



Inform citizens about the risk they may face and about possible actions and measures, they can take to reduce vulnerability and better prepare themselves

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Disasters can be substantially reduced if people are well informed about the risk they may face and the measures they can take to reduce their vulnerability and better prepare themselves and if they provide disaster managers with information on what is happening on the ground. The media, alongside disaster management authorities plays an important role in ensuring that this occurs. A combination of appropriate media tools and means should be employed when delivering information to citizens about emergency situations and recommending behaviours that can mitigate the negative consequences of disaster situations. To increase their efficiency the design of all communication and management strategies should take into account both cognitive and affective mechanisms of processing risk information, and the need to be responsive to different socio-cultural circumstances.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Policy Makers](#), [Disaster Managers](#)

Disaster Phases: [Prevention](#), [Preparedness](#), [Response](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [Non-active citizens](#), [Active citizens](#), [National civil protection bodies](#), [Healthcare and emergency services](#), [Media](#), [NGOs](#), [Red Cross](#)

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#), [Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations](#), [Man-made intentional hazards](#)

Cultural Map Entries:

- [Communication patterns between the different actors of disaster response](#)
- [Specialised assistance tools developed by the German Red Cross for people with special needs](#)
- [Preparedness actions for all vulnerable groups during heat waves](#)
- [Comunitat Valenciana' is a public service in the Valencian region that receives emergency calls in Valencian, Spanish, English, French and German](#)
- [Language-independent communication in case of disaster](#)
- [Cultural differences in visual communication and perception](#)
- [Text messages, the most efficient and resilient mode of communication after a disaster](#)
- [Media's role and influence on public perceptions in the social construction of risks](#)
- [Topics that generate irresponsible media alarmism](#)
- [Blame: an important aspect in media's coverage of risk](#)
- [Personal experience guides behaviour more than received information](#)
- [People tolerate natural disasters better than man-made ones and media has an important influence on this](#)
- [The media's influence on individuals who are directly involved in disaster events](#)
- [Mass media as an important tool in addressing risks to the public/society](#)
- [People from post-communist countries rely on regional and national authorities for both risk communication and prevention measures](#)
- [Communicating risks and individual preparedness](#)
- [Communication strategy and risk perception](#)
- [Impact of visual aids on risk perception](#)
- [Links between trust in authorities and disaster behaviours](#)
- [Lack of knowledge of disaster guidelines and procedures found in a study with Bucharest residents](#)
- [Low levels of awareness of appropriate behaviour in a disaster found in a study with Bucharest residents](#)
- [Considerable interest in disaster preparedness information found in a study with Bucharest residents](#)
- [High incidence of expectations of a disaster found in a study with Bucharest citizens](#)



- [Information gaps between authorities and citizens on how to prepare for a disaster](#)
- [High levels of interest in disaster preparedness information amongst citizens in Malta](#)
- [Information as a tool for reducing gendered differences in risk perception](#)
- [Citizens' first response in a disaster would be to call family and friends](#)
- [Use of social media not the preferred immediate response in an emergency amongst Maltese citizens](#)
- [Social media usage for ongoing communication with family and friends during a disaster](#)
- [Likelihood of using social media to submit information to authorities during a disaster](#)
- [Importance of safety instructions in non-native languages](#)
- [Positive experiences of first responder action in the recovery phase of a disaster outweighs negative ones](#)
- [Real time use of social media during disasters](#)
- [Citizen perception of effectiveness of authorities in natural vs man-made disasters](#)
- [Perceived trustworthiness of media in disaster situations](#)
- [Varying levels of trust in public institutions vs private media channels](#)
- [Information channels to be used to communicate information about disaster preparedness](#)
- [Perceptions of individual preparedness for disaster amongst citizens in Frankfurt](#)
- [Interest in receiving information about disaster preparedness amongst citizens in Frankfurt](#)
- [Differing reactions to the reporting of local vs international first responder activity](#)
- [The importance of conveying disaster-related messages in at least three languages](#)
- [Adapting disaster-related messages to specific groups](#)
- [The importance of communicating directly to encourage appropriate response behaviours amongst certain communities](#)
- [Importance of considering communication channels used by the elderly, who may not be active on social media](#)
- [Differences in relationships with authority figures across cultural groups](#)
- [Illicit lifestyle' communities and communication in disaster situations](#)
- [Traditional vs modern communication channels](#)
- [Age and profession-related differences in the use of social media for disaster communication messages](#)
- [Different communication channels to be used for different social and cultural groups](#)
- [Citizens and the culture of inclusive policy-making](#)
- [The importance of restoring social networks among citizens to enable effective response efforts](#)
- ["Home alone" scenario for children during a disaster less likely in Italy](#)
- [Technology-use is often country dependent](#)
- [Citizens' expectations during a disaster is often related to their trust in authorities](#)
- [Trust issues in risk communication](#)
- [Trust and communication](#)
- [Lack of trust hampering risk-adapted behaviour](#)
- [Cultural adaptations in communication](#)
- [Social capital can help building trust](#)
- [Local identities as a source of coping mechanisms](#)
- [The socio-cultural construction of disasters](#)
- [Introduction to disaster and risk communication between citizens and authorities](#)
- [Example for the effectiveness of grassroots campaign in risk communication](#)
- [The "crisis and risk communication model" by Reynolds & Seeger](#)
- [Example of ineffective communication by public institutions in a disaster setting](#)
- [Lack of trust in authorities](#)
- [The potential of self-help / open source initiatives and citizen alert systems in disaster communication](#)
- [Cultural clashes between disaster managers and local communities example](#)
- [The impact of the media on citizens' attitudes and behaviours](#)
- [The role of new media in disaster communication](#)
- [Opportunities during the disaster recovery phase](#)
- [NGO roles in disaster management](#)
- [The complementary nature of NGOs in disaster management](#)
- [NGO roles in the preparedness phase](#)
- [Media impact on citizens](#)
- [The role of the media during a disaster](#)
- [Interdependency between different communication channels](#)
- [The role of traditional media](#)
- [Roles of traditional and social media in disasters](#)
- [Practical approaches in communication for empowerment](#)
- [Findings from the C4E Initiative](#)
- [C4E Initiative results](#)
- [The leadership Advance Online approach](#)
- [Risk communication](#)
- [Popular knowledge definition](#)
- [Media roles in empowering citizens in the Czech Republic](#)
- [Communication strategies of the Territorial Coordination Master Plan of the Province of Potenza](#)



- [Implementation activities of the Territorial Coordination Master Plan of the Province of Potenza](#)
- [Intensified information-seeking as a response to a disaster event](#)
- [Information categories concerning short term disaster recovery](#)
- [Information dissemination as a two-way process](#)
- [Trust in authorities in disaster settings](#)

General association with cultural factors: [Norms/values](#), [Customs/traditions/rituals](#), [Worldviews](#), [Open-mindedness](#), [Individual/collective memory](#), [Local knowledge](#), [Languages](#), [Communication](#), [Livelihoods](#), [Rule of law](#), [Power relations](#), [Attitudes toward authorities](#), [Attitudes toward the media](#), [Attitudes toward environmental issues](#), [Gender roles](#), [Age-related roles](#), [Ethnicity](#), [Educational system](#), [Density of active citizenship](#), [Social networks](#), [Social control](#), [Social exclusion](#), [Access and use of infrastructure/services](#)

Implementation steps:

Recommendations on overall principles to consider when designing & implementing disaster communication strategies

A. Employ risk communication practitioners to design the disaster communication strategies as this may help counter the multiple effects of selective media coverage on people's risk perceptions. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

B. Consider the influence of the affective processes on people's risk perception, when communicating risk and crisis information, as emotions can either increase or lower the perception of the risk. Use altruistic emotions to enhance motivation for preparedness. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

C. Consider the way information is provided regarding the risk as public communication influences citizen's level of perceived risk regardless of whether the information is provided by authorities or by experts. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

D. Carefully assess all public communication activities concerning risks, as to avoid unnecessary panic on one hand and unpreparedness and complacency on the other. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

E. Utilize the ecosystem approach to disaster communication, which enables the set-up of a more efficient multichannel crisis management, which is not only focused on communication but also considers preparedness, alerts and recovery. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

F. Citizens should be made aware of the existence, role and functionalities of a disaster management system. They should also be convinced that the technology and the DMAs' capacities are credible. The warning messages should use the local language and wording. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#), [Languages](#)

G. Provide consistent information by using single messages from single source, to create trust in institutions, while remaining sensitive to cultural differences, as well as the abundance of available information and the way it is processed by target groups. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

H. To improve situational awareness, address citizens as partners, who can report information on the situation on the ground through different trusted communication channels. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

I. Use a participatory approach to communication, whereby the top-down messages (from an expert to a lay audience) are complemented by feedback and inquests, also answered respectfully. Related



cultural factors: [Communication](#)

J. Support communication between citizens and local authorities to enable authorities to integrate citizens' preferences into their strategic planning. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

K. Provide timely consistently, and regularly updated risk and crises messages and deliver it through multiple channels. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

L. Develop communication strategies pre and post disaster according to the specificities of each disaster, depending on the perception and behavioural adaptation of the citizens to the disaster. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

M. Use media to educate people on matters related to disaster management. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

N. Use media to promote a model of 'shared responsibility', in which citizens are encouraged to play an active role in the production and sharing of crisis information. Allow citizens to collect and share quantitative and qualitative information related to the environment of existing public places as well as their well-being in those places. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#), [Social networks](#)

O. Withholding information in the response stage from and/or lying to affected communities should be avoided at all costs, as well as delaying communication without a serious reason as they may create panic or lead to lack of trust in authorities. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

P. Communicate quickly and do not allow rumours to take over. Offer up-to-date, truthful, clear and concise information. Take into account that the media also plays the role of a watchdog, which scrutinizes the actions of public authorities. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

Q. Investigate the causes of the disaster and offer the results truthfully to the public. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

R. Provide timely and accurate information about the actual level of risk while coaching people about preparedness activities, they can engage in to minimize the potential harm and about activities they should perform in the event of a disaster. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

S. Use media to calm people and encourage them to become active actors through their contribution to the process of managing a crisis generated by a disaster (natural or man-made), giving them an insightful perspective from the spot (places that are closest to the area where the disaster struck) and thus help communities and families locating victims. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

T. Ensure collaboration among the different emergency services and civil society organisations to ensure that information is disseminated among them in a fast, clear, understandable, accurate and complete manner. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

U. Novel and complex disasters need more explanations and available information for the citizens. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

Recommendations on selection of platforms and means of delivery in disaster communication

V. When communicating a risk, crisis or disaster relevant information, choose the proper type of media, as each communication platform has its own characteristics, influencing how, where and why a



specific message is produced and delivered. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

W. Information on risks and actual disasters should come from popularly trusted sources and relayed through trusted communication channels. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#), [Attitudes toward authorities](#), [Attitudes toward the media](#)

X. Ensure interaction between citizens and authorities via social media or dedicated disaster mobile applications. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

Y. Use mainstream and social media to develop more integrative strategies on the part of institutions involved in crisis and disaster mitigation. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

Z. Understand how information gets to be generated, diffused, rolled in social and mainstream media environments and how it can be used creatively to enhance the capacity of the community to react and cope with disaster. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AA. Choose the communication channel that is most used by the target population and take advantage of possible cultural characteristics that allow for a horizontal spread of information. Related cultural factors: [Norms/values](#), [Customs/traditions/rituals](#), [Worldviews](#), [Open-mindedness](#), [Individual/collective memory](#), [Local knowledge](#), [Languages](#), [Communication](#), [Livelihoods](#), [Rule of law](#), [Power relations](#), [Attitudes toward authorities](#), [Attitudes toward the media](#), [Attitudes toward environmental issues](#), [Gender roles](#), [Age-related roles](#), [Ethnicity](#), [Educational system](#), [Density of active citizenship](#), [Social networks](#), [Social control](#), [Social exclusion](#), [Access and use of infrastructure/services](#)

AB. Carry-out a pre-assessment of both the technological level of the community where a communication strategy is being implemented, to ensure that all communication platforms employed are accessible to the citizens, and the level of literacy, to ensure that the format of the message enables understanding. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AC. Accept the risk of providing redundant information due to the existing multitude of social media channels and mobile phone apps and, rather than attempting to avoid redundancy, perceive overlapping information streams as strength, given that cultural groups and cultural factors overlap as well. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AD. Use traditional media to influence the behaviour of the communities directly affected by man-made and natural disasters as a result of the fact that they have long played an important role in educating the public on disaster risk. However, media interventions appear to have a greater influence upon general behaviours and are not suitable for the provision of real time, context-specific information. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

Recommendations on disaster communication content and format

AE. Provide accurate information in the risk communication strategies about different types of risk to ensure that citizens' risk perception is based on rational analyses. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AF. Use visual aids and visual communication when possible to avoid miscommunication, translation errors and semantics misinterpretation in sending messages to citizens. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#), [Languages](#)

AG. Try to avoid discussing risk in terms of probabilities (interpretation of statistical information), but provide risk prevention measures. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)



AH. The information about risks should have an affective code rendering it more salient and meaningful. For example, by using different symbols to emphasize important information, using letter grades to mark safety data or adding affective descriptions alongside numbers (i.e. excellent, good). Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AI. Undertake information campaigns to advise people about the disaster risks in their area. Make sure to have them in different languages and preferably through easily understandable drawings/symbols. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AJ. In the event of a disaster, disseminate the location of the volunteers' coordination centres, their contact information as well as the actual material needs of humanitarian responders to streamline the process in a coordinated manner. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AK. Emphasizing the preparedness of authorities for terrorist attacks, increases risk perception in citizens. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#), [Attitudes toward authorities](#)

AL. Risk perception changes based on media coverage of that particular disaster type so the policy should be that the coverage (i.e. number of times something is mentioned in the media) reflects real frequency of that hazard. This will create informed citizens with adequate risk perception. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AM. Quickly debunk misleading information about your action during the crisis. Take into consideration that myths/false information perpetuated through media channels may also hinder response and recovery initiatives through their distorted representation of the behaviour and the needs of the affected populations. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AN. Convey messages in at least three languages: the language of the country, an international language, the language of the minority with the highest share, as to ensure successful communication process with different cultural groups. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#), [Languages](#)

AO. Identify specific groups (if any) and seek out the message that is the easiest to understand (e.g.: children, drawings, colouring books, animations, games; the elderly: readable text, uppercase, brief). Related cultural factors: [Communication](#), [Age-related roles](#)

AP. Adapt the language for communication to the lowest level of understanding to ensure successful communication process with different cultural groups. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AQ. To improve behavioural change in disaster preparedness:

AQ.1. promote a “culture to help” by embedding shared cultural values (e.g. Mediterranean family value, or collective memory of neighbourhood help in previous disasters) in behavioural guidelines such as information leaflets or other campaigns;

AQ.2. design information brochures that appeal to citizens' feelings which are more likely to activate or change behaviour, rather than merely providing “facts” about disaster risks;

AQ.3. appeal to citizens' feelings of responsibility towards vulnerable others, e.g. family or community members, as a motivator that is stronger than self-protection.

Related cultural factors: [Norms/values](#), [Customs/traditions/rituals](#), [Worldviews](#), [Communication](#), [Livelihoods](#)

AR. Always provide ample information as it prevents suboptimal emotional behaviours. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AS. When making leaflets position pictures that instigate negative emotion on the front, and pictures



that instigate positive emotion next to recommendations as this will enhance preparedness. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AT. Information should not consist only of statistical data and dry facts but should incorporate narratives, (e.g. stories by other victims or community members). Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AU. When preparing citizens for disaster use both short and long-term time-frames (e.g. mention immediate consequences but also life-time concerns). Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AV. Inform people about the ongoing clean-up, remediation, recovery, to facilitate broad-based, honest, and open discussion and resolution of issues regarding cause, blame, responsibility, and adequacy of response and eventually to document, formalize, and communicate lessons learned and rebuilding efforts. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AW. Meet citizens' information and emotional needs by delivering to them helpful, verified, empathetic information; notify them that the information process is an ongoing one. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AX. Use emotional discourses in disaster media coverage to raise aid donations and invite members of the public to care about 'distant suffering'. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AY. Pay special attention to the way information is presented to the public by using a more personal and emotional tone. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

AZ. Use humour and "lol-culture" to continuously educate and engage target groups online, as well as stay up-to-date with relevant trends. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#), [Age-related roles](#)

Recommendations on communicating with different vulnerable groups

BA. Raise awareness among people with special needs regarding the measures, which they need to take for their protection in case of disaster by organizing information campaigns, publishing and distribution of information materials tailored to their specific demands. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#), [Social exclusion](#), [Access and use of infrastructure/services](#)

BB. Pay special attention to the perception of increased vulnerability of some social groups and tailor messages according to the characteristics of each group. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#), [Social exclusion](#)

BC. People with less education need to be given more detailed information. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#), [Educational system](#)

BD. Consider cultural factors in disaster communication. Related cultural factors: [Communication](#)

Sources:



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[Deliverable 2.2: Report on systems and processes in disaster management](#) - CARISMAND
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[Deliverable 3.2: Report on best and emerging practices of technologies for disaster risk management and their adaptation to different cultural groups](#) - CARISMAND
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[Deliverable 5.9: Interim synthesised report on citizens' reactions and opinions: Citizen Summits 1 \(Romania\) and 2 \(Malta\)](#) - CARISMAND
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Further reading:

Bankoff, G. (2004b). The historical geography of disaster: ‘Vulnerability’ and ‘local knowledge’ in Western discourse. In G. Bankoff, G. Frerks, & D. Hilhorst (Eds.), *Mapping Vulnerability: Disasters, Development and People* (pp. 25–37). London and Sterling, VA: Earthscan.

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De Groeve T., Casajus Valles A. (2015). *Science Policy Interfaces in Disaster Risk Management in the EU - Mapping the support provided by science in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism*. ISBN 978-92-79-52740-1, ISSN 1831-9424, doi:10.2788/023384; available at: <http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC97968/lbna27520enn.pdf>

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Culture And RiSk management in
Man-made And Natural Disasters

<https://toolkit.carismand.eu/a/recommendation-inform-citizen>

