommendations are variable,
- media should also provide the explanation of situation, not only a short statement,
- exact wording is very important.

Main features of media reports about elevated radon concentration in some schools in Slovenia

- It is the **news** that is important – not standard natural conditions.
- News about ionizing radiation = news about **danger and health risks**.
- **Sensationalistic / emotional** reporting style is prevalent.
- Style of reporting **reduces trust** in professionals.

Both agree

- governmental institutions, and not professionals or journalists, are primarily accountable for public information about natural background radiation,
- governmental institutions have to be more proactive in communication regarding human exposure to ionizing radiation in natural environment;
- journalist that cover ionizing radiation issues need additional training about

